



The Upper Triad Material

Commentaries III

Edited by Peter Hamilton

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The Upper Triad Material

Commentaries III

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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 III 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

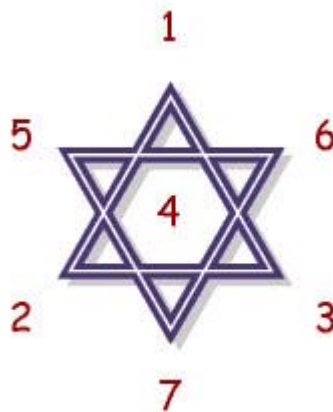
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There is a place, deep within the heart, where we touch God, and where God touches us, where human hearts achieve communion, with God, and with one another, there being no difference, no space between us.

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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The All of Time

Objective experience is usually viewed in terms of time and space since these two variables (which are actually two expressions of a single variable) provide the basic framework and focus for objective (personality) experience.

The apparent reality of time (and space) is not usually questioned, but when the student begins to realize the greater reality of the soul (on its own level), the world of time becomes quite insufficient as a point of reference or focus. Consequently, the spiritual student must learn to function consciously unhindered by the distraction of time and space. The real world of the soul is clearly beyond such limitation; the spiritual student needs to be free from the habit of thinking only in terms of time and space or not, as the case need be. As the student progresses in his soul relationship, a new reference frame is evolved based primarily on consciousness and independence from time.

Time (space) is merely a perspective, one way of viewing the experience of objective manifestation (with emphasis on the world of effects), and it is a very small portion of the reality of existence. Since time is a necessary phenomenon during incarnation, there is no harm in its acceptance, but the spiritual student should at least acknowledge time for what it is (a temporary and illusionary perspective) rather than an absolute reality. The ocean of time is subject generally (greatly) to perception and interpretation; beyond time there is an inclusive understanding and a potent realization that is relatively free from the distortion of perception. Meditation (and other forms of abstract and subjective thinking and realization) is a way by which the student can ultimately and consciously achieve the transcendence of time (and its inherent limitations) (at will), while simultaneously functioning in the lower worlds.

The real understanding of life (and events) comes when the mind (and soul) views life as inclusively as possible, beyond the sequence of events and experience in time and space. The phenomenon (panorama) of karma is unbound by time (though obviously related to time-dependent events). Therefore, any real understanding of cause and effect relationships can only exist on higher levels of consciousness than those which are merely time-

dependent. Any real understanding of life must take into consideration the existence and character of the soul (the unit of human evolution); but the soul does not exist in time and space (nor does the soul exist as (or through) a single incarnation). The soul exists (in reality) as the totality of experience (past, present, and future) and the integration of all related perspectives (levels of consciousness) (and simultaneously as an integration over all lives).

The all of time (of the soul) is not an extension of time; it is the integration over time such that time-dependence is inclusively eliminated. Time-dependence could be eliminated by treating time as a constant (through successive differentiation), but that would not be all-inclusive. By successive integration (vice differentiation), the reality of higher existence (beyond time) is approached in consciousness, and the illusion (appearance) and exclusiveness of lower (finite) existence is successively overcome. The past, present, and future are merely distributions of energy (as the soul itself is essentially energy). Time (separated existence in time and space) is seen to be only a focus for objective experience, replaced as a reference frame by the timelessness (reality) of the soul. Refusing to be completely absorbed in time, the esoteric student dwells primarily in (on) the subjective whole, the all of time, and views all experience in the greater light of life and consciousness (knowing that events and experience are merely transitory energy expressions).

† Commentary No. 202

The First Ennead 8

The eighth tractate of the First Ennead is entitled "The Nature and Source of Evil." Considered is the relationship between good and evil, being and non-being, and between the soul and the opposition of good by evil.

The primal evil (evil absolute) is said to exist as the independent (and abstract) principle of non-being (the absence of being) (or the quite distant image or reflection of being), as the absolute (lifeless) formlessness and lawless void that exists prior to (and to a certain extent during) manifestation. As an emptiness (non-existence) (the negation of reality), evil is real in the sense that it complicates life and consciousness, but it is unreal in the sense that it has no real life of its own.

On the other hand, the good is the abstract principle of being which has its root (source) in God (life) (reality) and produces the ordered purposeful manifestation of life and consciousness. In one sense, the good is associated with the highest formlessness, unbound and unlimited, but having an inherent purpose and an ordered synthetic nature. The good is inserted into the lower formlessness (emptiness) (chaos) by successive differentiation and reflection. The ordered nature of being produces patterns (forms) (structure) within the lower formlessness. From life (spirit), through quality (consciousness), to appearance (matter), the spiritual impulse reaches a lower (relative) limit. That lower limit (the greatest diversification of matter on the lowest level of manifestation) confronts the lower formlessness, and by association is qualified by evil (lack of purpose) (random, chaotic force). Thus evil is inherent within matter, though evil is actually a derived quality.

So absolute evil is an abstraction inherent in unqualified formlessness. And those forms which come into closest contact with such formlessness (in the lower sense) acquire a degree of evil by association and to the extent to which the indwelling life and consciousness permits (or is unable to prevent). Higher forms can take on an increased measure of this evil quality by continued association. Matter itself exists at a lower level than that of patterns and forms, and therefore in the realm (interface) between form and (lower) formlessness. Bodies are not true forms (archetypes); bodies are formations of matter and are therefore very easily swayed by material forces. The lower mind is associated with evil only in the sense that it is associated with its bodies (personality) and works therefore with matter and form. The higher mind (and the soul) remains untouched by evil.

But that which identifies with lower limits of form takes upon itself some character of evil. Thus human ignorance (evil) begins with the identification with form (illusion) and ends with the identification with life (reality). What is normally called or characterized as evil is simply the manifestation (induction) of evil by association with matter. Matter tends to control whatever is manifested through it; thus are forms corrupted and considerable effort is required on the part of consciousness to secure their relative freedom. The abstract evil does have a place within the evolutionary scheme, however, for it opposes evolution and therefore moderates all activity in the lower worlds, thus

providing a framework of experience. Evil (ignorance) manifested within the human form (body) (personality) is a resistance (inertia) to be overcome, ultimately yielding greater potencies for good. All forms within the framework of manifestation have within themselves a degree of the inherent good (by virtue of their source of creation and how close they are to that source). Thus the human being is essentially a very noble creature.

† Commentary No. 203

Namaskara

“Namaskara” is a Hindustani word that can be used as a greeting or salutation of considerable spiritual significance. “Namaskara” is actually a salutation and recognition of the divinity within the human form; it can be used as a form of communication (invocation) (evocation) between the mind and the soul, or it can be used between two or more individuals. It can be used silently (mentally or in meditation) or it can be spoken (or written) with mantric (energy) value. As a word of power, the greeting carries with it an inherent energy of invocation, to draw the higher self more fully into the waking-consciousness. Used with an intelligent and conscious recognition of its significance, the word carries with it a considerable potency for good.

Used internally (vertically) (between mind and soul), the word “Namaskara” parallels the English expression (mantra) “I am That I am” in the evocation of higher consciousness. The lower self (the mind) (personality) is so easily distracted by the outer (mundane) world and personality experience (absorption) that the spiritual student may frequently need to align himself with the spiritual self (the divinity within). Through such conscious alignment (or through the attempt or effort toward alignment) the inner energies become more easily manifested and the student is better able to maintain a spiritual poise (perspective) (temperament) (disposition) throughout the waking activities. Such alignment is also an essential part of serious meditation effort. Thus, this word of power (or an equivalent formula) can be used internally to bring about a stronger, more meaningful relationship between the personality and its higher self. In recognition of the God-self within comes eventual manifestation of that God-self through the obedient and willing (purified) personality.

Used externally (horizontally) (between individuals) the word “Namaskara” is a salutation of one soul to another, a conscious recognition of mutual divinity, regardless of the appearance of personality. When used between spiritual students, the word “Namaskara” is a word of spiritual strength and encouragement (rapport), an affirmation of recognition of the greater (one) life that binds all lives together. When used by a spiritual student for others, the word tends to draw out the best of qualities (potentialities) in the others and serves as a considerable force of encouragement. When used by a spiritual student for others (humanity) (those who may or may not be on the path), the word can be a potent force for right human relations and goodwill; for in the recognition of divinity within another (or humanity) is that divinity encouraged to unfold.

Not only is it a matter of recognition, but a process of identification (of one life with another aspect of the same life). Regardless of the evident (apparent) personality, there exists a God-self within all human beings (and other beings). By focusing the attention on the divine nature inherent within all, the student should find it far easier to overlook the limitations and shortcomings of others (which should not be dwelled upon) and much easier to develop the needed rapport with all of humanity (and with all of life).

In each sense, the recognition of divinity strengthens the spiritual impulse in manifestation (throughout humanity). The divine self is the personal aspect of God, that aspect through which all lives are bound together, that aspect (divine, inner spark of life) which evolves and contributes to the group evolution. In one sense at least, the word “Namaskara” is more potent than its English correspondence (“I am That I am”); for it has an essential heart-centered quality that goes far beyond the individual sense of alignment. It is that heart essence that contributes to the group (human) consciousness.

Group Character

The spiritual student is tasked with understanding his own (personal) (individual) nature on its various levels (and interactions) as well as human nature in general. One of the interesting features of human groups is their tendency to take on many of the individual human characteristics. The many lessons concerning human nature are frequently found reflected in human groups of various types and sizes. Thus the student is encouraged not only to understand himself, but to observe and analyze group behavior and character as well, that the student might more easily and more intelligently cooperate with constructive forces on various levels and through various groups.

There are a number of variables that can be considered in an analysis of any group. The size of the group should be taken into consideration, for the size of a group very strongly affects the internal and external group dynamics (along with some of the other variables). Human groups can range in size from a few persons, through nation-states and races, to humanity as a whole. The size of the group contributes to its manageability and potency. The membership of the group should also be examined, for the group nature rests ultimately on the nature of the individuals who form the group (analogously, in the human being, the various aspects and constituent elements of the personality and their relationships with each other). The purpose of the group usually reveals how the membership is related to the group. Group goals and objectives play an important role in attracting the membership and holding it together.

Other group variables of significance include quality, maturity, strength (potency), stability (of membership), level of consciousness (as well as variety and consensus), flexibility, diversity (of membership), frequency (of association), freedom (of the membership), formality, and complexity. The overall quality of the group may be head-centered or heart-centered (or balanced) and allied to any one or more of the seven rays. The maturity of the group is especially important; the strength (potency) for good is related to the group's dependability, stability, and overall maturity. The level of consciousness is also quite important in this respect.

Depending on maturity and the level of consciousness, a group might be reasonably well-integrated (coherent) and spiritually responsive (as a group). Groups of significant duration (nation-states) (races) are qualified each by a personality ray and a soul ray which may substantially interact with the group character (and contribute to its formation). The internal structure of a group also plays a considerable role in the determination of the group character. How the various individuals relate to each other (and to the group goals) affects the various qualities and characteristics that the group manifests. External relationships (alignments) (forces) also (usually) affect the group character.

As all of these variables are considered and the nature of the group determined, the various attributes of the group can be discerned (such as humility, openmindedness, awareness, moderation, goodwill, reasonableness, practicality, adaptability, confidence, kindness, harmlessness, friendliness, impersonality, clarity, etc.) (of course these qualities may be as much a part of the analysis). Much can be learned concerning human nature and the effects of certain characteristics in the field of human experience, and much of that understanding can be applied to constructive efforts and interactions. What is learned about group dynamics and group character will well serve the spiritual student, for increasingly, spiritual students must work together in a coherent and mature fashion on personality levels and on group levels.

† Commentary No. 205

The Occult Rays

Four of the seven rays are considered to be occult (head-centered) rays (rather than mystical rays). These four rays (the first ray, the third ray, the fifth ray, and the seventh ray) form a special and potent group, symbolized in part by the cross of manifestation. These odd-numbered (head-centered) rays provide the bulk of work (activity) of manifestation, being moderated by the heart-centered (mystical) rays. The occult rays provide the purpose, intelligence, and organization (structure and framework) for manifestation, while the mystical rays provide the quality (consciousness), guidance, and assimilation of the experience of manifestation.

The occult rays fall naturally into two (four) (six) pairs of rays (1+7 and 3+5) (1+3, 1+7, 3+5, 5+7) (1+3, 1+5, 1+7, 3+5, 3+7, 5+7). On the higher levels, the first and third rays constitute a potent vertical relationship (pair of opposites) of spirit (life) (energy) (will) and matter (form) (consequence), respectively. The first ray provides the purpose for life and manifestation (intelligent activity). On lower levels, the first and seventh rays provide another potent vertical relationship. The first ray provides the power (impulse) of life while the seventh ray provides ordered structure and material basis for the manifestation of energy (through the process of creation).

While the third and fifth rays constitute a highly vertical relationship (through reflection), they simultaneously form a horizontal relationship. Together, the third ray and the fifth ray are concerned with knowledge and truth (light). The third ray (in this respect) functions as the abstract mental plane (concerned with archetypes and patterns) (general principles) (philosophy) while the fifth ray functions as the concrete mental plane (concerned more with understanding the patterns as manifested) (details and specifics) (science) (application). The other two relationships (the first ray with the fifth ray and the third ray with the seventh ray) are significant but are less potent.

Of somewhat greater significance are the two synthetic triangles (1:3:5) and (3:5:7) which together forms the cross of manifestation. The higher triangle (1:3:5) relates the purpose of evolution to the middle stage of mental formulation, while the lower triangle (3:5:7) carries the energy farther into the external world. Subjectively, these occult rays are concerned with creative plans and light energies (truth) (knowledge), while objectively, they are primarily concerned with the work, activity, and structure of manifestation. The rays of mind provide the middle ground of balance between archetype and created (manifested) form, between theory and practice, between the subjective realm and the objective work.

The substantive world of the occult rays involves invocation and evocation, the manipulation of matter by applied forces to achieve some evolutionary objective. The occultist is an instrument of force in the manipulation of form, while the mystic is the instrument of moderation (quality). The word "occult" essentially means concealed or hidden, referring to the superphysical or subtle nature of the forces of manifestation. The purpose of occult investigation is to establish the

relation of manifested things to their invisible or subtle causes and thereby to be able to cooperate more intelligently with the forces of evolution. The occultist works primarily with head-centered rays in bringing into manifestation the needed forces. The esotericist blends and balances both occult (head-centered) and mystical (heart-centered) energies, bridging between the world of activity and the world of consciousness, having mastered both great hindrances to occult work: the undisciplined emotions and the ego.

† Commentary No. 206

Courage

Courage has been defined as the mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty. It implies firmness of mind and a degree of confidence. In the spiritual context, courage is an important virtue to be cultivated by the student, for the path can be quite difficult at times, and living a delicate balance between the inner world of the soul and the outer world of the mundane personality can be especially trying.

First of all, the soul itself must have courage to incarnate. Many (souls) incarnate easily, and quickly adjust to the external world (by absorption) because they identify more with the lower life than the higher one. Many incarnate with varying degrees of difficulty, due to the foreign nature of life in the lower worlds (foreign to the poise and consciousness of the soul) or due to various karmic phenomena. Few souls incarnate easily (without reservation) and carefully refuse to be absorbed by life in the lower worlds. Some are able to incarnate easily with an implied (but temporary) period of absorption and adjustments followed by a necessarily courageous struggle (later on) (as the personality completes the preliminary (preparatory) work) to regain control of the mind (and the personality) and draw the lower life out of the dilemma (predicament) of mundane absorption.

The spiritual student (being somewhat enlightened and reasonably well integrated) must have the courage to face adverse or unknown conditions throughout the lifetime, for the path is filled with tests and trials of spiritual strength and character, and the karmic workload of one relatively new to the path can be quite a burden (not to mention the intense and almost

instantaneous karmic workload of one who has made substantial progress along the path). If the student is to maintain (and increase) his usefulness, and if the student is to progress along the path, he must conquer all events and circumstances (and the lessons found therein). He must remain true to himself, and he must remain true to the work (dharma) (and karma) that has been assigned.

Simultaneously, the spiritual student must have (should develop) the courage to be different (as needed), to adjust his approach to life in the lower world of human events and to be flexible (and reasonable) in his relationships with others. The student must ultimately have the courage to live consistently according to the principles of life along the way (the spiritual path). He must have courage to believe according to the reality of inner knowledge and understanding (in spite of disbelief or misunderstanding in the outer world), and he must inevitably have the courage to live according to the dictates of his philosophy (or suffer the consequences of disharmony between what is believed and what is practiced). The student can ill afford hypocrisy.

Perhaps above all, the spiritual student must have the courage of honesty and truthfulness. He must (should) be honest with himself and with others (the wise person speaks little, but what is said is ever honest and sincere (appropriate)). He must not be afraid to face the truth about himself or about life itself. The student whose self-image approaches reality will have no difficulty in receiving truth, but courage is required for the majority who are unprepared to face the truth. The student must ultimately have the courage to be humble, in a world whose members are traditionally egocentric. For in the deepest and most meaningful humility is found the greatest and most profound truth and realization. With courage and fearlessness the student must guard ever against foolishness and conceit, for courage does not justify recklessness or carelessness, and fearlessness is no substitute for humility.

The First Ennead 9

The last tractate of the First Ennead is entitled "The Reasoned Dismissal." Considered is the inappropriateness of suicide. The great sin (suicide) is its interference with the purpose of the soul (which purpose is experience and expression leading to the evolution of consciousness). It is also perhaps the greatest act of arrogance that a mind or personality can commit, for no one (on the personality level) has the right to terminate life (release life from the form) prematurely. When the soul is ready to withdraw from its incarnation, a simple and natural transition (death) will result.

Suicide implies a voluntary and deliberate act (of interference) on the part of the personality, giving rise to the concept of reasoned dismissal (of the physical plane experience). The reasoning (rational or irrational) may vary widely, but is more often based on strictly emotional experience or at least centered in kama-manas (the desire mind). Higher forms of (strictly rational) (if not reasonable) reasoning often relate to an apparent lack of usefulness.

The reasons themselves are not important, for there are simply no grounds which are sufficient (justification) for dismissal (suicide). Suicide is an extreme act, one that has gone far beyond the balance, moderation, and poise of one who is healthy emotionally and mentally. Anyone who dabbles in extreme energies is likely to develop the vulnerabilities which may lead, in turn, to a consideration of suicide. Suicide is sometimes related to the sudden release of an intense attachment (on some personality level), but no matter what circumstances precipitate the event, the event itself is one of failure to maintain reasonable balance and self-control, coupled with lack of respect and understanding of life and death (and the purpose for incarnation).

The consequences of suicide are relatively (very) bad. At any death, the individual stands free from the body (which is released to its elementary state (uninspired matter)), but not necessarily free from the emotions and the mind. The individual takes into superphysical existence the consciousness (lower and higher) that was experienced in ordinary life (without the distraction of the dense physical). The personality survives, at least until the soul withdraws

from the personality (and the personality is then resolved into its constituent and elementary lives). The archetype of the physical body persists until the intended time of natural transition. During ordinary transition, the life's experience is assimilated on the various levels (astral, lower mental, higher mental) and the soul passes on freely to its natural (higher) state (existence). But in the case of suicide, the soul remains bound to the personality (and to the unfulfilled archetype of the body) for usually a considerable length of time. And that experience is one of the most painful (since it is so contrary to the purpose of evolution).

The conclusions are simple; suicide is (by definition) an unjustified and potentially devastating experience. With greater public understanding of the nature of life and death, the problem of suicide should recede and (ultimately) be eliminated. All life has meaning and purpose, whether it is recognized and understood as such or not. It behooves everyone to continue learning for as long as the opportunity for life in the lower worlds exists, to face all situations and circumstances with reasonableness (and as learning experiences), and to contribute whatever one can to the evolution of the greater life. Life in the lower worlds (regardless of its appearance) is an opportunity for individual and collective progress. And until the soul is free, there is always hope for progress. Usefulness persists.

† Commentary No. 208

The Individual Heritage

The individual heritage of a soul is the totality of experience acquired during its existence coupled with all of the energies of experience available to it. That experience may manifest itself in many ways, through capabilities, quality (consciousness), and character; everything that the soul is or can manifest on any level of its consciousness (including those of the personality).

The largest portion of the individual heritage is that which was acquired during earlier existence, both in the case of the individual life (consciousness) and in the case of the independently-evolved form. All of the experience of the soul (consciousness) assimilated from prior incarnations contributes directly to the individual heritage. From the earliest existence of the soul (as a distribution of

consciousness within the group soul) through the various stages of involution (prior to self-consciousness) and evolution (after self-consciousness (individualization)), all of the experience is enfolded into the energy pattern (reservoir) of the soul. Thus, all of the specific lessons of evolution through the various kingdoms (elemental, mineral, plant, animal, and human) contribute to what the soul is and to the capabilities and consciousness of that soul. The same is true for the forms which the soul appropriates for utilization in any particular lifetime (incarnation).

By association with the forms of the personality (the various bodies), the soul inherits the experience of the forms in addition to its own experience. In other words, the form follows its own pattern of evolution, and as the soul appropriates (creates) the form out of matter, the actual (earlier) experience of the atoms of matter which comprise the form is available to the indwelling consciousness. The experience of the form in manifestation is also a part of this heritage. The present (immediate) existence of the form and its derived character are also important, for many characteristics are passed on by parent-atoms during the creative process. Those characteristics are, in part, the immediate consequence of the physical, emotional, and mental characteristics of the forms of the parents (or however the form is derived) and, to a certain extent, their qualification by the consciousness of the parents. This is, of course, in addition to the historical experience of the atoms themselves.

Probably the most potent factors in the individual heritage are the immediate experience of the soul (including its physical, emotional, and mental development through (and weighted heavily towards) the most recent incarnation) and the current state of its karma. Many environmental factors controlled largely by the soul and its karma contribute directly to the immediate heritage of the soul. Much depends on the ability of the soul to sift through the environmental (karmic) factors and control them (or more precisely, to control the response (if any) to those factors). Furthermore, the soul chooses (subjectively) (within karmic limits) what characteristics will be manifested or emphasized in a particular incarnation (out of those which have been earned or developed). Thus the entire heritage is available, but not all of that heritage is used. Only that which is needed or pertinent is actually enfolded into the personality patterns.

Finally, perhaps the most important factor is the dynamic and creative ability of the soul in incarnation (how the soul applies its heritage to life in the lower worlds and lessons in consciousness). The soul may (if it can), from time to time, adjust various factors, bringing in new energies and withdrawing old ones, as needed. The soul (and the enlightened personality) can actually draw consciously upon its entire heritage, and that of the entire lifewave.

† Commentary No. 209

The Mind and Its Brain

The soul tends to develop (evolve) a form or instrument for each plane of consciousness in the scope of its experience. On the manasic (mental) level, the primary instrument is the mind, in its two parts: the abstract mind of the soul itself and the concrete mind of the personality or lower self. On astral levels, the primary instrument is the astral or emotional body. On physical levels there exists a dense physical instrument (body) and its etheric (vital) double. Occult or head-centered work is concerned primarily with the mind and its particular instrument within the physical body, the brain.

The brain is a strictly physical instrument having a dense physical structure and an etheric counterpart. It is analogous to the hardware (physical instrument) of a computer system (specifically, to the central processor). The brain is concerned primarily with three things: processing sensory inputs, physiological processes (the control and coordination of the physical body), and localized memory. As a dense physical form, the brain has no consciousness of its own (except for the elementary consciousness of the physical and etheric atoms). It is simply a piece of hardware associated with (and necessary to) the physical body, but it is also the primary instrument through which consciousness can function and experience on physical levels. Without the brain, it would be extremely difficult for the waking-consciousness to experience anything on physical levels. The brain is not required for thinking processes, but it is needed for observation, awareness, and interaction on physical levels.

The mind on the other hand, is an instrument of a much higher order than that of the brain (a higher order as far as plane of consciousness is concerned albeit

not nearly as structured (organized) as the brain). The mind is the instrument used on the mental plane of consciousness, the instrument of reasoning, thinking, and understanding. It exists more as an aura than as a detailed form, though the mental body itself is becoming more organized as far as mental matter is concerned. The lower (concrete) (superficial) mind provides the single-track processes of thinking and reasoning (with the generation of thought-forms in mental matter), and the (conscious and subconscious) programming of the personality on mental, emotional, and even physical levels.

The concrete mind is analogous to computer software, the programming that utilizes lower-order instruments (hardware). The abstract (higher) (inner) mind is a higher order of programming (software) that operates on multiple-tracks and has virtually no structure. The abstract mind provides an interface with the concrete mind of the personality, by providing various energies (guidance) from the soul. The abstract mind is more concerned with relationships, understanding, comprehension, realization, and contemplation; while the concrete mind is more concerned with programming, concentration, and application.

The intellect is that aspect of the concrete mind that has so identified itself with the brain (and with physical experience) that its patterns and processes (programming) have more or less crystallized. The mind utilizes the brain intimately for physical awareness, and that relationship is usually a considerable distraction (absorption) for the mind. In fact, the mere presence of the brain in the personality system tends to burden (dull) (slow down) the entire thinking process. Since the brain and the mind are closely related during incarnation, it is almost inevitable that an intellect will develop to sustain the illusion of lower (independent) existence. Memory processes, too, contribute to this complicated involvement of mind and brain. They are both involved to a certain extent with etheric memory processes.

The Lunar Cycle

The lunar cycle is a major cycle of significance to humanity. Serious spiritual students of all faiths observe the lunar cycle in their pattern of daily and monthly meditation, primarily because of the opportunities to work with special, qualified energies that are available according to the monthly rhythm of the lunar cycle. This meditation process is one of cooperation on a number of levels: cosmic, solar, planetary, group, and individual.

As far as energy is concerned, the sun (physical symbol of the manifestation of the solar logos) plays the primary role in the lunar cycle and the corresponding planetary meditation effort. The sun is a relative source of energies from outside of the immediate (solar) system. Various cosmic (extra-solar) energies (on subtle levels) from those sources (cosmic lives) which provide a heavenly background for the sun (relative to earth) are received by the sun, intensified considerably (and qualified by the nature and character of the solar logos), and redistributed by radiation Throughout the system. These same energies are almost always available directly (except when interfered with by other bodies), but with much less intensity (and without the specific solar qualification). For example, the energies of Aries are always available to humanity in one form or another, but when the sun is in Aries (relative to the earth) those energies are particularly magnified and redistributed. The energies that are especially available in this fashion vary according to the solar cycle (as the sun moves (relatively) along the path of the ecliptic).

The sun is also a direct source of energy pertaining to the entire (solar) system. The particular nature of the solar logos is reflected in the sun's own energy (on subtle levels as well as purely physical and etheric levels). Furthermore, the sun is a relative source of various planetary energies. Each planet has a distinctive aura which qualifies (or is qualified by) the energy (character) of the planetary life. Those various planetary energies can be received directly, or via the sun. Since all of the planets are dynamically and esoterically coupled (with each other and with the sun), the sun reflects and qualifies all energies within the system. All of the planets (physical and non-physical) (and other lives and bodies within the system) exist (live) (are manifested) within the solar aura.

That aura provides a dynamic medium through which all of the planetary lives are linked together by their various energies. That aura constitutes a vast sea (energy field) of qualified substance (etheric and superphysical matter) and associated energies.

The movement of various physical and non-physical forms (bodies) (and lives) through that dynamic medium (aura) creates wavefronts of energy qualified by the particular form or life. Though the moon itself is not an active influence, it does interact with the various planetary and solar energies by virtue of its presence within the solar aura. The moon acts as a gate (valve) that moderates the amount (intensity) of energy received by the planet.

The first half of the cycle is primarily one of receiving energy; the second half of the cycle is primarily one of redistributing the energy for planetary (and humanitarian) purposes. At the period of the new moon, the moon is positioned (relatively) between sun and earth, so the energies received from the sun are impeded. As the moon continues its motion from the new moon position to the full moon position, the flow of energy received from the sun increases. At the period of the full moon, the moon is positioned on the far side of the earth relative to the sun, and therefore has minimal impact on the energies received from the sun. Thus, the solar sign of the full moon is quite significant.

† Commentary No. 211

Rightness

Rightness is defined as the state or degree of being right, in accordance with what is just, good, or proper. Rightness is concerned with correctness, suitability, appropriateness, truth, and wisdom (discretion).

As a servant of truth and evolutionary purpose (love), the spiritual student should be consciously concerned with rightness in regard to each aspect of waking activity; but the student should not be attached to any sense of rightness, nor should he be concerned with the rightness of others' behavior or motives in the three worlds (of physical, emotional, and mental experience).

One of the eternal problems of rightness is its inherent relativity. It would be easy to classify all moral, ethical, and behavioral activity (and all decisions and conclusions) into one or the other of two extremes (right or wrong). If truth were absolute, then rightness would be a simple matter of logical and analytical reasoning. But truth is relative, dealing more with universals than absolutes, and treating rightness in absolute terms is a considerable limitation. Some well-defined standards may be established and adhered to, but with openmindedness and respect for the relative nature of truth. But the concrete mind (and human nature) prefers certainties and the exclusiveness (separateness) of clearly defined dualities. And human nature (with its vanity) tends to polarize forces and considerations so that the spectrum of consciousness is difficult to realize. But nonetheless, the student should moderate his relative understanding of experience and activity, so that the stumbling blocks of polarized or extreme conclusions are overcome.

The principles of rightness are the same for behavior (activity) as well as belief (truth). Rather than trying to discern the extremes of what is right or wrong, the spiritual student should discern what is relatively right. Of all the known alternatives, the student should endeavor to recognize the one that is (or seems) best, keeping in mind the relativity of his life and decisions in the three worlds. The spiritual student is simply urged to do what seems best (after due consideration or intuition), knowing full well the futility of absolutes and the fallibility of human consciousness. It is rarely a matter of right or wrong; it is more often a matter of right and more right. The student should not be afraid to make his decisions and proceed, for in action and experience come greater understanding. As long as the student is sincere and true to his beliefs and understanding, he should not be ashamed of failure, for all is relative, and the lessons of apparent errors are still fruits of meaningful experience. And the student should also respect the perspective and consciousness of others, for what is (relatively) right for one may not be so for another; such is the greatness of truth and consciousness.

Another problem of rightness is its relationship to levels of personality-centeredness. The student is urged to experience and express himself in the highest possible way, according to his consciousness. The lower form of rightness is righteousness manifested externally (so that it provokes personality effects and reactions from others). Such righteousness (self-righteousness) is

usually a greater hindrance to progress and right human relations than not. The spiritual student may well be concerned with justice in the outer worlds, but he should ever respect with faith and confidence (and humility) the law of karma and the rights and freedom of others. The rightness (righteousness) of the student should be of the higher form, an individual matter of quiet, introspective, and humble righteousness. Such righteousness that is internalized (as a factor in consciousness) is far more meaningful.

† Commentary No. 212

The Second Ennead 1

The Second Ennead of Plotinus considers the heavens and the two kinds of matter. The Second Ennead begins with the first tractate, entitled "The Heavenly System." Considered in the first tractate is an analogy of the microcosm (the human being) and the macrocosm (ordered universe), with a clarification of the heavenly system in its various qualities and characteristics. A distinction is made between individual persistence and the persistence of type; the macrocosm is a useful combination of soul and form where the soul persists (endures) and the form suffers limited duration. The ordered universe has a changeless foundation, a ceaseless and dynamic, ever-changing manifestation, and a perpetuation (purpose) based upon the will of God.

On human levels, the persistence of type refers to the form, as the souls (lives) are reintroduced to objective levels in new forms (personalities) (bodies) which sustain the type. Also seen is the interrelatedness of heavenly lives and forms, analogous to the human experience. The heavenly system is considered a ceaseless flux, but one which is a (relatively) closed system (with primarily internal changes). The heavenly system (like the human) is self-consistent and stable (though interactive). Identity (the monad) remains unchanged, while consciousness (and form) changes (progresses). With eternal beginnings, a restoration (of flux) is not needed, for the immortality of the cosmos and its intrinsic internal character are sufficient.

A restoration of energy is only needed in the lower worlds, yet from a higher standpoint the energy is not lost, but merely involved in ceaseless

transmutation. The cosmos (the ordered universe) has no beginning or end, only relative beginnings (and endings) as the cycles of manifestation proceed. The flux is not outgoing, but self-contained. In the lower sense, the flux appears to be outgoing only because the whole is not taken into the vision. Lives which expend themselves are merely transformed. Forms which have completed their usefulness are returned to their constituents, and as the universe completes its immediate usefulness, all is returned to chaos, that a new beginning may follow.

The ceaseless activity of manifestation depends on four major elements: fire (heat) (light), earth (matter), air (space), and water (cohesion) (magnetism). But even these elements of the heavenly system undergo transformation and re-formation. And these elements are also completely integrated with respect to higher purpose. Lower forms are derived and therefore suffer less permanence (as formations) than consciousness. The reality of cosmic fellowship is seen in the utilization of life, consciousness, and form by the life of each higher dimension. The lesser is not dominated, but rather the qualities and characteristics of the lesser are determined by the guidance of the higher life.

Earth-centeredness is also seen as a relative phenomenon. The dynamics (internal motion) of the heavenly system depend almost entirely on the reference frame or perspective. Every major element (star) (planet) of the heavenly system can be viewed as being self-centered (with respect to its frame of reference), just as each self-conscious life (human being) views his personal universe as centered in himself. But in the greater reference frame (unanimity), there is no self-centeredness (or earth-centeredness), only an omniscient and internalized (all-inclusive) vision. With such a vision, no external forces (body) are needed to insure permanence (divinity flows from within and provides the soul with immortality). But the soul does not (cannot) share its permanence with its instrument (the body) (personality). The same also holds true for the macrocosm, by correspondence.

The Monad

The human being in the physical form known to ordinary consciousness is actually a small portion of a much more complicated lifeform. In reality, the human being is a spiritual monad of which the physical form is the lowest and most distant relation. The monad is the highest spiritual aspect of the human being, and it is one of the three major levels of existence through which that life manifests. The other two levels are the soul and the personality. The monad, the soul, and the personality form a significant triplicity.

The monad is the least objective and most abstract level of human existence, although it is misleading even to call it human; the human distinction is merely academic on monadic levels. The monad is the divine spark of the flame of the life which is God. Its presence or nature cannot even be glimpsed by ordinary consciousness. The presence and nature of the monad can only be revealed through the conscious attainment of soul-consciousness, and even then, only through a difficult alignment of the soul with its monad. The monad is that aspect of the human life which remains on the atomic level without itself descending into the lower worlds. The descent of the monad is achieved only through its reflection onto lower worlds of consciousness, while the monad itself remains en rapport with the godhead. That godhead descends only to the level of consciousness adjacent to, and one degree higher than that of the monad. Since the monad exists on the atomic level, there is no substantial barrier between itself and the next higher level. On its own level, the monad is the only reality, an integral and undifferentiated part of the godhead.

The monad is the supreme element of that life from which the human being is a derivation. It is supreme in the sense that it is the only imperishable aspect of the triplicity; the personality is the least permanent aspect, while the soul is relatively, but not quite immortal. As the universe comes into and out of manifestation, the character of the monad persists, while all that functions on lower levels is dissolved, at least at the end of manifestation. Obviously, the monad is the least known of the three aspects from the standpoint of human consciousness, for the monad is beyond consciousness, and few (if any) souls in

incarnation can be aligned consciously with the monad. Since the monad is beyond consciousness, it can only be approached on its own level (being).

The soul is the first but distant reflection of the monad onto the next lower levels. The monad remains unconcerned with the plight or experience of the soul, though a thread of life does link the two aspects. It provides a most vague form of qualified energy, but it should not be construed as guidance. For the most part, the soul is almost completely independent of the monad. One cannot even really say that the experience or quality of the soul is ultimately assimilated by the monad, for the process of assimilation implies consciousness, which is denied the monad on its own level. So the monad can only be described by analogy and correspondence, and only then in the most vague of terms. One can say that the soul somehow contributes to the purpose of the monad, but it would not be quite right to say that the soul contributes to the evolution of the monad, for the monad does not evolve on its own level.

The soul is the unit of human evolution; the monad is beyond evolution, since evolution is a process, and limited to the second aspect of trinity. Furthermore, the monad has no specific existence; the monad simply exists on its own level as a most vague distribution of energy. The only value of the monad to human experience is the distant provision of the ultimate energy (source) of life; and as an object of contemplation, akin to absolute recession.

† Commentary No. 214

The Soul

The soul is the first or primary reflection of the monad into consciousness. The soul is itself a triplicity, functioning on three levels of consciousness. Those three levels associated with the soul form an upper triad of atma-buddhi-manas. Atma provides a quality analogous to the spiritual will. Buddhi is the next lower level of soul-consciousness which manifests as the true (subjective) (spiritual) intuition. Manas is the next lower dimension, the principle of mind. In the case of the soul, manas refers primarily to the abstract or higher mind, that aspect of mind that is unburdened by thought-forms. This upper triad of atma-buddhi-manas is the derivation or reflection of the monad on soul levels.

By correspondence, atma is more directly related to the soul itself; and manas relates the soul to its own reflection, which is the personality.

Also by correspondence, the seven rays relate directly to the three aspects of the human life, to the three aspects of the soul, and to the seven principles of human experience. The monad is the first ray aspect, providing the ultimate thread of unrealized purpose. The soul or upper triad is the second ray aspect, providing the method or process of evolution (consciousness). The personality is the third aspect, providing the means of experience. Atma is governed by the third ray since it is the third of seven planes of consciousness, but as the first or highest aspect of the soul it is also qualified primarily by the first ray. Buddhi is governed by the fourth ray since it is the fourth plane of consciousness, but as the second aspect of the soul it is also qualified primarily by the second ray. Manas is governed by the fifth ray since it is the fifth plane of consciousness, but as the third aspect of the soul, it is also qualified primarily by the third ray. Thus each aspect or element is qualified by one or more of the seven rays, by correspondence and by relativity.

The soul is viewed as the relatively immortal essence that incarnates under the law of karma, time and time again, through the various personality rays. That evolution of the soul contributes also to the evolution of the greater life, for each of the three aspects of the human being correspond (analogously) to cosmic, solar, and planetary manifestations. The human monad is inherently absorbed in the unified and singular monadic life which corresponds to a reflection of the planetary monad on cosmic physical levels. And the human soul is inherently a part of the soul aspect of planetary life, as a group soul that corresponds to the planetary soul as reflected into the cosmic physical plane.

The human soul is the aspect of consciousness, that essence that relates life in the lower worlds to the divine life of monadic and cosmic existence. The soul naturally transcends the earthly worlds of consciousness, yet persists as the totality of integrated experience, talent, virtue, and conscience. As the subjective individuality, the soul reflects itself into the lower regions of human consciousness as a personality that, in turn, functions through several vehicles or bodies. Like the monad, the soul is without sexual distinction; only the androgynous personality is manifested as either male or female.

The soul also exists as a seat of dispassion, uninvolved in personality matters, yet in its own way it is subjectively linked to the quality of personality experience. The indwelling (overshadowing) soul creates the personality (as the soul is a creation or reflection of the monad), and although the soul does qualify the personality more directly than its higher counterpart. The soul remains essentially on its own level, a part (aspect) of the soul is imbedded in the personality instrument to provide the needed linkage and continuity.

† Commentary No. 215

The Personality

As the third aspect of the human lifeform, the personality is formed of several vehicles for manifestation on objective levels. Each vehicle is attuned to a different rate of vibration of matter and functions on some level of consciousness, though the rate of vibration can be raised or lowered within each respective plane. The three aspects of the lower self (personality) are the concrete mind, the astral body, and the etheric body.

The concrete mind is actually the reflection of the abstract mind into the world of form. The astral (emotional) (desire) body is the instrument of feeling, and the etheric (energy) (vital) body (the etheric double) constitutes a matrix of energy which vitalizes the dense physical body. This lower triad of mental, emotional, and physical aspects excludes the dense physical body; but if that physical form were included in the personality, the lower triad would become a quaternary or four-fold instrument.

As the third aspect of the human lifeform, the personality is governed by the third ray, more so as it is integrated, less so as it functions as several uncoordinated elements, each qualified by its own rays. The physical body, for example, is naturally qualified by the seventh ray since it functions on the seventh or lowest plane of consciousness, and by the third ray since it is the third aspect of the personality. The astral body is qualified primarily by the sixth ray since it corresponds to the sixth plane of consciousness; but as the second aspect of the personality, the astral body is further qualified by the second ray. The concrete mind is qualified by the first ray as the first aspect of

the personality, and by the fifth ray by virtue of correspondence with the fifth plane of consciousness. As the personality is integrated, the concrete mind becomes the dominant force or factor, and finally the mind is associated with the personality ray itself.

As the soul continues to reincarnate, it qualifies each personality, in turn, by a particular personality ray. Each of the rays is chosen, according to some pattern or need, until the experience that each has to offer has been fulfilled. Each personality ray qualifies the experience of the personality during incarnation. That relative qualification depends on the degree of development and maturity of the personality ray being manifested. The personality matrix is further qualified by all of preceding experience, by degrees, along each of the seven rays. The personality exists throughout each incarnation as energized or organized matter with a rather primitive consciousness which provides the deep-seated (subjective) motivation of the personality form, while external forces, karma, and various personal energies provide the superficial motivation.

The respective rates of vibration for each of the aspects of the human personality can be adjusted, more or less independently, provided the mind is strong enough and the personality is reasonably well-integrated. As the quality of consciousness is raised, each of the three vehicles is naturally raised in vibration, since each vehicle is made of matter and consciousness moderates vibration. But the vibration of each vehicle is also subject to external forces in the three worlds of human endeavor, depending on the degree of integration and self-composure. Each vehicle may be quite vulnerable to external or karmic forces, so that a deliberate adjustment on the part of consciousness is required for proper resolution. That normal, waking-consciousness is (essentially) the concrete mind, hopefully inspired and qualified by an alignment with the soul, and hopefully not absorbed by mundane consideration.

Accuracy

The spiritual student is urged to be as accurate as possible (reasonable) in all aspects of life in the lower worlds; in the spoken word, in the written word, in thinking (consciously and unconsciously), and in all belief. The reasons for this are to encourage and sustain greater clarity of communication, greater understanding, and closer recognition of truth. Truth (humility) (honesty) (reality) is paramount in the evolution of consciousness; with greater accuracy, some of the problems of illusionary (mundane) existence are overcome.

Accuracy is defined as relative freedom from mistake or error. It suggests (relative) correctness and conformity to truth. Accuracy also implies carefulness and deliberation in realization, thinking, and expression. Naturally disciplined (inspired) thinking and expression (verbal or written) is a boon to the spiritual student, especially in the sense of manifesting the internal energies (of the silence). Carelessness in thinking, especially when reinforced by carelessness in speech leads to greater dishonesty and continued self-deception. Many persons are so accustomed to the petty, casual lies of mundane experience and expression that they cannot properly discern truth or reality. Thus the illusions of personality-centered existence are sustained and reinforced. But the relatively enlightened student must be careful to realize the relative truth and accuracy of all thoughts and statements generated and thereby contribute more to the cause of good (truth).

One of the real problems of inaccuracy is its tendency to increase in momentum. Small distortions in truth lead to larger distortions. The communication of inaccuracy coupled with the inherent limitations of communication (perception) (interpretation) leads to greater inaccuracy and exaggeration. But what is worse is the effect of inaccuracy, untruth, and exaggeration on unconscious levels. The apparent (superficial) (assumed) validity of all thoughts and statements is absorbed on unconscious levels, so that even a statement known to be false will, usually on unconscious levels, be assumed true by the unconscious. This process of self-deception is only one of many problems associated with the habits of illusionary existence, habits which breed continued complication through glamour and illusion.

So the spiritual student should ever seek to be as accurate as possible in all matters. The senses should be trained for clarity and accuracy, as should the entire temperament and personality. Truth should be valued as highly as possible, and honesty and humility should be valued (highly) as aids to the recognition of truth. Since (realized) truth is affected by perception, the mind and the emotions should be clarified. Habits should be examined for their usefulness, and anything that leads to distortion or inaccuracy should be properly transformed. With persistence, the awareness of the student on mundane levels is heightened and the relative glamour and illusion will be accurately perceived for what it is. The possibility for deception and self-deception will be minimized and the temperament (tendency) toward truth will be encouraged. And the inherent disharmony of inaccuracy will be effectively eliminated.

But all this does not mean that accuracy should be carried to unreasonable extreme. There are few certainties or absolutes in life, and the limitation of words (and perceptions) is considerable; so the student should be as accurate as possible (reasonable) but not needlessly so. One can be quite accurate and still be subject to interpretation and problems of perception. Accuracy should not be considered as an end in itself, but as a reasonable aid toward the identification of (with) truth and the liberation of humanity from its inertia.

† Commentary No. 217

The Second Ennead 2

The second tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled "The Heavenly Circuit," and considers the abstract existence and motions of the heavens (the soul). The heavens reflect the abstract principles of philosophical existence, and from the heavens may be discerned much concerning the nature of the soul and its universality. One of the most potent of abstract concepts is that of motion.

Physical plane motion includes vibration, translation, rotation, revolution, and progression. Each aspect of physical plane (objective) motion has an abstract, subjective counterpart. The soul has no spatial or objective movement, but the

soul can animate matter and therefore involve spatial motion; likewise, the movement of heavenly bodies is a matter of appearance (effect) (animation) rather than consciousness (life) (reality). One should not confuse physical appearance with levels of causation or reality. The circular movement of the heavens (the soul) is spatial only incidentally. The real, non-spatial movement is ceaseless, infinite, and unlimited; a movement of self-awareness in the universal sense; a movement of the soul toward itself (the source) in the most encompassing sense; a movement of eternal and never-ending attainment (approach) (refinement), with only relative degrees of fulfillment to mark the various cycles of reflection (activity) and evolution.

The need for such (abstract) motion is inherent within the nature of life and manifestation. Being (existence) requires motion (vibration) (ceaseless flux); life is movement, the reflected energy of manifestation. Without motion (in the abstract sense), there would be no life or consciousness; and without motion (in the concrete sense), there would be no objective existence on physical, emotional, or mental levels. Consciousness requires interaction, the communication (movement) (exchange) of energy (information). But motion (on both abstract and concrete levels) is opposed (balanced) by inertia (friction) (moderation); otherwise there would be no purpose and no possibility of progression or achievement (expansion of consciousness). Thus time and space (in the lower sense) and motion and being (in the higher sense) are distinctly related to cosmic purpose. Motion (in the abstract sense) is the eternal attainment, the advance toward perfection (universality).

That advance is one of circular (spherical) (abstract) existence and the simultaneous movement of the soul inward toward the center (source) of existence and outward toward the same (inverted) center of existence (as that center is drawn toward the focus of the soul and as the focus of the soul expands). The soul is that advance, an impulse of self-awareness and imperative mobility, a gravitation toward the God (source) of its being. That abstract and subjective advance contrasts sharply with that of the animated form which knows only forth-right movement. The soul remains in the repose of relative stability (the ordered synthesis of ceaseless vibration), while the animated form (personality) experiences the limitations of time and space. The movement of the soul is one of grace; the movement of the form is one of intermittent translation. But an aspect of the soul remains localized with that

animated form, overshadowing the objective existence and experience, while the essence of the soul persists at rest, in the motion (tendency) toward perfection.

The most obvious example of this heavenly circuit can be found within atomic existence (the existence of life within a self-turning atomic sphere). The soul is an atomic sphere of considerable order, while the greater soul (the cosmos) is an atomic sphere on its own level. The motion (distributed energy) of atomic existence is not really spatial (or temporal) but statistical and abstract.

† Commentary No. 218

Geography and Consciousness

Geography is a science that deals with the earth and its life, with emphasis on the description of land, sea, air, and the distribution of plant and animal life; or in other words, a study and description of the surface phenomena of the earth. The spiritual student may very well be interested in the origin of the various surface phenomena of the earth and their relationships to consciousness and the pattern of evolution.

The geography of the earth is substantially related to consciousness, both from the standpoint of evolutionary purpose and from the standpoint of the continued interaction of geographical phenomena with consciousness. The basic geography of the earth is an effect of consciousness, created to form the material foundation of planetary manifestation for evolutionary purposes in time and space. Many interrelated lifewaves pass through the experience of living on or near the earth's surface, and their evolution of consciousness interacts with the geography of the earth in a rather dynamic way. The major lifewaves concerned with the geography of the earth correspond to the mineral kingdom, the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom, and the human kingdom. In addition, the deva or angelic lifewave is heavily involved in consciousness and is related to each of the other kingdoms and lifewaves.

The mineral kingdom provides the basic material framework for objective manifestation. The distribution of mineral lives is related to long-term planetary objectives. Mineral lives evolve very slowly and provide a stable

physical basis for the more frequent cycles of higher lives. Plant lives evolve quite slowly, but interact with the higher lives more directly than the mineral lives. The forms of the plant kingdom provide sustenance for higher life forms (as food for animal and human forms) and the chemical processes of the plant kingdom interact directly with the biosphere of the earth. Plant forms are distributed according to the relatively short-term needs and objectives of planetary manifestation. The higher life-forms (animal and human) are quite mobile and have relatively rapid cycles of activity. The animal and human forms move about on the surface of the planet according to the immediate needs of consciousness. But each of these lifewaves (and their kingdoms) is integrated into the larger framework of planetary experience and energy relationships.

The human life-forms are especially sensitive to changes in consciousness. There are many forms of qualified energy distributed in various ways across the planetary surface. Human forms congregate in various places and serve various functions according to particular needs of energy, consciousness, and karma (on its various levels). The diversification of human lives through various geographical and political regions depends very much on consciousness. Each geographical area (broad or localized as the case may be) has an associated energy character or character of consciousness. Each country, state, region, district, city, town, etc. is qualified in terms of life and consciousness, and the inhabitants relate directly to these conditions.

Such factors as climate, weather, terrain, population character and density, economic purpose, earth changes, etc. are related to various planetary centers of energy and paths of energy distribution. The entire conglomeration of planetary life-forms constitutes a planet-wide network of evolutionary energies on various levels. Each place provides specialized conditions needed or appropriate to the advancement or development of consciousness. And through the evolutionary pattern, forces of karma, and dynamic magnetic phenomena, the various life-forms are drawn into needed places, circumstances, and conditions.

Karma

The law of karma is one of the most fundamental principles, if not the most significant force for evolution. Karma is the law of cause and effect, of action and consequence. As such, karma is the force which sustains the activity of manifestation, allowing divine purpose to be served.

Without karma there would be no motion or movement, no vibration, no activity, no life at all in the lower worlds; for in the fundamental sense, karma is the force of manifestation itself, the force (system of forces) which ties all of manifestation together as a means of experience and expression. Karma therefore promotes evolution and gives meaning to all of experience.

Basically, karma provides the urge toward evolution and enlightenment by serving as a super-personal teacher to each life, creating the experience and lessons and circumstances needed for the advancement of that life. From another point of view, equally valid, karma is simply the unresolved or unfulfilled personal force (or energy). For every action there is a sending forth of energy which must be resolved in one form or another, and simultaneously give meaning to the cycle of energy. The returning force may be delayed in time and space, and it may be transformed into any of the various forms or levels of force, so that the end result is a meaningful learning experience (or opportunity) for the individual who sent forth the energy in the first place. This process of action and consequence is complicated since each person is continually sending forth energies to be fulfilled and those energies are superimposed (and interactive) to create a continuous stream of returning energy. Thus karma is said to be the sum total of all unresolved personal energy at any given moment in time.

Karma is therefore a complicated and dynamic interaction of a continuous stream of causes (action) and effects (consequence). Furthermore, if a particular aspect of unresolved energy could be isolated, it would be seen to be modified in time by subsequent causes (experience). A particular consequence, for example, might be lessened or modified as a result of newly acquired understanding. Karma is not merely retribution for action; it is meaningful (earned) and serves

evolutionary purposes. If a particular lesson is learned, there is no need for further consequence and the energy is fulfilled. The majority of karmic energy (effects) is received and assimilated unconsciously. As the spiritual student advances in awareness and consciousness, the process becomes more conscious and much more rapid. When an individual realizes he is responsible for all of his own actions, then the karmic process becomes much more potent, since the learning process is more direct as action and consequence are properly associated.

But in the early going (in lifetimes prior to being placed upon the spiritual path), an individual sends forth far more energy (causes) than can be fulfilled at the same rate or even during the same lifetime. Therefore, each individual accumulates karma during most lifetimes, working off as much as possible according to the degree of experience and consciousness attained. As the individual evolves, it becomes possible to assimilate experience more readily and the accumulated (earned) karma can be resolved or fulfilled at a greater rate. The turning point comes when the individual consciously begins to moderate or discipline his actions, so that the vast stream of unconsciously generated force is tempered by intelligence and discretion. Ultimately, at some point along the spiritual path of conscious evolution, the student works off (fulfills) the last of the accumulated karmic force, and from that point onward karma is fulfilled at approximately the same rate that it is generated.

† Commentary No. 220

Meditation and the Seven Rays

Before the student can consciously, intelligently, and safely evoke the energies of any of the seven rays, the student must have a reasonably thorough understanding of each of the rays and their relationships with each other, and the student must be in reasonably good control of his own faculties (with an understanding of his own strengths and weaknesses). Once the student has achieved a basic understanding of the seven rays, it becomes prudent for the student to contemplate and study each of the rays via meditation.

The student should begin by studying each of the rays in turn, and each of the keywords for a particular ray, one at a time, so that the various keywords are

understood and consciously (and unconsciously) associated with the appropriate ray. Then the various keywords for a particular ray should be associated with each other. Once this has been done for each of the rays, the student should meditate on each ray (in turn) as inclusively as possible, considering the nature and character or qualification of the ray as a particular type of energy. As this form of meditation is achieved, the student is actually evoking the energy contemplated, with nominal intensity, so that the student is actually learning to function with that particular energy.

The next step is to study and contemplate the relationships that exist between the various rays (planes) (kingdoms) (cycles), since it is not really safe to work with a particular ray without understanding its relationships. In working with a particular ray, there are usually effects along lines (via relationships) that should be taken into consideration. The student can easily and unnecessarily complicate his life by working with energies before they are fully understood, and since the student is held accountable for his actions (and the effects of evoked energies), he is wise to proceed slowly and cautiously. When the relationships among the rays are understood, and when the student has mastered his control of the nominal energies, those ray energies can be evoked and guided toward useful, constructive purposes.

Each of the rays has essentially unlimited application for its energy. The student can evoke a particular ray energy during meditation and channel it wisely toward almost any useful application. The rays may be used internally for purposes of personality cultivation and refinement; for the development of needed qualities; for more perfect integration and alignment; and for deeper understanding of life and consciousness. The rays may also be used externally, being sent forth in conscious support of humanitarian or spiritual activity. As the spiritual student progresses, he is expected to contribute more and more to evolutionary patterns. When the student becomes adept at working with the various ray energies, those energies will be naturally and automatically evoked as needed throughout the activities of life in the lower worlds, whether the student is fully conscious of that current process or not.

The student then becomes a potent channel for the distribution of the subtle energies, interacting consciously and subconsciously with the environment without being absorbed by it. That interaction is one of sharing energy

wherever it is needed, without thought of self. The student should never be at a loss for energy, so long as he is properly polarized and sincere. The student who lacks the basic alignment of mind and soul, who fails to achieve the necessary humility (prior to evocation) will have problems. But, as long as the head-centered nature (of invocation and application of the rays) is subordinated to the heart (the soul or higher self), the student should find no real difficulty in working with and controlling the various ray energies.

† Commentary No. 221

Priorities

The spiritual student is in a rather unique situation with respect to his personal values and the priorities of his life, when compared to the bulk of humanity. The values and priorities of most of humanity are determined by karma and the mundane conditions of life in the lower world. But the spiritual student recognizes higher values and comes to realize greater responsibilities than most of humanity. These responsibilities (and corresponding priorities) may be difficult to resolve, and quite likely misunderstood by most of humanity. But for the spiritual student to live an effective and useful life in the lower worlds of activity, it can be quite helpful to recognize and understand an order of priorities as a form of guidance.

The highest priority in the life and consciousness of the serious spiritual student can be associated with God and the spiritual path itself. God is the logos on whatever levels are meaningful to the consciousness of the student. God is life in the highest sense, and as the highest aspect of conceived existence, it must necessarily receive the highest priority, subjective and elusive as it may be to most of humanity. To the esoteric student, this priority is quite real, if not the most real. And the spiritual path itself is the most practical aspect of God with respect to the spiritual student. When the soul makes its commitment to the spiritual path, it is a solemn and serious realization of this first and highest priority.

The next lower level or priority for the spiritual student is relatively broad, encompassing the soul, esoteric group relationships (on soul levels, not on

personality levels), humanity, and the various lifewaves. Again these are mostly subjective priorities, yet nevertheless real and meaningful to the spiritually polarized student. The student must ultimately recognize and accept his responsibility to (as) the soul to be greater than anything of mundane significance. As the spiritual student becomes firmly committed to the path and to the soul, all other matters are subordinated and placed into proper perspective in relation to these higher priorities.

The next lower level (priority) for the spiritual student encompasses the realm of ordinary responsibilities: domestic, professional, and personal. Once the higher priorities are recognized and accepted, all of the domestic, professional, and personal priorities should fall nicely into place. Even though far higher priorities (responsibilities) (obligations) exist, they are usually no excuse for neglecting or ignoring the lower responsibilities. In fact, one of the nice things about the spiritual path and all of the implied obligations is that this entire hierarchy of priorities is self-consistent, and usually without conflict (provided a commitment has been made to the path). Apparent conflicts can be resolved, with common-sense (wisdom), hopefully without recourse to an independent or separative mind (personality).

National and racial concerns are not incorporated into this hierarchy of priorities for the spiritual student. Humanity has reached the point where these national and racial responsibilities are not merited for the spiritual student. There may still be problems for humanity regarding nation-states and the various racial expressions, but these are dealt with as problems of the lifewave, not as responsibilities of the particular spiritual student. But the priorities of the spiritual student can change temporarily with particular (presential) needs and circumstances, but for the most part, the esoteric student is concerned with the broader perspective, which leads ever back to the highest priority, to God and to the spiritual path.

The Second Ennead 3

The third tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled "Are the Stars Causes?" Plotinus considers the science (and myths) of astrology. Many of the popular misconceptions and misunderstandings concerning astrology are clarified. Many people find popular astrology to be appealing because it seems to allow them to avoid the responsibility for their own actions. But in truth, each person is fully responsible for his own actions and their consequences. Astrological forces work in complete harmony with karma to impel (not compel), and the recipient of those forces is quite fully responsible for his responses.

Plotinus affirms that the passages of the heavenly bodies (lives) indicate definite influences, but without being direct causes. Each of the heavenly lives has an associated position, motion, and (stable) character. But the energy (forces) (radiation) (communication) from those lives is modified by static and dynamic relationships and the medium through which it passes. The resultant blend of energies works upon the material (physical, emotional, and mental) nature of the personality, depending primarily on the quality of the individual's consciousness. The soul is the real (direct) cause of energy for the personality, but if the personality is not responsive to the soul, then it is necessarily responsive and vulnerable to the external forces (karma through astrological force). In the enlightened personality, the soul provides the needed guidance directly, and the individual becomes much less vulnerable.

It would be very wrong to associate human characteristics with the various heavenly bodies; from their point of view, their effects on humanity are quite incidental, and certainly those effects on the human personality are dependent entirely on the individual's human nature, the original energy itself being far removed from human consideration. Thus astrology is really a science which studies the effects on human (personality) levels of external (non-human) energies. Consequently, Plotinus does not challenge the ancient science (astrology) itself, but he does rightfully challenge the popular misconceptions and misinterpretations. It would simply be too easy (and wrong) to blame external forces for earned consequences.

Divination is explained by the unification and relatedness of all things within one whole, from the macrocosmic to the microscopic. The soul is actually an intermediary between the lower and higher domains, and functions (analogously to the heavenly lives) as an independent (interdependent) (individual) source of motion (energy) (influence). Along with the soul, karma provides another common thread which ties all of life and consciousness (experience) together. The law of justice (karma) actually relates every action in the universe, however significant. Through karma, virtues (blessings) are considered as gifts of the soul (based on experience) and vices (difficulties) result from absorption in outer (mundane) matters (which are also based on experience).

While the relatively unevolved (working on personality levels) are impelled (influenced) somewhat by external forces, the relatively evolved cooperate with those available energies for constructive purposes. The material forms of the personality are recognized as useful instruments for higher purpose, naturally impelled by (vulnerable to) external forces (a contributory environment). But as the soul's energy begins to play upon the lower forms, the energy (guidance) of the soul predominates. Human conditions are then (still) determined entirely by karma, as (through) a blend of external forces and the interaction of freewill with those forces; but the creative soul becomes supreme, and the external (astrological) forces are utilized intelligently, as needed.

† Commentary No. 223

Abstract Thinking

Though the spiritual student is usually and rightfully concerned with practical philosophical and spiritual matters, there remains considerable value in the exercise of abstract thinking, provided that the concrete or lower mind has been sufficiently developed. Most of humanity are presently concerned with emotional control and concrete mental development, while the spiritual student is more concerned with personality integration and the alignment of personality with the soul. One of the values (merits) of abstract thinking is that it contributes substantially to the alignment of soul and personality and the consequential flow of soul energies into the lower self. But this all supposes that the concrete mind is properly developed and responsive to the soul.

If the lower mind is not sufficiently developed, abstract thinking may even be counterproductive since it may discourage the concrete mental training. But if the concrete mind is already reasonably developed, then the exercise of abstract thinking will naturally complement and encourage a more responsive concrete mental development, especially where spiritual motives prevail.

The primary value of abstract thinking is in the training of the concrete mind to work in close and responsive cooperation with the abstract mind. This activity generates a number of helpful byproducts in addition to the mental training itself. The development of a number of useful qualities is quite naturally encouraged by abstract mental efforts; qualities such as broadmindedness, inclusiveness, tolerance, reasonableness, creativeness, and understanding. Abstract thinking leads to an expansion of the focus of the mind such that the resulting perspective is broad enough and inclusive enough to allow the recognition of relationships and concepts (truths) otherwise impossible. Thus, abstract thinking leads to a greater awareness and a deeper understanding of life and consciousness (experience).

Desires prevent the recognition of truth, but in abstract (impersonal) thinking the mind rises beyond desire (and critical thought) into a realm of unimpeded and undistorted truth. The mind then stands clear from the senses, and realization prevails. The exercise of abstract thinking itself is a function of buddhi-manas, a linking of the spiritual intuition and the enlightened mind. So the exercise itself also fosters the manifestation of the intuition through a trained and responsive mind. In fact, the intuition cannot work properly unless the mind is suitably developed. Likewise, understanding or realization achieved on abstract levels cannot be properly brought down to the levels of brain-consciousness unless the concrete mind is properly aligned and free from personal energies. The concrete mind must be trained to interpret the higher energies properly, to translate those higher (formless) thoughts into the accurate concrete thoughts (thought-forms) needed by the responsive personality.

Many (impersonal) human studies can lead to the proper exercise of abstract thinking: such as mathematics, theoretical physics, abstract philosophy, art (in its various forms) and symbolism; and any meaningful form of imagination, visualization, conceptualization, or creative ideation. Some powerful objects of

contemplation and abstract thinking include the nature of time, the reality of God, the nature of impersonal love, the purpose of life, the meaning of truth, the significance of consciousness, etc. Through abstract thinking the reality of principles and concepts can be experienced, through the knowledge (realization) of participation in the energies themselves. If the soul is characterized as the deepest ocean, it is the abstract mind that can penetrate the depths, while the concrete mind is forced to remain at the surface.

† Commentary No. 224

Momentum in Meditation

Considerable effort is usually required to bring about momentum in meditation, but once established, that momentum makes meditation virtually effortless and helps to deepen the quality of meditation and consequently the quality of its effects in the outer life. But before a proper momentum can be established, two prerequisites must be fulfilled: the proper integration of the personality and the personal stability that implies self-control and (especially) the proper control of any sensitivities or vulnerabilities. Otherwise, momentum in meditation would be difficult to achieve, and if achieved would be quite dangerous due to the increased potency of energies received. Before the spiritual student endeavors to build any appreciable momentum in meditation, he is urged to turn his attention (in meditation) to the integration of the personality and the achievement of mental and emotional stability.

Once the prerequisites are fulfilled, the student can properly address the patterns for meditation and the cultivation of momentum. The intended momentum is a constructive habit of effective meditation. In addition to sincerity and purpose, an important factor in building momentum is predetermination. If the student is predetermined to meditate regularly and effectively, then that effort of will will actually create the needed patterns and momentum, and at the same time condition the personality for serious meditation. A proper predetermination may consist of a consciously created and sustained thought-form of the intention and determination to meditate regularly and effectively. But care must be taken to seriously fulfill these intentions; otherwise the created thought-form will lose its credibility (potency).

With proper predetermination, a regular pattern of meditation can be established. Two simple but potent factors are the times and place of the regular daily meditations. Since the outer, mundane world is so distracting, regular, daily periods of meditation are needed to renew the alignment with the soul and to shake off the casual effects of the mundane world. A regular, daily pattern of serious meditation is more important than the particular times and place (and duration) of meditation. The student must endeavor to maintain consistency over a relatively long period of time if truly meaningful results are expected. Once the times and place (and approximate duration) are determined, the student should endeavor to maintain that pattern.

The spiritual student should meditate seriously at least once per day, though two or three times per day is preferable. Favored times include early morning (shortly upon rising from sleep), sunrise, noon, late afternoon (5 o'clock), sunset, and in the evening (shortly before retirement). But consistency is more important than the particular times chosen. If possible, a particular place or room should be qualified (dedicated) exclusively for meditation, to further enhance and sustain the pattern and momentum. The duration of meditation is usually determined by availability, but 20 to 40 minutes per meditation period is a reasonable goal. Care should be taken not to force meditation beyond what is reasonable. Any extreme is to be avoided.

Once the patterns of meditation are determined, the momentum should build naturally as the patterns are fulfilled. The times and quality of each meditation period should be anticipated, to further the responsiveness of the personality to meditation. While consistency of the overall pattern of meditation is important, a variety of forms for meditation may be employed. As these matters pertaining to momentum in meditation are fulfilled, the student can expect the depth and quality of his spiritual experience to increase.

Seven Supreme Virtues

One significant aspect of the seven rays is their contribution to human development through the cultivation and refinement of the human personality. In this human sense, each ray provides a particular domain for human experience. Each ray is a field of energy qualified with a certain (particular) character. Each ray can be described in terms of qualities (virtues) and weaknesses; each ray brings with it certain tendencies and opportunities for evolution. As the various weaknesses of a ray are overcome and transformed into the qualities of the particular ray (which provides its potency), the resultant overall character can be described in terms of a supreme (representative) virtue. Each supreme virtue represents the entire contribution of the ray to human development, and implies the achievement of the entire character and maturity of the ray.

The supreme virtue associated with the first ray is humility. The ray itself leads the spiritual student toward strength and self-reliance, but this tends to inflate the ego and its natural self-centeredness. But through this weakness (and paradox) comes finally the supreme contribution of the first ray to human development: a spiritual humility born of strength and a deep respect for others. Similarly, the supreme virtue associated with the second ray is compassion. The second ray leads the student from the personal to the impersonal, from indifference to others to a compassion born of spiritual maturity, showing the way toward union with the greater life.

The supreme virtue associated with the third ray is goodwill. The third ray develops the intelligence and brings understanding, but with understanding comes a necessary and useful discrimination. That discrimination can lead to separateness. Goodwill is the synthetic quality that overcomes separateness and allows the active energies of the third ray to flow properly and purposefully. The problem of the fourth ray is that of extravagance, glamour (deception), and instability. As this fourth ray works upon human temperament, it offers the ultimate quality (supreme virtue) of moderation, leading to synthesis. In harmony and spiritual poise comes the moderation needed to free the student from the attachments and distractions of the lower life.

The supreme virtue associated with the fifth ray is honesty, leading to truth. Along fifth ray lines is found the pursuit of knowledge, but it tends to be narrow-minded and without realization of higher (broader) purpose. The critical fifth ray nature is ultimately transformed as higher truths are recognized and as self-honesty prevails. And honesty in this higher sense is necessary to the realization of truth. So too, is impersonality necessary to the highest contribution of the sixth ray. The sixth ray teaches aspiration, devotion, reverence, and idealism; but with these qualities comes the tendency toward personality-centeredness (glamour) and decision-making based on appeal rather than merit. But the secret (supreme virtue) of the sixth ray (impersonality) lifts these qualities to more meaningful levels; glamour is overcome, and blind devotion to personalities is replaced by higher realization.

The seventh ray experience leads to organization and effective structure (law and order), yet through that experience it is easy to lose sight of the underlying purpose. The student tends to be absorbed by the means as an end in itself. So the highest (human) contribution of the seventh ray is its supreme virtue: a sense of purpose, which brings understanding to the laws and order of manifestation, leading to unity. Likewise, the seven representative virtues lead to ultimate human synthesis: relative perfection, as the student completes his mastery of all seven streams of qualified energy. May each be fulfilled.

† Commentary No. 226

The Sea of Resistance

To the spiritual student, seeking to find and develop inner consciousness, the outer world of physical incarnation may appear to be a sea of resistance to the path of spiritual enfoldment (unfoldment). The outer world of conditions, circumstances, and forces may be considered as a sea in the sense that it is a dynamic, ever changing, flowing field of experience and activity. It is a necessary field of experience because it provides the opportunities for karmic fulfillment and the development of the fundamental personality characteristics. But it is also an absorbing field, for those who function on personality levels (as most everyone does) are consequently absorbed by this mundane field.

This is fine for those upon the gradual path of evolution, and even for those upon the approaches to the hastened path (the spiritual path proper), for the needed conditions are provided and the higher consciousness is not needed. But for those who are committed to conscious evolution, the sea of experience and activity is also a sea of resistance, for it provides a considerable force of inertia to impede the spiritual development and the activity of enlightened, spiritual consciousness through a cultivated and responsive personality. This, too, is by design, for this sea of resistance forces the spiritual student to overcome that inertia. Thus, in paradox, the very resistance to spiritual consciousness provides the conditions necessary for spiritual enlightenment.

But it is an almost monumental task for the spiritual student to conquer this sea of resistance (which is also to conquer the outer, lower self). First of all, the spiritual student begins the quest completely imbedded and absorbed in the sea of mundane existence. The student must therefore be responsive somehow to the need for liberation, and the student must then struggle at great length (years, possibly lifetimes) to achieve some degree of freedom. And in that extent of freedom is found the key (encouragement and guidance) to further progress and refinement (and even some degree of freedom); the spiritual student must continue to resist the almost overwhelming nature of the mundane world (by eliminating all resistance to the higher consciousness).

Any form of involvement in the outer world contributes to the distraction of the spiritual student (and encourages his absorption in the mundane experience), yet some involvement is necessary and unavoidable. The spiritual student usually lives and works in the mundane world, carrying with him as much of his spiritual consciousness as possible. And even those who live in spiritual communities can be distracted by the mundane aspects of their community. So the student must strive to remain ever awake and responsive to the inner spiritual guidance (consciousness) regardless of the demands and distractions of outer involvement. The student must refuse to become completely involved or absorbed in the outer, personality life, regardless even of the demands of those who are naturally absorbed in the outer world themselves.

The spiritual student must strive not to flow with the mundane patterns and lines of force, but rather to flow with the inner, greater patterns and lines of

force of spiritual purpose and enlightenment. The vast majority of humanity (and to a certain extent most spiritual students) are sheep with respect to this sea of resistance. The unconscious and inherent pressure of mundane (personality) experience is quite considerable. But as the God-within unfolds more and more, the alien-ness of the outer life is placed into proper perspective, and the liberated student can increasingly serve humanity with spiritual purpose, as the sea of resistance is fully overcome in the spiritual potency of the God-self.

† Commentary No. 227

The Second Ennead 4

The fourth tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled "Matter," wherein Plotinus suggests that matter is nonexistent. In the popular sense, matter refers to anything within the domain of material existence, i.e., to forms, bodies, things, etc., while Plotinus defines matter in a much more particular fashion as the ultimate base of material existence (through which the various forms are created). As an ultimate base, matter is the recipient of ideas (with respect to forms or archetypes) resulting in material manifestation. For some, matter is the only reality, for its results (as form) are tangible and objective, while the world of concepts is too remote from sense impression to have any real (material) existence. For others, matter is the illusion, for its appearance is merely temporary, and without having any subjective reality, being only the most distant reflection of spirit.

But regardless of perspective, matter appears to exist as the irreducible, simplistic base from which all forms are derived (with the help of determination (creative thought)). Plotinus discriminates sharply between matter (the base) and (derived) forms. Matter (in the ultimate, basic sense) is eternal, immutable, indeterminate, continuous, indefinite, sizeless, invisible, boundless, and evil (in the sense of being empty of life or consciousness).

Matter can be impressed upon and compounded into atoms, elements, and greater forms. Matter can be differentiated and it can exist on the various levels of consciousness. Furthermore, matter accepts shape and other attributes, without those qualities or attributes being associated with matter

itself (the qualities can only be associated with the forms impressed or created in matter). Matter (darkness) is the object of determination (reason) (light). Idea is the outside power which brings all that even appears upon matter.

Forms or bodies on the other hand (matter in the more general sense) are reducible, compound, and attributive (having magnitude, shape, color, etc., and some relative existence). But the primordial matter constitutes a void of non-being, existence without magnitude or direction, without quality, the recipient of spatial extension, an illusion common to all elements, and without stability (in the sense that matter is always available, responsive, driven by positive force), ceaselessly changing its form. Primordial matter is related to space, but only esoterically does matter experience anything beyond the void (space is not a void, but a living entity). The primordial matter is an absence of life and can therefore only be construed in a negative (empty) sense, while ordinary matter has been impressed by vibration (life) and has some primitive consciousness (light). Primordial matter may be conceived as an energy field which is displaced in some way to permit the existence of material forms, and in that displacement lies the key to the mystery of matter.

In its absence of life, matter (in the primal sense) causes the soul (consciousness) to recoil, and from this interaction (the communication of soul with matter) arises the sense of evil (ignorance) and destitution. While basic to all forms, matter introduces its unredeemed evil (emptiness) (lack of being), and of its own kind naturally opposes reason. Yet consciousness must deal with this indefinite, undelimited factor of evil (darkness) in all forms. Furthermore, this material factor underlies action, since it supplies the natural base. The inescapable conclusion then, is that matter in the primal sense does not exist, yet remains a factor to be reckoned with. In the privation of matter lies the key to reality and the eternal struggle of life (consciousness) (being) (existence) with non-being (the void).

Speech and the Throat Center

Speech is one of the human activities associated with the throat chakra. The spiritual student is not so much interested in the basic principles of speech as in the appropriate development, control, and utilization of the throat center, and in the magnetic and superphysical effects of speech. Some of the essential variables or dimensions of speech and the throat chakra are intensity, quality, magnetism, effectiveness, focus, and creativity.

The intensity of the throat center is an indication of the magnitude of its development (not necessarily its quality) and its apparent potency. The outgoing, head-centered person usually has a reasonably well-developed throat chakra, with an intensity or forcefulness of projected energy (speech), and a corresponding impact upon the immediate environment. The quality of the throat center activity is determined by the purity or coherence of the basic intensity (magnitude) (vibration). A high quality of speech (in the metaphysical sense) requires both some intensity and coherence. This coherence is an indication of the ease or natural flowing of thought energies and their transformation through the throat chakra into projected speech patterns. Regardless of intensity, the person who speaks well extemporaneously is one who has developed a requisite coherence in the development of the throat center.

The magnetism of the throat center determines the extent to which an audience responds to the speaker. In the outer world, a speaker needs considerable intensity, coherence, and a particular magnetic rapport with the audience, so that the audience will pay attention and respond to his expression. But such activity (through a well-developed throat center) need have no relationship to higher consciousness. For the higher consciousness to come into play, a different type of magnetism is required, one that rejects the mundane lines of attention and draws forth the attention of the audience along more intelligent lines. This magnetic rapport is more discriminating and less hypnotic. The minds of the listeners should be stimulated rather than dominated, and therefore no considerable intensity is required; in fact, the intensity associated with the well-developed throat center is transformed along more magnetic (and spiritual) lines (without appeal to the personality).

The most important dimension is effectiveness, and effectiveness in speaking depends almost entirely on the quality of consciousness (and how well it can be related through the magnitude and coherence of the throat center). With higher quality of consciousness comes the most meaningful (and conservative) utilization of speech as a channel for spiritual energies (encouragement). The activity or role of the throat center is essentially the transformation of thought energies into speech energies and their projection. With proper consciousness (and understanding) those energies are projected quite effectively and constructively, without interference and with discretion (wisdom).

Effectiveness in speech is also related to the proper focus of the throat chakra. If the center is not properly focused, the corresponding energies will be weakened and scattered. The focus of the center is also related to the inherent creativity of the third ray (throat) center. That focus is involved with the creative energies projected as speech (creative invocation, evocation, communication) as well as those which do not involve speech. The throat center is an important center for the speaker, the teacher, the healer, and the artist (and the spiritual student), who functions creatively. But the spiritual student ever needs to exercise discretion in its use, for it is a difficult center to control effectively (and without exaggerating the personality).

† Commentary No. 229

Concentration

An important prerequisite to effective meditation is the ability to properly concentrate. Much of the cultivation implied by the spiritual path involves mental training and discipline, and much of the service required of the spiritual student involves exercising the mind that has been properly prepared. Thus the ability to properly concentrate is central to both development (cultivation) (refinement) (progress) and service (sharing) (expression).

Concentration usually refers to the focus of the waking-consciousness, specifically to the gathering or direction of consciousness (attention) (awareness) to a single and well-defined point of tension. That point of tension is simply the object of concentration. The object may be a symbol, a keyword, a

tone or concept, a visualized or perceived object, or anything that the mind can be concentrated upon. The act of concentration should be useful and constructive, i.e. the act or object should have some meaning. Concentration is characteristically an occult exercise involving (primarily) the various odd-numbered rays. There are many outer (mundane) world activities (governed by the occult rays) which involve concentration and strict mental discipline. These outer world activities are quite useful in the sense that they prepare the mind of the student for the rigorous mental training implied by the intermediate reaches of the spiritual path. Those who have followed primarily mystical approaches are particularly encouraged to exercise the mind through concentration as a form of meditation. And those who have followed the more occult (head-centered) approaches need the meditative discipline as well, so that the process of concentration can be removed from its attachment to outer world objects and effectively applied to more useful spiritual purposes.

The real key to concentration (for the spiritual student) is the ability to concentrate the mind without recourse to an object. The intention of concentration as a (spiritual) meditative discipline, is the development of the ability to hold the mind steady (with considerable poise and detachment) and focused for a considerable period of time, for the student to actually become mentally absorbed in the object or act of concentration. The ultimate intention is concentration upon the focal point (of concentration) itself. With an object of concentration, the concrete mind usually predominates and the higher mind (of the soul) need not be present (active, albeit subjectively). But if the object of concentration is relatively abstract, or if no object save the point of focus is present, then the higher mind (and intuition) can be brought into play.

One of the benefits of concentration is the ability to properly and effectively focus the mind during meditation. Though meditation itself need not utilize concentration in any formal sense, the focused mind leads to a much more effective interaction with the energies of meditation. A properly focused mind leads to understanding and increased awareness (consciousness) and a more enlightened direction of metaphysical energies. The minds of the majority of humanity are not focused; they are more or less passive centers of scattered (relatively incoherent) mental endeavor. Without a properly focused mind, it is not possible to achieve liberation from the lower glammers and illusions.

The spiritual student must be able to think independently (from the lower form of mass-consciousness) (by virtue of an intelligently focused mind) and at the same time remain responsive to higher impression (guidance). With the ability of the enlightened and responsive spiritual student to hold the mind steady in the light comes considerable freedom from mundane forces (distraction) and considerable momentum for further progress and meaningful service.

† Commentary No. 230

The Extroverted Personality

Most human personalities can be generally categorized as being either introverted or extroverted, according to the extent of apparent interest in and interaction with the objective, outer world of ordinary human experience. The extroverted personality is usually quite easily absorbed by (in) the outer world and is therefore rather interactive with mundane conditions (with a tendency toward being reactionary). The extroverted personality tends toward unreserve, communicativeness, talkativeness, sociability, outspokenness, and unrestraint. The extroverted personality lends itself to personal expression, to activity, involvement, accomplishment, and the exaggeration of the personal self (ego).

The primary advantages of the extroverted expression (as the spiritual student is concerned) are accomplishment, acceptability, active experience, and expression (the development of needed abilities and the expression of appropriate energies). But the disadvantages of extroversion, though quite insubstantial to those who are not upon the path, are considerable for those who are on the spiritual path, for the extroverted personality is so easily absorbed (deceived) (distracted) (corrupted) by mundane experience. While the extroverted experience accomplishes a great deal in the basic development of the human personality, it is usually at the expense of the inner life and quality.

The extroverted personality may be viewed as a stage through which each person must pass, to develop the needed abilities (and to learn how to express those abilities) and strengths, as a prerequisite for further development and refinement along more introspective lines. Extroversion is defined as the habit (process) (pattern) of directing the attention (the waking-consciousness) toward

and obtaining gratification from the external world (of things and objective experience) (from what is outside the self). Extroversion, as a necessary stage of experience, is implied in the obligatory pilgrimage into matter. Through that pilgrimage, self-consciousness is achieved and development along personality lines is completed. But continued extroversion (without moderation) is merely the exaggeration of self-consciousness (and the personality) and the denial of the inner life (reality) in the illusion of objective experience.

But this is not to say that there is no place for extroverted experience or expression in the life of the relatively mature spiritual student. There may be times and circumstances which appropriately call forth the spiritual student into particular and deliberate involvement in the external world, but always (hopefully) with inner guidance and outer restraint, as the external involvement is properly tempered by the inner rapport and wisdom. The spiritual student is (relatively) welcome to play whatever useful role is called for in the external world, provided that such a role can be played honestly, without compromising the spiritual integrity, and without leading the student to any substantial absorption in mundane or personality matters.

The spiritual student who finds himself blessed with a well-developed extroverted personality would do well to channel his energies more through creative meditation than external involvement and to abstain from idle speech (even from sociable but petty conversation) in order to place his abilities in perspective. Absorption by personality-centered conversation leads frequently to the demise of the extroverted personality (the rendering of the personality virtually useless with respect to spiritual awareness and higher consciousness). Such is the danger of involvement in matters of personal (personality) interest, a danger that encourages the student toward self-mastery and freedom from the concentration upon the worldly values and objective experience.

Respect 1

The spiritual student (and especially the disciple) is expected to demonstrate (at least subjectively, if not outwardly) respect and consideration toward all other lives. Any form of disrespect or discourtesy is an indication of failure to achieve or exercise that natural disposition of poise and equilibrium intended for all whose lives belong on the path of unification. And yet the cultivation of respect (consideration) is usually quite difficult because it involves a measure of humility and a dampening (refinement) of the ego. It is especially difficult for those upon the first ray, the fifth ray, and the sixth ray, and for the strong head-centered individual in general.

The concept of respect (in its metaphysical or spiritual context) is quite broad, but basically it refers to the recognition of the worth of a person (or life), regardless of appearance. This is justly due on the basis of the soul itself which is common to all lives and indicates the inherent nobility and divinity present within all, however manifest (or lacking in appearance or expression). This concept indicates the need for respect for others' values, methods, consciousness, experience, preferences, and perspectives. In short, it means the acceptance of others and the recognition of their divine right to self-determination. It means the elimination of imposition (not to mention self-centeredness).

The spiritual student who has developed the mental abilities and who has gained some (possibly considerable) insight into the nature of life, may also develop the tendency to view his own perspective as superior to that of others, but that kind of determination is invalid at best, since his perspective is only meaningful to his own consciousness. It cannot be completely valid for any other, and to suppose that it is a matter of disrespect (narrow-mindedness) (self-centeredness). If even the enlightened student feels he knows what is best for another, then he has overextended himself and has constituted a violation of rights. For others necessarily have different needs, different values, different standards, different experiences, even different paths.

So it is well for the student to mind his own business, to help where help is called for (in the form of discreet encouragement), but to refrain from imposition or interference, even mentally. It is not the role of the student (enlightened or otherwise) to judge others or their actions and experience. The spiritual student needs to express sincere compassion and understanding and respect for the life, disposition, and experience of all others. This respect does not necessarily mean admiration or even liking (the student might do well not to like or dislike), but it does mean the expression of love in a very mature, impersonal form. In fact, respect might even be considered (in some ways) the head-centered analogue to love, or at least a manifestation thereof.

This concept of respect has other implications, including self-respect and respect in a group context. Self-respect is a necessary and proper respect for oneself as a human being (as a soul) and a modest regard for one's own position. Respect in a group context is broader, more complicated, but nevertheless a vital parallel to the respect of one life for another. Groups frequently acquire characteristics analogous to those of people, and therefore due respect should be afforded by the spiritual student in the regard of any group of people. Groups likewise need to exercise consideration for individuals, whether or not present in the group. And groups need to exercise a healthy regard (reticence) for other groups, regardless of temperament, methods, or values; for each contributes to the whole in its own (meaningful) way.

† Commentary No. 232

The Second Ennead 5

The fifth tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled "Potentiality and Actuality." Actuality means the quality or state of being real, active, or existing in fact and not merely potentially. Potentiality indicates the ability to develop or come into existence (actuality). But Plotinus considered these terms as abstract entities as well as practical ones. A sharp distinction is made between actually existing things and potentially existing things (or more correctly, things existing potentially). Actuality indicates a really existent entity (depending on reality), while potentiality exists as a mere pattern (impulse) (intention) (archetype) for some subsequent (future) existence.

Actuality is prevalent on higher levels of consciousness and to a certain extent on ordinary levels (depending on perspective). But potentiality does not refer to the higher order of things in Plotinus' view, for the higher order exists in actuality (being), while the process of becoming is restricted to the lower order. And this is true for the lower order with respect to the higher. From the lower perspective, the higher realm is entirely subjective, and existence in that higher realm even resists actualization (since time-dependent processes are precluded) (on that level). The higher order therefore depends upon the lower for the development of potentiality into actuality (the development of matter into form), and that higher order (the realm of the soul) actually (subjectively) impels the lower order toward its fulfillment.

Potentiality is specifically related to the proposed or intended actuality. It refers to the present existence (base or prior form) and to the intentional conclusion of its becoming. Becoming refers to the relative acceptance of change (growth) (fulfillment), while potentiality indicates a capacity for change. According to Plotinus, whatever has a potentiality must first have a definite character of its own. Its potentiality will then consist in its having a reach beyond that character to some other. This is the entire basis of evolution (epigenesis). The cosmic powers are merely evolutionary (productive) forces involved in the (never-ending) process of achievement of potentiality. Potentiality however, is not the power itself. Potentiality indicates actuality, while the power of potentiality (a reality) leads to actualization.

Potentiality and actuality are analogous to matter and form, respectively. An actualized entity is a combination of matter (potentiality) and the impression of idea upon matter, but a clear distinction is made between actualization (the process) and actuality (the abstract). Matter serves as a potentiality (non-being in itself, but a necessary ingredient in the actualization process). Matter is not of the order of the form it is to become. In this sense matter is not the form, but the potentiality of everything, and therefore the actuality of non-existence. Anything that has potentiality is actually something else. But these matters are occluded by time-dependence.

With time-dependence, the potentially educated person is not the same person fully (actually) educated. In any discrete (objective) view, they would appear to be the same life at different levels of experience, the latter having actuality

while the former exists no longer (except conceptually). But it is a greater reality, that life is an integration of all existence (past, present, and future). In time-dependence, things are seldom as true as appearance would indicate. Without recourse to time, the mind exists as a potentiality through which a person becomes knowledgeable. But potential is led into realization by an external (internal, but superior) force. The soul (not being a potentiality) is that force or power toward actualization.

† Commentary No. 233

Organization

One of the great marvels of nature is found in the sweeping patterns of organization throughout manifestation. This teleological universe is filled with meaningful patterns and structure to support the expansion and assimilation of consciousness throughout experience and expression (intelligent activity).

The magnitude and interdependence of universal organization is staggering to the ordinary mind, yet that pattern of organization is vital, necessary, and natural to the entire grand scheme of evolution. Universal manifestation is key to the interaction (communication) of forces; of spirit (life), consciousness (quality), and matter (appearance). Any manifestation requires some sustaining structure (pattern) (organization) for continuity and endurance. Universal manifestation is no exception (with its great magnitude, diversity, complexity (simplicity), and multiple purpose) and therefore the evolutionary patterns (and underlying organization) provide the framework for all that exists.

But that greater organization has a number of pertinent qualities and attributes worthy of reflection and incorporation on more human levels. That organization is streamlined, efficient, and natural. There is no unnecessary organization or structure to burden the evolutionary processes. In fact, the various patterns of organization are relatively time-dependent and encoded with purpose. These patterns come into play when needed and for the appropriate (intended) duration. When a particular purpose has been accomplished, the supporting patterns are fulfilled and withdrawn. Thus there is always just enough organization or structure to support and ensure the objective, but not too much. And these various patterns or organization all fall into place naturally; there is

nothing arbitrary in the divine evolutionary plan; everything fits together, each in its own place for its own experience, yet naturally contributing to the greater whole. Or in other words, the intended perfection of universal manifestation is reflected in its natural order.

One of the main keys to evolution is the expansion of consciousness, and although consciousness is veritably subjective, there is still some fine, delicate structure implied. Furthermore, the expansion of consciousness requires a flexible and responsive structure to support and sustain it, for the sake of coherence and relative containment. Without any subtle structure, consciousness would diffuse and scatter without meaning and without relatedness. With too much structure, consciousness would be limited and unnecessarily bound. For evolutionary purposes, consciousness needs to grow and expand, naturally and effectively, with some reasonable degree of control (direction) (purpose) by the overshadowing life. Loosened consciousness is irretrievable. Tightened consciousness is ineffective and useless. Thus moderation and balance are implied in organization (as in all spiritual disciplines).

Organization is not only a binding force holding all of the various parts and aspects together, but it is a relating force as well, for the structure and patterns of organization relate the diversity of elements and constituents together in meaningful (evolutionary) ways. The universe is organized to a large extent by reflection, association, and correspondence. Macrocosmic structure is reflected onto microcosmic levels. All of the elements are associated one with another, each to a certain extent, and rules of correspondence actually govern (dominate) the evolutionary scheme (timing and structure). The coherent unity of all life, consciousness, and form easily demonstrates the natural integration of the logos and its natural creation. And it is the organization that provides this needed interdependence.

Autobiographical Study

Ever needing to understand himself and his experience, the spiritual student is encouraged to implement a conscientious discipline of daily retrospection, in which all of the daily events are reviewed for their significance. The purpose of retrospection is to aid in the assimilation of experience, self-understanding, and the cultivation (refinement) of the personality-instrument. But it is also quite helpful to periodically review the events of the entire (present) lifetime in a similarly retrospective fashion. This review should be performed periodically (perhaps every year or so), as there may be many lessons (and aspects) that are missed by the waking-consciousness at the time, and as the student grows and deepens himself, his perspective changes (broadens) (deepens) and his consciousness improves (expands) so that previous experience can be studied with greater potency (insight).

As an aid to this intention, it may be helpful for the student to develop a formal autobiographical sketch, to be revised and expanded at each subsequent (periodic) review. The student should be careful not to become absorbed in this study, as it must be kept in its proper perspective as a learning tool, rather than a self-centered exercise. Placed in its proper perspective (with a nominal investment of time, energy, and attention), the autobiographical study should prove meaningful, especially to those who have not developed the eidetic memory with a corresponding fully programmable mental interface.

The autobiographical sketch should be as detailed as is reasonable and prudent, as some details may be later realized as more significant. The student might begin by finding a suitable pattern of organization and then writing an overview or summary of each period of time to be considered. Then the details can be filled in as time and study (and periodic review) permit. Suitable patterns might be geographical, residential, educational, professional, or family-oriented. The intention is to divide up the lifetime into natural, logical periods of time which can be analyzed separately (and tied together) as needed. Or if no apparent (natural) pattern emerges, the student might use (almost arbitrary) three or seven year periods. A new chapter or division should begin at each logical or natural phase point (that indicates a change or commencement of activity,

consciousness, etc.). A relatively discrete method should be employed to permit ease of revision and expansion.

An introductory chapter might include an astrological (natal) study, consideration of hereditary and environmental factors, etc., as a prelude to the actual incarnation. Consideration of past lives is not encouraged, as the primary focus of the current incarnation is (or should be) on the present experience and contributing factors. As each period is developed, attention should be given to the growth and development of the physical, emotional, and mental natures; to relationships with persons; to personal philosophy, values, and temperament; to crises and problems; and to any particular experiences that can be recalled. Some effort should be expended to draw forth memories of any blank periods to help the overall sketch (and avoid missing any substantial lessons). Attention also should be placed on motives and decisions.

Throughout the study, the overall purpose of the endeavor should be kept in mind, that the reviewed experience might be properly assimilated and therefore contribute to the growth of understanding and consciousness. The student might also begin a diary of the daily experience, to assist in subsequent review and assimilation. Provided this entire process of autobiographical study is not overdone (or underdone), the effort expended should prove most worthy.

† Commentary No. 235

The Introverted Personality

Though the extroverted personality constitutes a broad stage of experience and development (from the undeveloped and unevolved person to one who stands at the threshold of the spiritual path proper), the introverted personality is usually found in two relatively narrow stages: at the threshold of externalized experience and at the relative conclusion of externalized experience.

The first type of introverted personality is relatively undeveloped (at least with respect to the immediate experience, though it may unfold rapidly) and is often unaccustomed to life in the outer, objective world. It is characterized (generally) as relatively shy, withdrawn, (almost) childlike, oblivious to external experience.

Such an introverted person usually lives in his own self-centered, almost dream-like world, full of imagination, but with no real interest or involvement with the world of ordinary experience.

This first kind of introverted personality can come about through several very different ways. A soul unaccustomed to incarnation may find life in the lower worlds to be quite alien, and will therefore protect or mask the personality until it has time to develop and adjust to its new experience. Some personality patterns may have psychological problems (from previous experience) (or defective equipment) that result in an introverted personality, at least until the problem or deficiency is overcome. Also (in contrast), very highly evolved souls often prefer the introverted personality (of the first type), for awhile at least, to keep it from being easily absorbed by mundane experience, and until the soul can establish the needed rapport with its instrument. Thus, the first type may or may not have an inherent, developed consciousness, but if it has, that consciousness is not being fully expressed or exercised.

The second type of introverted personality characterizes the relatively advanced soul who has already experienced and mastered the extroverted experience. Such a personality has most of the advantages of the extroverted personality with virtually none of the disadvantages, plus considerable advantages inherent in the (well-developed) introverted personality itself. Where the extroverted personality is an exercise in objective, outgoing concrete mental and emotional experience, the mature somewhat introverted personality is an exercise in greater consciousness and the refinement of a highly poised and effective instrument. Such a person is usually quite aware of both external and internal experience; being a highly trained observer with full faculties of assessment and understanding (and creative interaction). Among the important characteristics usually present in addition to spiritual poise, are moderation, a contemplative (introspective) nature, self-sufficiency, detachment (freedom and potency), impersonality, humility, modesty, self-control, respect for others, peacefulness (gentleness), wisdom (discretion), and (inner) strength.

In general, it is this (second type) somewhat introverted personality that is used to bridge between the two worlds (between the external world of ordinary experience and the internal, subjective world of the soul). The self-contained (self-fulfilled) individual turns naturally inward to the soul (through meditation

and contemplation). The reserved, contemplative disposition and temperament are well-suited to the discreet expression of the higher (spiritual) energies to benefit the various evolving lives. The reticence of the spiritual student is vital to the maintenance of freedom from absorption, yet that same reticence need not impair the quiet and meaningful expression of both love and light. The student may be interested in the outer world of (meaningful) human experience, but that interest is demonstrated qualitatively, without drama.

† Commentary No. 236

Spiritual Practice

There is an intrinsic condition implied throughout the esoteric philosophy, and that is the obligation of the spiritual student (and to a certain extent, ordinary humanity) to externalize the teachings wherever practicable (or practical). It is not enough for the student to merely read or study the philosophy; it is not enough to be a spiritual student or even a scholar. If the student expects to progress and to fulfill his dharma, he must actually put into practice whatever aspects and elements of the philosophy (the spiritual way of life) that are understood, accepted, and applicable.

This spiritual practice means the consistent application of ethical philosophy and spiritual principles, the application of meditation as a serious spiritual discipline, the application of right human relations and goodwill, and the right (sincere) (appropriate) expression of the various qualities and virtues, not merely their study or development. This entire process begins with the study and consideration of the various teachings. Sincere study leads (eventually) to understanding or realization (whether rational or intuitive). Once an understanding has been reached, there is the important matter of acceptance. If the student accepts a particular teaching, there is implied the responsibility to incorporate the teaching wherever possible in the daily life (or consciousness). The failure to accept a valid (meaningful or appropriate to the particular student) teaching carries with it its own practical consequences (in the form of encouragement).

The incorporation of the teachings depends on their practicality. The higher (greater) (more abstract) lessons (principles) can only be incorporated subjectively (in consciousness), while the lower (more practical) lessons must be objectively incorporated wherever possible (and reasonable). What is practical is what is capable of being put into purposeful practice. Spiritual practice implies the actual performance or application of principles in the daily life, through (1) relationships with other persons, (2) the mental and emotional life (quality of consciousness and the sharing of meaningful energies), and (3) the exercise of personal (spiritual) values.

Before any spiritual teaching or principle (or virtue) can be truly assimilated (resulting in permanent retention and potency), it must be properly incorporated or externalized. Externalization suggests manifestation (expression) or embodiment. The teachings must actually be embodied within the life and consciousness of the student if substantial progress is expected. Such assimilation is mostly a matter of consciousness, and the continuous exercise of the spiritual values wherever possible (appropriate). The actual process of study, consideration, understanding, acceptance, and application should be continuous (with possibly many lessons being integrated simultaneously).

Spiritual practice itself is a considerable and meaningful learning experience. The spiritual student should be a trained observer, expressing the philosophy with discretion, noting the effects (as realizable), and adjusting the approach appropriately. This implies flexibility and adaptability in the reasonable and intelligent application of spiritual principles. This practice is a personal (individual) exercise, according to individual needs (and consciousness) and experience, and not something to be advertised or imposed upon others. The student who sincerely applies the practical spiritual teachings (and incorporates into consciousness virtually all of the exposed teachings) soon becomes proficient and therefore contributes more effectively to the overall purpose of life (evolution in group formation).

The Second Ennead 6

The sixth tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled "Quality." In the highest sense, quality correlates directly with consciousness (as a principle) and with the soul (as an aspect). But Plotinus uses quality in its ordinary sense (as an attribute, characteristic, property) and in a higher correspondence to that ordinary sense, rather than in the sense of aspectual consciousness. In Plotinus' terminology, qualities are considered in two orders: a higher order in which qualities are real (subjective) (in the realm of the soul) and indicate character (principles) (abstracts) (archetypes), and a lower order in which qualities are merely apparent (in the sense of attributes and characteristics). Of the qualities in the lower order, some are derived from the higher order (and are therefore constitutive) while others are not (and are therefore incidental).

Reality is considered to be the universal fabric (not the material base) in which a number of highly meaningful constituents are present (such as being, movement, identity, consciousness, etc.). Reality is essential to the higher order, but has existence in the lower (only) by reflection. The higher order is a reality because all things are one, while the lower order is merely a sphere of images whose separation produces grades of difference. It just happens that it is this lower order of existence by reflection that is the mundane (objective) (external) world of ordinary human experience. Thus, distinct (separated) human existence is not authentic; it is simply a consequence of descent into the lesser realms.

Plotinus draws a considerable distinction between the two types of qualities in the lower order of differentiated existence. Whenever the quality can be derived directly from the higher order, that quality is said to be constitutive rather than incidental. The incidental (accidental) qualities relate mostly to superficial appearance, and are not needed for the sake of reality. Thus constitutive qualities constitute needed qualifications. There are certain (constitutive) characteristics (for example) which contribute to a person's humanity, and other (incidental) characteristics which do not so contribute.

In a reality possessing a determined quality, the reality and the essence precede the qualified reality. Quality (in the lower sense of attribute) is a condition

added to a reality whose existence does not depend on it. Such a quality (qualification) may be a later acquirement or an original accompaniment. In the absence of quality (in the lower sense), the reality would persist. Qualities in the higher order are more substantial (subjective) (each having an energy existence of its own) than particularities in the lower order. Qualities in the lower order (the sensible realm) do not indicate the very nature of the reality, while the archetypes of such qualities are of a much higher order.

The key to all this rests in the consideration of reality as existence within the principle or abstraction, not in its practical derivation. For example, fire as a principle has a greater reality than the fire of material phenomena. Until this realization is made and accepted (that conceptual realities are far greater than tangible realities), confusion (illusion) will persist. Real existence is limited to the realm of principles and beyond (to the soul and higher orders); everything of a lesser order (such as the personality) is (at best) merely qualified in some way by the higher. The great error (illusion) of humanity is the attachment to qualities (in the lower sense) while losing sight of quality (reality) in the higher sense; the (improper) association of reality with things in the realm of sense impression rather than the (valid) association of reality with the quality of consciousness.

† Commentary No. 238

Mental Organization

One of the challenges to developing humanity (and more so the spiritual student) is the effective organization of the mind. As a physical instrument (of the mind) the brain is very highly developed and organized with considerable and effective internal structure; yet the brain remains under-utilized in almost every case. The mind, on the other hand, is not as well developed nor as well organized as the brain. As is the normal case in development, the mental body is more a sheath than well-defined instrument. Most of humanity have not achieved mental polarization and consequently the mind (and its mental body) of the ordinary person is relatively vague and lacking in organization.

As humanity overcomes the emotional polarization and (Atlantean) consciousness, the mind becomes better organized and a much more effective

(potent) instrument. But one of the tasks of the spiritual student today is the conscious cultivation, discipline, and application of the mind along useful, spiritually meaningful lines, well in advance of ordinary humanity. Not only must the mind be developed through proper exercise, but the student must gain conscious control of the mind and qualify it directly with the spiritual purpose of the soul. Otherwise there is considerable danger in having an overdeveloped (and therefore relatively uncontrollable) concrete mind. So mental development must be balanced properly with the natural (mature) development of the heart.

One of the keys to this mental development is the conscious organization and utilization of the mind. The mind should be trained as a servant of higher purpose, as an organized, effective, and responsive instrument of the soul (rather than the self-centered instrument of the personality). Mental organization begins with mental discipline: through the study of appropriately disciplined subjects; through the exercise of concentration, meditation, and contemplation; through continued personality cultivation and refinement using the mind as an instrument of integration, alignment, and self-control; through the exercise of the student as an observer (with subsequent evaluation and assimilation); and through purposeful (and reasonable) organization of the daily life for more effective use of the time and energies available (remaining ever flexible and responsive to inner (higher) guidance and outer circumstances).

The training of the mind (toward more effective organization) should continue by conscious and deliberate exercise of association and correspondence. This is a very important aspect of philosophical development (leading to deeper understanding and realization), for the fabric (pattern) of evolution (manifestation) is fraught with correspondence and interrelatedness. Therefore the mind should be trained (properly organized) to study and assimilate patterns of association and correspondence, for those patterns (and their mental analogues) provide the mind with the power of relating elements of experience (observation, study, realization), and thereby integrating (assimilating) (synthesizing) the experience into a unified (interdependent) (expansive) whole.

If the mind is properly organized (disciplined) (trained) (cultivated), it will be a much more potent force for understanding. But the mind will also be a much more potent instrument of experience and expression, for it will easily be programmable by the waking-consciousness (and more easily qualified by the

soul). The practical object of mental organization is therefore the ability of the student to consciously and effectively program the mind as a powerful and responsive instrument (of study, understanding, application, and service). The well-organized mind can be a potent instrument of subjective analysis and for the helpful application of spiritual energies.

† Commentary No. 239

Human Energy Balance

The human being in physical incarnation is a rather complex and enlivened mechanism dealing continuously with energy and energy processes. The character and quality of the waking-consciousness has much to do with the overall effectiveness of the entire mechanism. The sources of energy for (individual) human uses are varied. On physical levels, the human being receives (and expends) energy in the form of food and drink, air, light and heat, and (mostly) vital (etheric) forces. On emotional (astral) and mental levels there can be a direct energy interaction with the immediate (astral and mental) environment. On mental levels the student also has an interaction with the soul through which may flow a considerable amount of higher energy (encouragement), from internal sources (from the soul itself) and from external sources (by way of the soul).

The human being is capable of energy reception (input) and expression (output), as well as transformation, assimilation, and accumulation (on each or between each of the various levels). In the reception and acceptance of any form of energy is implied the responsibility for its efficient and effective (constructive) use. On physical levels, the student is urged to eat and drink only in the amounts and qualities necessary or appropriate to the effective use of the physical form. Eating too much causes an unnecessary accumulation (waste) of energy which burdens the physical instrument. Eating too little tends to drain the vital (etheric) body of its natural energies. Thus a balance (and moderation) is implied on every level. Any form of physical, emotional, or mental activity actually expends energy, so the student is encouraged to express himself properly in every way. Some sleep is usually required in order for the vital processes to renew the energy balance of the entire mechanism (due to the expenditure of energy during the waking hours at a greater rate than received).

On etheric, emotional, and mental levels, the energy balance is particularly important because the aura can be highly interactive with its environment. The etheric body is renewed primarily through external (etheric) processes (mostly related to air and sunlight). The etheric body is vital to the health and maintenance of the physical form, so the student should be careful to allow no unconscious (accidental) etheric depletion. Certain superphysical experiences (such as hypnotism) can be very dangerous since they may involve etheric depletion or otherwise interfere with the normal functioning of the vital body. The same is true (to a certain extent) for emotional and mental processes.

Wherever negative energy is encountered (through the acceptance or expression of negative emotions or thought-forms) there is a considerable depletion incurred (a loss of energy that would otherwise be available for constructive purposes). So the student is encouraged to maintain his composure and self-control (aura containment). If the aura is properly balanced and maintained, external energies of a negative character will have little or no effect. It is also much easier to express the more positive energies (thoughts and feelings) through a balanced (healthy) aura (and disposition).

With a healthy mind and healthy (quiet and controlled) emotions (and with some physical discretion) the student should easily be able to maintain the proper energy balance, and therefore be able to express himself in service along any appropriate line. In the field of proper service (that which is not self-centered or involved with glamour), there is a special form of energy renewal, in which no (net) energy loss is acquired, no matter how great the amount of (meaningful) energy shared. Thus the spiritual student (with an intelligently controlled and balanced aura) becomes a considerable instrument of service.

The Objective Work

The spiritual work of the serious spiritual student falls naturally into two aspects: objective work that is performed in the external world (on primarily objective levels) and subjective work that is performed internally (within consciousness) (on primarily subjective levels). Work suggests activities in which energy or effort is expended for some useful (spiritual) purpose.

Spiritual students may work primarily with some aspect of human evolution, or they may work primarily with the animal kingdom or the plant kingdom. Some may even cooperate consciously with the deva lives, though that usually involves more subjective work. The opportunities throughout the evolutionary kingdoms for practical (objective) service are plentiful (many and varied), provided the student is willing and responsive to the opportunities.

Virtually every form of work has its opportunities for collateral or incidental spiritual service, though the apparent magnitude of the actual service may be small, the expended (sincere) effort along constructive lines may be quite meaningful. The student who is employed professionally should look for meaningful opportunities to express some form of spiritual energy (mental or otherwise) in his work or through his working environment. Though spiritual service (proper) is more a state of consciousness than an actual endeavor, the student should respond easily to even incidental opportunities for useful work. The student may also be able to work with or through one or more of the various nonprofit organizations (full-time or part-time) (along religious, educational, philosophical, metaphysical, or humanitarian lines).

The objective work may take any or several of many forms, from actual physical labor for a worthy cause, to objective meditation work to qualify the energies shared in some externalized effort. It may involve the sharing of energy through useful publications, or through teaching, public speaking, counseling, or sharing. It may simply involve the expression of good thoughts and feelings toward all. It may involve financial support of worthy projects (also with discretion) (spiritual students usually live below their means in order to liberate funds to sustain the objective (spiritual) work). It may involve the expression of

kindness toward other lives (human, animal, and plant), or it may involve simply the conscious projection of healing energies (impersonally) during meditation. There is really no limit to the ways and means of useful, practical effort along spiritual lines.

There is also spiritual work implied in almost every aspect of the ordinary (daily) life, through relationships with other persons, or through contact with animal or plant lives. The proper attitude of service (in the sense of spiritual work) is an attitude of helpfulness, without self-consciousness. The student should not be concerned with the magnitude (importance) of the task, nor with any credit or recognition of his work, nor even with seeing the results. To some are given the opportunity of planting seeds; to others are given the opportunity of cultivation and encouragement. The spiritual student should not be attached to his activities, no matter how worthy they might appear. And as the spiritual values (energies) are properly embodied (incorporated in the spiritual lifestyle (disposition)), so shall the opportunity for useful (objective) work be more easily recognized and more effectively accomplished, without any personal consideration. The spiritual student usually has considerable control over his involvement in the outer work, but the student must still cultivate willingness and responsiveness, and the idea of impersonal service in every aspect of the daily life.

† Commentary No. 241

The Superficial Mind

The superficial mind is that aspect of the mind with which most of humanity are familiar. But the mind itself is vastly greater and much more complicated than its superficial interface with the objective world.

The superficial mind is the waking-consciousness that functions as the focus of the mind; the external surface of a much deeper (potent) instrument. The superficial mind (as a mental focus) may be active on virtually any level or dimension of the mind depending on the training and mental capabilities of the student. The waking-consciousness usually resides in the concrete (lower) (objective) mind where ordinary thought-forms are created and projected. In the case of the spiritual student, the waking-consciousness resides increasingly on

abstract (higher) (subjective) (relatively boundless) mental levels, where actual thought-forms can only exist in terms of quality.

Another way of viewing the superficial mind (waking-consciousness) is to relate it to the two depths of mental activity: the super-conscious and the subconscious. The super-conscious (superior) mind is that which exists above and beyond the normal waking-consciousness, while the subconscious (inferior) mind is that which exists below the threshold of normal thinking. The superficial mind remains the focus of the mind, where the mind is brought to bear on some object, whether well-defined (sharply focused) or otherwise (relatively) vague. The concrete mind and the abstract mind are fixed in terms of purpose and level of consciousness. The super-conscious mind and the subconscious mind (as aspects of the mind) are relative because they depend on the nature of the waking-consciousness, which is itself a floating focus (rather than a fixed focus).

The subconscious mind usually includes much of the concrete mind and serves as an unconscious, programmable interface for both heredity and environment. The super-conscious mind usually includes part of the concrete mind and most of the abstract mind, and serves as the correlational mind and as an interface with the soul. The familiar waking-consciousness is only a small (trivial) fraction of the true individuality and mental being. The subconscious (mostly concrete) mind is completely programmable and is usually programmed (unfortunately) carelessly and unconsciously through habit. Much energy can be expended (wasted) through unconscious (subconscious) (subterranean) thinking of a mundane (useless or unnecessary) nature. As this is realized, the student can endeavor to qualify the subconscious experience and learn how to access information or experience gathered unconsciously (whether programmed or otherwise).

Furthermore, the increasingly enlightened student should also begin to work more closely with the super-conscious mind, for it too, can be programmed (though the process is far more delicate (refined) than is the case for the lower mind). The student is urged to (learn to) meditate effectively (truly, without a specific objective or focus), whereby the waking-consciousness can look into the great depths of both subconscious and super-conscious levels. Considerable understanding (and self-mastery) can be achieved by studying these aspects of

the mind, through the practice of holding the mind steady in the light. The subterranean patterns can be thereby revealed and can therefore be restored to more practical purposes. And super-conscious abilities can be tapped for even greater effectiveness. But the student must learn and acquire a considerable amount of self-control, and the mind must be held steady or it (the waking-consciousness) will remain superficial. The waking-consciousness that can clearly reveal the great depths of mental and spiritual (internal) existence is superficial no more, but functions at will through the depths of being.

† Commentary No. 242

The Second Ennead 7

The seventh tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled "Complete Transfusion." Plotinus considers the nature of the complete transfusion of material substance as a prelude to understanding the spiritual transformation of the human personality. The concept of transfusion is contrasted sharply with that of mixing. In the mixing of two or more elements or compounds there is a simple combination of components, with each component retaining its separate existence. The volume (potency) of the product of mixed substances depends on the degree of interpenetration (keeping in mind the vast relative spaces between atoms and molecules), and therefore a reduction or increase in volume does not necessarily indicate a more serious process of transformation or transfusion.

A complete admixture is merely a juxtaposition (mutual, lateral coexistence) of components without any real interaction. Transformation implies the passing from one molecular or energy state to another, and this process may or may not be reversible. But the product of such transformation is merely the same substance in a different form or manifestation. Another concept is that of diffusion (permeation), in which one or more elements are diffused in another (and lost in the sense that the energy is not easily recovered), resulting in a (relatively) permanent modification. That modification may be incidental or highly significant (resulting in an entirely new product) depending on the magnitude and type of interaction (mutual influence).

The complete transfusion of material substance always results in a new product, though it may involve a (relatively) permanent qualification or polarization of elements. Transfusion implies considerable interaction, the coalescence (fusion) of elements into a new, independent existence. The primary distinction between mixing and transfusion is that in mixing the elements are separable and independent, while in transfusion the elements are inseparable and interdependent. Transformation is an intermediate concept, between mixing and transfusion, which simply implies a modification of energy levels.

Each of these concepts pertaining to material substance can also be applied to personality refinement. The personality is actually energized (vitalized) physical, etheric, emotional, and concrete mental matter. Consequently, the personality in its various aspects can experience subtle mixing, transformation, and even transfusion, for the quality or character of the personality depends upon the quality or character (qualification) (polarization) of the matter of which it is constituted. And that matter can be highly interactive and dynamic with respect to the environment, the impression of higher energies, and/or the modification of internal energy levels in general. Mixing is a process that usually describes the relationship of the aura to the immediate environment (since the aura is usually somewhat open). If the aura is not properly regulated and controlled by the mind-soul, then the aura will experience (some) adverse mixing and some transformation of energy levels (e.g., the emotional body can be stimulated to various energy (vibration) levels by external influence). The same can also be induced internally.

But the complete transfusion of the personality suggests a process and experience of more serious magnitude and consequence. In the transfusion of the personality, the soul transforms the qualification and polarization of the (matter of the) personality to greater, more spiritually potent levels, and this process passes beyond mere (reversible) transformation, to a new and different (improved) (highly refined) state of responsiveness (and temperament), in which the personality is infused with the quality and potency of the soul itself.

Types of Ashrams

Esoterically, an ashram is the energy center of an esoteric group. In a slightly broader sense, the ashram and the esoteric group are virtually synonymous due to the influence the ashram has on the group itself.

Each ashram (or esoteric group) is composed of a number of souls so interrelated that the group exists (on soul levels) as a coherent whole, an organism having its own quality and character of energy. In the broadest sense, the lifewave (humanity) is a great ashram of souls. So, too, are each of the seven streams of souls (allied closely with the seven rays) considered great ashrams. But an ashram in the more specific, esoteric sense is a group of relatively enlightened souls conscious as a group and having some particular purpose or assignment in terms of solar or planetary evolution.

Not all souls belong to or are affiliated with ashrams (in this esoteric sense); in fact, (relatively) very few are so associated, for so very few have fulfilled the basic requirements (of experience and achievement resulting in quality) and can function constructively in such a conscious merger of identity (on subjective levels). As the student progresses sufficiently, he is naturally and magnetically attracted to an appropriate ashram. There are basically two types of ashrams, each having its own fundamental rules for admission. The majority of ashrams are organized horizontally within a broad vertical structure of ashrams within ashrams, along ray lines. Each ashram (of the horizontal type) is limited to a relatively narrow range of consciousness. As the members of such an ashram progress, they naturally pass on into the next higher ashram within their ray structure and according to their particular needs and qualifications. Thus, the horizontally-polarized ashrams are relatively dynamic from the standpoint of membership. Graduates of this hierarchical structure pass on into even greater (extra-planetary) levels of expression.

The other type of ashram is vertically-polarized and enfolds a wide range of consciousness, and is also usually organized along ray lines, but with some historical or karmic significance. The karma or history of such a group usually can be traced either to a group of souls of similar character who individualized

together, or to a group of souls of similar character who entered into (or were transferred to) an evolutionary pattern (lifewave) together. Such a group will contain those souls (members) who are enlightened (and consequently fully conscious on group levels) as well as those who are not (yet) enlightened but who are affiliated anyway due to the original karma (genesis) of the group. Such affiliation definitely serves as a magnetic force of encouragement, so that the members are usually drawn early onto the spiritual path. In contrast to the horizontally-polarized ashrams, the vertically-polarized ashrams allow for considerable progression within the same (relative) group of souls. Such is not the case for the more specialized (horizontally-polarized) groups.

The basic requirements for conscious assimilation (incorporation) into an ashram are the same regardless of type: the candidates must be well-established on the path of discipleship and have passed at least the first few major tests of consciousness. In earlier days, the requirements were less stringent, so that aspirants and probationary disciples could be assimilated, but the path evolves and the relative standing (assignments) of an ashram evolve also. Nevertheless, those who are progressing in discipleship are naturally attracted to the appropriate ashram (depending on ray type, temperament, experience, qualification, etc.) and even the vertically-polarized ashrams have been known to accept new members who do not share in the original karma.

† Commentary No. 244

Ashramic Work

Both horizontally and vertically polarized ashrams may be manifested or unmanifested (though vertically polarized ashrams are more likely to be manifested). A manifested ashram is one whose sphere of influence extends as low as the lower (concrete) mental plane. No ashram (in the esoteric sense) extends below the mental plane onto emotional or physical levels. A manifested ashram can therefore establish linkage with the minds of its members (workers) (representatives) who are in incarnation (provided they are responsive).

An unmanifested ashram does not extend as low as the concrete mental plane, and depending on its character, may not even extend as low as the buddhic plane. Consequently, members of unmanifested ashrams who happen to be in incarnation are usually assigned temporary affiliations and work within the framework of both ashrams. Certain ashrams may manifest cyclically as needed.

The work assigned to a particular ashram (or group of ashrams) depends on the nature, qualification, and capability of the ashram and its relationship to the work. Proper ashramic work is performed almost exclusively on subjective levels (abstract mental and beyond) and involves some form of energy manipulation. That energy manipulation may include reception, transformation, clarification, qualification, modification, distribution, and/or transmission. Each ashram is particularly qualified by one or more of the seven rays (usually by primary and secondary rays), which provide the ashram with specific capabilities. The members of the ashram are particularly adept (trained and experienced) in working with the specific (assigned) energies, and they work as a single, coherent, group-conscious organism.

The togetherness implied in ashramic work actually means the merging of consciousness in the group qualification. This by no means implies that these members (souls) function in any objective sense (except by reflection as personalities if they are in incarnation) (but the personalities are not (cannot be) directly involved in the ashramic work (which is limited to soul levels)). As souls the members are interactive on soul levels, without the incapacity of lacking proper preparation (as is the case of the majority of souls), and en rapport to such an extent (subjectively) that there is virtually no awareness of objective manifestation. Besides, ashramic work (proper) does not really pertain to the outer, externalized instruments (personalities), except in the sense that these energies are ultimately passed on to the workers in incarnation and freely distributed on practical levels. Enlightened personalities do serve a purpose, but it is not equivalent to or synonymous with the real (subjective) work of the ashram.

Ashramic work is primarily an extension and fulfillment of hierarchical work and the consciousness of the planetary logos (and to a certain extent of the solar logos and other planetary logoi). Hierarchical work pertains to the overall

evolution of consciousness within the planetary scheme, with some emphasis on human evolution. There is considerable collaboration with the higher-order deva (angelic) lives and to some extent with the group consciousness of mineral, plant, and animal lives. But much of the work involves humanity and the transformation of energy from both internal (planetary) and external (extra-planetary) sources and its liberation (application) for constructive purposes. The hierarchical work deals with these various energies on a rather broad scale (and involves generalized plans), while ashramic work is concerned with the particulars of energy distribution and with specific work (usually along ray lines).

† Commentary No. 245

Peacefulness

One of the accomplishments expected of the spiritual student (aspirant) from the probationary (preliminary spiritual) work is the attainment of peacefulness, both in the sense of inner peace and in the sense of outer peace. This moderate characteristic of peacefulness implies a state of tranquility or quiet, freedom from disturbance (disorder), freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions, and harmony in personal relations. This peacefulness also suggests a disposition (temperament) characterized as calm, friendly, moderate, and pacific; devoid of violence or force, and disposed naturally toward peace. But this peacefulness should also be a dynamic, though moderate characteristic, allowing qualified progress and avoiding the inertial peacefulness (inactivity).

The need for peacefulness (and especially with respect to dynamic peacefulness) is derived from the nature of objective existence and the natural, human tendency of response to that objective environment. One of the most basic aspects of objective existence (manifestation) is pressure. There is pressure implied in the very framework of existence; there is the pressure of physical manifestation (were the pressure removed the objective universe would cease to exist); there is the ever-present atmospheric pressure (and all that that implies); there is the pressure of population; and there is the overall (substantial) pressure of evolution itself. In each case, pressure is a natural condition that leads to tension; and tension is a state (experience) that leads ultimately to a release of pressure (force). And in that release of pressure is intended the progress

(learning) (development) (experience) needed. That release of tension implies adjustment (response) to the particular circumstances (as well as an overall disposition which supplies the response).

The release of tension may occur in any number of ways, with effects (apparently) ill or good as the case may be. The human (personality) tendency is to react to pressure (tension) (confrontation) in an extreme (uncontrolled) (excessive) fashion, with considerable mental or emotional force (and in some cases even physical force). The extreme of violence (whether it be on physical, emotional, or mental levels) is the most uncontrolled (undisciplined) (unworthy) response. The reactionary (personal) (extreme) tendencies of the personality should be transformed into intelligent (moderate) (controllable) responses, where the lesson of the experience can be learned more effectively, and where the independence of the lower self can be uplifted (transformed) into alignment with the spiritual self. The attainment of peacefulness is one of the steps leading to a balanced and spiritually responsive personality. With the proper (natural) disposition (peacefulness), pressure (tension) can be faced in a mature fashion, and the tension can be released quite constructively.

Outer peace should embrace harmony in human relations, or at least (since the response or repose of others cannot necessarily be determined) a sincere and healthy goodwill toward all persons, regardless of their disposition or feelings. This moderate and dynamic peacefulness should be an encouragement to others and contribute (externally) to the working out of the evolutionary plan.

In rejecting the use of force can be found a considerable (spiritual) strength for human progress, but that pacific realization includes sublimation of mental and emotional forcefulness as well as physical patience. The accomplishment of outer peace (peacefulness) complements the simultaneous accomplishment of inner peace. In inner peace is found the spiritual self (reality) and the spiritual potency needed for self-transformation, leading to the latter stages of the path and increased (effective) service to humanity.

The Second Ennead 8

One of the shorter, but more potent of Plotinus' commentaries is the eighth tractate of the Second Ennead, entitled "Why Distant Objects Appear Small." Plotinus takes what might otherwise be considered a rather trivial subject and challenges the very (apparent) reality of objective, three-dimensional existence. It seems quite obvious that distant objects appear reduced in size (magnitude) and close together (less distinct). And in purely physical terms one can easily and satisfactorily explain (rationalize) the phenomenon of diminution. But in philosophical (and metaphysical) terms, the problem is not so easily dismissed, and the physical solution is clearly inadequate.

The problem of three-dimensional (spatial) recession (diminution) involves four conceptual problems: distance, objectivity, perception, and magnitude. In spatial terms, distance implies the extent of separation between two points or objects. In the three-dimensional spatial universe, distance is easily measured and assumed to be a function of physical reality. But distance (the interval between an observer and some observed object) assumes the existence of an intervening space, and in the higher reality of consciousness, space is merely a conceptual existence, and the three ordinary dimensions of voluminous experience are easily overcome (as spatial existence is recognized as having no intrinsic reality). In consciousness, any space serves no intervention; there is no spatial separation (in the greater reality of consciousness).

Objective existence, likewise, has little basis in consciousness. An object is something capable of being seen, touched, or otherwise sensed. Or in other words, the reality (existence) of any object depends entirely on sense perception. Sense perception in itself is a function of objective (illusionary) existence. Thus the reality (appearance) of any object depends upon observation, the medium and method, the perspective, and the interpretation of sense impressions. Furthermore, the perception of any object depends upon spatial parameters and the magnitude of the observation (as opposed to the magnitude of the object). An object may be viewed microscopically or macroscopically, and the appearance (and subsequent conclusions) may differ dramatically. Thus the

spatial existence of any object is questionable, as is any process of perception, colored as it is by intention and consciousness.

Even if an object has an apparent existence that can be perceived from some apparent distance, there remains the problem of size (magnitude) (mass) (bulk) (extent). The reality of an objective magnitude extends to subjective (energy) levels, though the physical magnitude has little significance; the physical magnitude depends on spatial reality and the perception of that quality. For a distant object to appear small is a consequence of the apparent (illusionary) nature. An object may appear large or small according to the position (perspective) of the observer, and there can be no absolute magnitude (size) for any object, since magnitude itself is a relative quality. Objective measurement is an interesting exercise, even necessary to objective experience, but of futile value in any (higher) subjective sense.

The reduction of apparent magnitude upon recession is actually not a function of distance but a function of changing perspective. In consciousness, the perspective can be changed without any physical or spatial movement. Magnitude is known only incidentally, by virtue of perception and the interpretation in consciousness that perception implies. The process of diminution is hardly worth attention, yet it does serve as a means of focus for the discernment of appearance and quality (consciousness) (a higher reality).

† Commentary No. 247

Keywords

Keywords are an important part of philosophical study, and used intelligently can lead the student to a much deeper, more effective understanding of the ancient and eternal wisdom. A keyword is literally a word that serves as a key or device, a means of gaining or preventing knowledge and understanding. A keyword exemplifies the meaning or value of a particular idea, concept, or relationship; a keyword indicates a thread or chain of philosophical (abstract) or scientific (concrete) (rational) (analytical) thought.

Keywords are symbols that represent a considerable amount of relatable information. In one sense, keywords overcome much of the limitation of language, for keywords contain (relate) (potentially) much more information than any verbal description or elaboration in itself (apart from keywords). Each keyword has an associated (intrinsic) energy (philosophical) value, an energy of some basic (fundamental) significance. Keywords are clues, uncluttered by verbiage, that indicate and implicate meanings by association and correspondence with other keywords and the ideas and concepts that they represent.

Keywords arise (derive) from the underlying philosophical (and scientific) framework of universal manifestation, from the grand (natural) (precursory) philosophical system that represents universal manifestation (life, quality, and appearance) (spirit, consciousness, and matter) in all its glory (systematic detail). That philosophical system is eternal (dynamic) and exists beyond language; it consists of the basic ideas and the subsequent or consequent details and relationships which can (in turn) be assigned symbols (keywords) or representation in any language. But keywords pass beyond definition and semantics, for the energy of a keyword is a deeper matter than the word itself. Language serves merely to introduce the concrete mind to the particular thought-forms which lead (in turn) to deeper realization (understanding). Definitions and semantics are only the (superficial) beginning; as more and more relationships are recognized, the greater (deeper) is the meaning embraced.

But without that philosophical system in the first place, keywords would have no intrinsic energy. The energy arises from association, from the deliberate (natural) attribution of a keyword to a particular thread of energy. The system simply ties all (meaningful) threads (ideas) together in a universal (interrelated) fashion. When the (enlightened or responsive) student embraces the body of knowledge that the system represents, any or every aspect of that philosophical system is available (potentially). First the student must develop the capacity for understanding and the ability to embrace the energy of the esoteric philosophy (the system) (body of knowledge). Then it is a simple matter of evocation using the various (selected) keywords to guide the mind in its love (inclusion) of truth (reality).

The necessary human link in this matter is the abstract mind of the soul and its relationship to a well-developed (trained and subordinate) concrete mind. It is the abstract mind that bridges the gap between knowledge and general (universal) understanding. The vision must necessarily be broad-minded, for infinite are the number of relationships that exist between the (selected) keywords. A narrow (closed) (predominantly concrete) mind will be unable to incorporate the associations and correspondences necessary to understanding. But the properly prepared mind can gradually improve its capacity and philosophical capability, as the keywords are studied and (especially) as the relationships between keywords are recognized. The set of keywords simply provides an index (simplification) to the entire philosophical system.

† Commentary No. 248

The Subjective Work

Subjective work along ashramic lines can be compared and contrasted with the combination of objective and subjective work of the incarnated mind-soul. As souls, the enlightened of humanity are involved in ashramic or hierarchical work.

As mind-souls in incarnation, the various workers (aspirants and disciples) are responsible for applying or manifesting the ashramic energies on more concrete levels and thereby assisting in the distribution and fulfillment of the needed energies. The souls involved in the ashramic work proper cannot serve this particular function because they are not externalized (and are not able to function on concrete levels) and because, as souls, they are prohibited from working directly with the minds of men (there are considerable karmic and evolutionary reasons to support this prohibition). Consequently, they depend on the aspirants and disciples in incarnation to fulfill the needed extension and application of their energies.

Unmanifested ashrams work entirely on higher levels without recourse to concrete mental levels, while manifested ashrams do function to some degree on concrete mental levels and are therefore able to impress the minds of their responsive and respective workers. This process of qualification parallels the general release of these energies for all of humanity. The mind-souls in

incarnation facilitate the sharing of energy simply by virtue of their presence within humanity; by responding to the subjective energies (consciously or unconsciously) the aspirants and disciples of the world establish subjective patterns of response and assimilation for others to follow (unconsciously). Thus the embodiment and sharing of these energies by cooperative and responsive spiritual students is a very potent force of encouragement for all of humanity. Workers in incarnation have greater freedom for the application of these energies than their subjective counterparts, because workers in incarnation share directly in the karma and immediate consciousness of humanity. Such would not be the case for energies imposed from external sources.

Much of the subjective work of the spiritual student is performed unconsciously or during meditation. A great deal of work may be accomplished during sleep, when the mind-aura is free from the confines and limitations of the lesser body. A great deal of work may be accomplished unconsciously through the aura, simply through the presence of a spiritually potent consciousness. The student who walks in the light and love is forever sharing these energies subjectively whether the student is aware of it or not. And during meditation, the spiritual student can link up with the subjective energies directly, better qualify himself for their useful application, and consciously begin sharing these energies by projection. The enlightened student still declines to interfere or impose these energies upon others (no matter how great the apparent need), but rather, the student will make these energies available to all who need (and who are receptive and responsive).

The subjective work of the spiritual student should complement and supplement the objective work. The effectiveness of the student is enhanced considerably by the extent and duration to which the student is fully aligned with the soul, and conversely detracted considerably by the extent to which the student is absorbed by personality (mundane) matters. Thus the student is always encouraged to maintain his spiritual repose (alignment) (consciousness) regardless of involvement in objective matters, to perform the needed work, whether it is subjective or objective, spiritual or necessarily mundane, but without absorption in glamour and without distraction in the personality.

Communication

Communication is the process by which information (meaning) (energy) is exchanged between focal points of consciousness, through some common means or system of symbols. The process requires an originator (precursor) (sender), a message (energy), and a recipient (and usually includes feedback). The originator and recipient, as focal points of consciousness, must each be polarized in some common way, or at least have some common ground of experience, in order for understanding to occur. Effective communication implies the accurate understanding of the intended message.

The least effective communication occurs between separated units of consciousness. Separated units of consciousness must rely on discrete means of communication, subject to inaccuracies (misunderstanding) at every stage of the process: the limitations of language, the utilization of words (symbols) that mean different things to different people, the problem of interpretation (and the bias of expectation), and the various problems of personality-centered experience. Such communication (between separated units) can be improved by the establishment of a common basis (foundation) of communication: a common core of experience, familiarity, honesty, openness, and sincerity.

The most effective communication occurs between focal points of consciousness which experience deep, subjective, intrinsic rapport and a harmony of integrated fields (of consciousness) (harmoniously integrated auras, regardless of distance or apparent separation). If direct, rational, and coherent communication can be (first) (properly) established (in the objective sense), based on mutual trust and objective understanding, then that process of communication can be enhanced (and ultimately transcended) by more subjective factors in consciousness. Then the exchange of information can be enhanced by the energy of the exchange and the subjective rapport that exists (consequently) between the respective minds (hearts) (souls) (units of consciousness).

Ultimately, a telepathic rapport can be developed which embraces a continuous exchange of energy, with or without conscious involvement. The exchange of a discrete, objective message (energy) then simply strengthens (confirms) the

energy link between the centers (units) of consciousness, and allows stronger, more subjective energies to flow. In the case of the evolving spiritual student, it is essential for the student to overcome the impediments of the personality in order to achieve effective (unprejudiced) communication. Reactionary tendencies must be transformed into intelligent and intentional (meaningful and reasonable) responses. The fear and vanity of the personality must be properly overcome or eliminated, to allow for unbiased interpretation and more complete understanding. The tendency of the mind to make personality-centered assumptions must also be overcome, for a considerable misunderstanding can arise where implications are exaggerated, distorted, or misinterpreted along personal lines. A complete dedication to truth and honesty in all matters can substantially enhance the communication process.

The process of communication (energy transfer) can occur horizontally (between units of consciousness on the same plane or of the same relative magnitude) or vertically (between units of consciousness on different planes or of different relative magnitude). The communication of the macrocosm with its microcosm is paralleled by man's communication with the lesser lives of his own constitution and with the energies (lives) (forms) within nature. A considerable volume of communication exists within the framework of human experience, of which only a small portion is realized or involved consciously.

† Commentary No. 250

The Second Ennead 9

The last (ninth) tractate of the Second Ennead clarifies the basic principles of the esoteric philosophy, compared with certain teachings of other philosophical schools. Plotinus begins by affirming the simplicity (essential, primal nature) of the trinity. The three primary rays (principles) are referred to as the good (the one) (the first), the soul (consciousness) (interaction), and the intellectual principles (mind) (creative intelligence), respectively.

There are only these three (major) principles (primals), from which all else is derived. The nature of each of the three primals determines all (secondary) distinction. The one (the first aspect) is the absolute primary. The soul (the

second aspect) constitutes a middle ground of consciousness (quality) between divinity (the monad) (the Good) and the lower sphere of the less noble (personality). The measure of the soul's potency is the degree of its absorption in contemplation of divine (subjective) (monadic) existence. That greater vision may be impaired to the extent of the soul's involvement in (attachment to) the lower self. This by no means implies any objective involvement, but suggests a subjective dependency on the integrated experience of the personality. The more potent (well-developed, experienced, older) soul is absorbed by the greater yet able to transmit (subjective) energy (illumination) (guidance) to its less noble self (the personality), while the less potent (younger, less experienced) soul is distracted somewhat by the (need for) experience of the lesser self.

The second aspect (the soul in its broader sense and group context) (the all-soul) (over-soul) provides for the communication of light energy from higher levels to lower, depending on the receptiveness (and intelligence) of lower forms (and lives). Even matter (at the extreme (conclusion) of the unbroken chain linking lesser lives with greater) receives, assimilates, and reflects some light energy. In collaboration with the third aspect (light), the second aspect (love) is also involved in the divine (creative) process. This process (stimulated by the light energy), embraces manifestation (differentiation), externalization (creative activity), and ascension (integration).

The greater soul is sovereign (with respect to the lesser) and immune to the distraction of lesser matters. The life of the personality is derived from the soul; that (personal) life is terminable, while the soul continues eternally (in principle). The higher is not bound to the lower; the conditions of the lower are not communicated to the higher; only the quality developed is communicable to the soul. The immortal (the student who has achieved conscious alignment with the soul) is not troubled by material things, has no attachments in the lesser worlds, but accepts his responsibilities and proceeds with the cause of truth (the spiritual path). The (relatively) more perfect the man, the greater is his humility and compliance (harmony) with the greater life.

The science of invocation, based upon understanding and cooperation with natural forces, has considerable merit; but self-centered (arrogant) invocation replete with various glours (misunderstanding) has little merit. Creation is not a matter of self-assertion, but one of purposeful cooperation with greater

principles. The light of greater existence ever illuminates the lesser, according to the ability of the lesser to recognize truth. Truth stands revealed ever on its own merits; truth requires no assertion. The pursuit of pleasure and personal advantage is inconsistent with the object of life (evolution) (spiritual progress) (goodness) (virtue). In virtue is found the joy of helpfulness (cooperation) in God-centered existence.

† Commentary No. 251

Keywords and the Seven Rays

Every aspect and attribute within the scope (framework) of human experience and beyond is qualified by one or another of the seven (energy) rays. These seven rays (lives) constitute all of manifestation and quite conveniently (naturally) classify (qualify) (organize) all of manifestation into seven fundamental domains. These seven rays can be studied (and understood) by their fundamental and applied nature (properties and characteristics) and by their domain, at least to the extent that the human mind can embrace and associate the various keywords that are naturally assigned to the respective rays.

Thus the seven rays (manifestation) can be understood (by degrees) by studying the various associated keywords and the relationships that exist between the rays through the correlation of keywords. Once a student has mastered the basic concepts involving the seven rays and has accomplished a comprehensive study of the rays (and has achieved a considerable understanding based on a well-developed mind and a balanced ability of discernment), it is a simple matter to recognize any word or concept as it relates to any one or more of the seven rays. Thus even words hitherto uncorrelated can be easily assigned to their proper places within the divine (natural) taxonomy of the seven rays.

However, in the natural assignment (realization) of keywords there are two governing principles: a uniqueness principle and (paradoxically) a conformity (plurality) principle. Each keyword can be uniquely (singularly) assigned to only one ray in the most basic, intrinsic sense. Or in other words, each keyword can be conclusively assigned to its (singularly) natural ray, according to its intrinsic character. But, at the same time, the same keyword can be assigned to each of

the remaining six rays, depending on context (implication) (application). Thus, each keyword exists (correlates) in an active sense (in qualifying) as well as in a passive sense (by being qualified singularly). For example, the keyword "energy" is associated uniquely with the first ray, in the most basic sense, for the first ray is the unique aspect (concept) of energy. But each of the seven rays is a particularly qualified energy. Second ray energy can be distinctly contrasted with third ray energy, etc.

Another example is the keyword "truth" which has a number of aspects or implications, depending on context. Truth in the sense of freedom is clearly within the first ray domain. Truth in the sense of wisdom is clearly second ray. Truth in the purely philosophical sense falls within the third ray domain, while truth in the sense of knowledge is more closely associated with the fifth ray. Thus, the assignment of a keyword may depend very much on the implication (context). The assignment of keywords is further complicated (to some extent) by the relationships that exist between the rays, so that a keyword belonging to one ray may also belong to another (by inference) according to the relationship(s) between the rays. Though no limit exists on the number of keywords, the rules (patterns) that determine assignment are relatively few.

The natural order (organization) of universal manifestation into seven streams (categories) of qualified energy provides the underlying potency for keywords. In understanding the seven rays, the spiritual student can apply the various keywords to any aspect of his experience and learn through association (correlation) and integration (since all of manifestation is interrelated). Provided the student avoids arbitrary (personal) assignment and association, and recognizes the natural order (rather than an order of personal (human) origin), the keywords associated with the seven rays can be a considerable tool leading to greater understanding and realization.

Mass Consciousness

In the course of human experience, the spiral circuit of evolution leads the lifewave onward and upward through alternating (parallel) cycles of progressive activity. In a sense, the spiral circuit is a progressive pendulum of activity and inactivity, of active experience (expression) and inactive experience (assimilation). In such a way has humanity progressed from unconsciousness to mass consciousness, leading ultimately through self-consciousness to a greater form of (group) consciousness (on a higher turn of the spiral).

The present state of human consciousness is predominantly mass-centered, with some degree of (limited) self-consciousness. The mass consciousness has its roots in a much earlier (major) cycle in which the present (human) lifewave experienced a consciousness analogous to the animal (mass) consciousness. In the animal kingdom there is no individual consciousness, no self-awareness, and no independence from the influence of the group entity (the animal group-spirit). As a particular lifewave passes from the animal kingdom into the human kingdom, the group-soul is differentiated into many (localized) units of consciousness. This process is called individualization, and it leads to a limited sense of self-consciousness overshadowed by group instincts.

From the purely animal (mass) consciousness, the various lives pass collectively through various stages of increasing (apparent) independence from the lifewave, as the respective (incarnated) personalities achieve greater self-consciousness. From the predominant animal (species) consciousness, the mass consciousness is gradually transformed into predominantly racial, cultural, social, or national polarizations. But with increasing self-awareness (in the lower, personal sense), the human personality experiences the illusion of self-consciousness and independence from the mass influence.

However, the individual consciousness (in the vast majority of cases) is still very much a part of the traditional mass consciousness for patterns of thinking, ideas, glammers, etc. That traditional mass consciousness is inertial, so that habits of consciousness easily dominate. From the higher perspective, the vast majority of humanity are asleep in the massive sea of glamour and illusion,

being highly responsive to mass influence while maintaining some degree of self-consciousness. This state of affairs is natural, and is being slowly transformed by higher impression. There is a considerable stimulation for increased self-consciousness and independence (freedom of thought), and many are passing into the potency of self-consciousness and self-determination (though many of these still respond to some degree unconsciously to the mass consciousness).

The objective of the spiritual student with regard to the mass consciousness is to achieve a complete freedom from mass influence while maintaining the ability to relate to humanity in an inclusive manner. Where this is achieved, the student is able to contribute to the process of constructive and progressive stimulation of the lifewave. Care must be taken to avoid (minimize) falling asleep (in the sense of being absorbed in the strictly mundane influence), and care must also be taken to temper the sense of independence with a higher group consideration. Ultimately, the individual must be assimilated into a group consciousness where the potency of the individual is subordinated to group needs and the talents can be more effectively utilized. The passage of the spiritual student from mass consciousness to group consciousness is a relatively narrow path, a path of freedom and humility, where the personality must be carefully cultivated and properly trained as an instrument of higher (greater) impression.

† Commentary No. 253

Infinity

The value of infinity is found within its contemplation, and from its contemplation should arise mental broadening and a considerable evolutionary encouragement. Infinity is difficult to define, for it embraces an unlimited, indefinitely large extent of time, space, and quantity. But it can be approached in contemplation and leads the mind ultimately to the concept of God having an infinite extent and an integral presence in all of manifestation.

Mathematically, the concept of infinity can be defined in two ways. One can approach infinity by continuously increasing the scope of some finite extent until the magnitude becomes incomprehensible; but infinity remains beyond

even the incomprehensibly large (but finite) magnitude. One can also approach (realize) infinity more directly, through the conception of some null quantity (zero) and its relationship by division to any non-trivial finite quantity (any finite quantity larger than zero, divided by zero yields an infinitely large magnitude). Either approach may be extended or applied to any conceptual domain (such as time (duration) or space) in any dimension. Consequently, infinity enfolds all of time and space (and beyond), especially since infinity remains beyond the limited extent of (ordinary) human experience.

The concept of infinity can be applied in two basic directions: to the endlessness of the infinitely large and to the endlessness of the infinitely small. The macrocosmic extent of universal manifestation is essentially infinite in its boundlessness and in its perpetual (cyclic) activity. And the microscopic extent of the infinitely small is limited only by the resolution of human consciousness. From both extremes come unanswered questions and an appreciation of the natural (divine) order of manifestation (and the humble place of human consciousness). Yet the endlessness of manifestation in time and space is a paradox, as reality (being) transcends the illusion of space-time.

Manifestation exhibits a basic, exponential nature, both in its progressive, cyclic activity and in its septenary structure (where seven planes of consciousness constitute an order of magnitude within greater and lesser schemes). Within the contemplation of this apparently infinite manifestation come a number of concepts or theories of manifestation. The theory of finite manifestation is quickly discarded since no end to manifestation has yet been realized (what could possibly exist beyond any finite limit?). The theory of unconditioned (infinite) manifestation is more humble (though bothersome), as it accepts the endlessness of both extremes. A third theory presents a more comforting (moderate) explanation: an infinite universe conditioned by a paradox of exponential inversion, an all-inclusive universe in the form of a multi-dimensional cosmic Moebius' strip which embraces all levels of consciousness. In such a formulation, progression through the infinitely large would lead to a relative emergence (and phase change) from the infinitely small.

This would not violate progression (evolution), for the conditions and consciousness would be ever-changing, and each successive experience would be unique. This ever-changing, never-ending loop suggests a universe that folds

upon itself in any translational direction with lateral (angular) folding as well. The vertical dimension would have infinite extent while the horizontal dimension would be limited (lateral movement would be impossible). This concept of infinity (conditioned or otherwise) leads directly to a realization of God immanent, for with infinity God transcendent could not exist without being simultaneously immanent within all lives and forms. Moreover, God transcendent must be a totality or the totality must be a reflection of God transcendent.

† Commentary No. 254

The Third Ennead 1

Plotinus' Third Ennead deals with the cosmos. The first tractate deals specifically with the idea of fate and the nature of causation. Plotinus considers several deterministic theories of cause and effect before elaborating the distinction between internal and external causes. The basic controversy is the assumption of a teleological universe (one having a purpose and subject to divine encouragement) as opposed to an order in nature derived from entirely mechanical processes.

Though Plotinus rejects each deterministic theory in turn, he draws upon aspects of each to show the interrelatedness in thinking and the contribution of each to a self-consistent formulation of apparent destiny. The deterministic theory involving purely mechanical consequences is dismissed by a consideration of teleological needs. But the subjection of material elements to external forces resulting in mechanical consequences is considered realistic, for material elements have such limited (extremely localized) consciousness that they are entirely at the mercy of environmental forces. Another deterministic theory involving an absolute cause is dismissed with the need for interactive consciousness. A third theory, involving sidereal (astrological) determinism, is rejected on its universal determinant, though the forces involved are accepted as viable, evolutionary forces; as impelling (not compelling) factors.

The wide influence of astrological forces on material aspects is acknowledged. The unaligned personality is considered as a material (physical, emotional, and mental) instrument subject almost entirely to external (environmental and

astrological) forces. But the personality that is relatively integrated and aligned somewhat with the energy (will) of the soul is increasingly free from external forces, and increasingly determined by internal volition. The sidereal circuit is recognized for its overall protection, but its influence is limited to the unaligned lesser self and has no bearing upon the soul. The soul is (ultimately) master of itself: the more noble the soul, the greater is its power over its environment (and the external forces).

There exists no universal compulsion, only a universal purpose and derived (secondary) forces which qualify and encourage all lesser lives, while drawing upon their creative interdependence. The soul is a powerful entity, responsive to higher impression (first principles) but potent in its own right (and cooperative). Though divine intention (the plan) brings order to the cosmos, there are many intermediate causes (creative beings) which provide secondary forces. All that happens is a consequence (effect) of cause. But the ordinary mind is satisfied with the nearest (apparent) (superficial) determinants. The spiritual student, however, is urged to pass beyond the mundane (superficial) causes through the various intermediate causes to a realization of purpose.

With inherent purpose are all of the various effects resolved as meaningful, evolutionary experience, even when greater lives are taken into consideration. All of the noble lives serve a common (universal) purpose, though the soul (through its experience as a personality) is the primary determinant for human evolution. The human condition is a direct consequence of earlier action (causes); thus the human being is fully accountable and responsible for its own condition, though many forces cooperate to achieve the needed consequences. All of the causative (interactive) forces (on all of the various levels) enter into the (karmic) system, including those of the individual himself; these forces comprise an endless multidimensional causative chain. All such forces affect the individual, though most are negligible and self-generated forces prevail.

Keywords and Triangles

In any philosophical study involving keywords, there are two primary considerations: a study of the various keywords individually (as a necessary first step), and a study of the various keywords by association (correspondence) (implication) (application). The study by association may proceed pairwise (involving pairs of keywords naturally related) as well as by correspondence with the seven rays and other (triple and septenary) implications. Pairwise association (and study) can be particularly potent in the case of natural dualities (pairs of opposites), especially where the student realizes that a continuum exists between the extremes. But this study of pairs of opposites is an intermediate stage, at best, for such a study is limited to one (primary) dimension and the pairwise association cannot be resolved at that level.

The advantage of triplicities is considerable. Triplicities allow several dimensions to be considered, while maintaining a relative simplicity (potency). Pairs of opposites can be resolved through a contemplation (study) of their natural triangular relationships. These relationships demonstrate a natural, dynamic interaction between the three points of focus. As the minimum (optimum) unit of circulation, triangles are usually more potent than other alternatives (though a number of unresolved pairs of opposites can be quite potent paradoxically). There are few examples of meaningful study by association beyond triplicities (mostly quaternary or septenary).

In synthetic triangles, a positive (clockwise) circulation (3:2:1) implies integration (synthesis) and the ascent of energy (consciousness), while a negative (counterclockwise) circulation (1:2:3) implies the process of manifestation and differentiation (the descent of a higher energy). In any circulation, a fourth keyword may emerge in the center of the triangle, signifying a product of synthesis. Keywords used in synthetic triangles should be of the same class (type) (category) or be linked together progressively. The triangle itself may belong to one of the seven rays in particular, in which case the three keywords function as subordinate elements (with appropriate secondary ray correspondence). So much depends on connotation and implication; the same

keyword may be assigned different positions and/or different rays, depending on the situation (connotation) (and the implied relationships).

The procedure for studying keywords via synthetic triangles assumes some knowledge of the basic philosophy and some meditative (contemplative) (intuitive) ability. The exercise or effort expended in study should encourage the development of such ability. The student should first study the keywords individually, taking into consideration any apparent or implied correspondence with the seven rays. The student should then study each of the three pairs of keywords, taking into consideration the relationships of any correspondents.

Then the student should consider the circulation of energy (thought) through the three points (keywords), in both clockwise and counterclockwise directions (since each may yield some insight). Finally, the student should apply the dynamic interactions of the three by inference. This last stage requires a meditative posture and the presence of intuition (and a comprehensive, abstract understanding of the various factors and their relationships). This effort leads ultimately to synthesis (realization) and a relatively profound conclusion (provided of course that the student is dealing with a valid triangle in the first place). The student should endeavor to remain open-minded throughout this process, since concrete patterns (mental habits) (opinions, beliefs, and prior assumptions) serve as prejudice and normally limit the realization achieved.

† Commentary No. 256

Self-Consciousness

Self-consciousness in the ordinary (lower) sense is a state or condition in which a person is conscious of himself as an individual. This (limited) self-consciousness emerges as the soul passes from the animal kingdom into the human kingdom, through the process of individualization. By definition, animals have no self-consciousness, no awareness of individuality. Humans, by definition, do have some (limited) self-consciousness, in the sense that they are aware of themselves as separate, distinct personalities.

The problem of self-consciousness in this lower sense is that it is based entirely in the illusion of separateness and identification with the personality (which is merely an instrument of the true self (soul)). This condition, however, is necessary to the development of objective consciousness.

This necessary experience (limited self-consciousness) is well-founded in the glamour and illusion of (human) mass consciousness. But as the individual assimilates more and more of objective experience, he becomes relatively less dependent upon the massive thought-forms and glammers, and more able to think (independently) for himself. This transition is very, very gradual and serves to strengthen the independence (individuality) (potency) of personality. That illusion of independence is the major factor in human experience (development), but before true self-consciousness can be achieved, the individual must overcome the personality-centeredness and realize (and accept) the subordinate position of mind (personality) with respect to soul. Through continued experience (and assimilation), personality cultivation, and meditation, the student gradually achieves self-mastery (in the lower sense of the mind achieving complete control of the personality) and his consciousness begins to approach the true self.

Self-consciousness in the higher sense is a product of the merger (fusion) of the soul with its (subordinate) personality instrument. As the mind of the spiritual student approaches the soul, the soul energies become more and more evident throughout the personality, until a complete transformation (reorientation) has taken place. This true self-consciousness is an awareness of the divine potency of the soul along with an identification with the soul and a conscious (subjective) application of soul energies through the personality. Such an individual (who is self-conscious) is free from the ordinary limitations of the personality, free from the imposition of the mass consciousness, and free from the illusions of personality-centered existence. But this (true) self-consciousness is not an objective consciousness; it is a potency derived of realization on subjective levels. The soul itself is a subjective entity, whose objective experience is limited to its reflection as a personality. So the higher self-consciousness remains dependent upon the concrete mind (and the objective focus) for its dealings (interaction) with the lower, human worlds.

Self-consciousness is certainly no end in itself (are ends even possible?), for it is just a stepping-stone to even greater awareness (and ultimately to the passage from consciousness to being). As this self-consciousness is developed, there is gradually achieved a group consciousness of a much higher order than that previously experienced. The soul itself is a gateway to the realization of the group unity that embraces all of life. As the student evolves further, his self-consciousness yields more and more to the subjective group consciousness, and the problems of ego are lost forever (though the individual self-consciousness remains as a potent, contributing factor in group consciousness). Self-consciousness is more than an awareness of the lower self or even of the soul presence; it is the consciousness of that higher self on its own level.

† Commentary No. 257

Conformity

Commitment to the spiritual path brings with it a number of problems to be realized and dealt with, problems that may mean little to ordinary humanity. The spiritual student, however, faces the delicate problem of living in the world in a meaningful way without being compromised by worldly values or expectations. The problem of conformity is one which the student must face if he is to succeed in his two-fold mission (to serve humanity and to progress spiritually).

The spiritual student is expected to conform to prevailing standards or customs wherever possible, but not to the extent that the student becomes absorbed by the mundane experience and not to the extent that the spiritual path (values) (lifestyle) is needlessly compromised. The student should respect the laws (rules) of his government (society) wherever possible (i.e., to violate a law only where conformity would cause a serious spiritual (ethical or moral) compromise). The student may or may not honor the various social conventions, but he should at least be aware of the consequences, and the action (inaction) should have some merit (and be accomplished in a reasonable fashion) (how a student exercises his values is often more important (significant) than the values themselves).

The spiritual student should not conform passively; but the student should conform deliberately and intelligently, with an understanding of any inherent conflict or contrast with spiritual (ideal) values. Furthermore, the student should have the courage to live openly (but quietly) in accordance with spiritual values, so that any effects (subtle or otherwise) may be both meaningful and constructive. The spiritual student cannot help being a nonconformist in some respects, but much of his nonconformity may remain in consciousness and in the quality of his experience. Nonconformity creates its own set of problems; but in any event, the spiritual student should be moderate and avoid the needless perils of radical nonconformity.

Though the spiritual student supports constructive change (humanitarian and evolutionary progress), his role may vary widely in both place and method. Spiritual students can be found in (virtually) all aspects of society. Many students on the path of approach as well as many aspirants (probationers) (disciples) are actively involved in constructive change (improvement) (guidance), working effectively within the system according to the opportunities afforded. But the more potent spiritual students are less actively involved, and much more involved in terms of consciousness. These (more potent) members are effective by virtue of their presence and consciousness; they blend so well within the orthodox framework that the unenlightened cannot even recognize them; yet with their considerable consciousness they are neither absorbed in their mundane work nor are they compromised spiritually.

In conformation there is an implied agreement (acceptance) (endorsement) (respect) with (for) the customs conformed to (and the values implied thereby), so the student is encouraged to exercise considerable (intuitive) discretion in all aspects of his relationships with the mundane world. There is an element of patience (tolerance) in conformity with values that are not wholly acceptable to the enlightened student. But what matters is the understanding (wisdom) of the student and his proper interaction with society. The enlightened student is neither radical nor highly vocal; the enlightened student is (rather) a potent (quiet) (humble) (intelligent) instrument of consciousness, committed to effective progress (from within).

The Third Ennead 2

The second tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled "Providence: First Treatise." Providence is divine guidance, the power which sustains and guides human destiny. Providence implies some (grand) purpose that brings about a qualification of the manifested universe, but not to the extent of any (absolute) controlling influence. Providence is therefore partial (relative) and allows the various lives to interact creatively with their own destiny.

The primal cosmos is perfect (unmanifested). The manifested universe comes about through a birthing process of differentiation into countless elements. This derived lower cosmos is an estrangement (reflection) of perfected divinity; the various (apparent) imperfections arise from the process of differentiation (a scattering of life forces), discord being an inherent property of differentiated manifestation. But universal purpose (providence) brings all of the scattered elements together into an ordered system; and that purpose provides the meaning of existence (the basis of evolution) for all lives. Pure spirit is considered divine reason; matter its greatest (deepest) reflection (corruption); and consciousness the moderating principle.

The world (system) is considered beautiful (noble) in its entirety, regardless of the appearance (illusion) of its parts (divine unity remains beyond the grand illusion of separateness). But even the apparent discord within the system can be resolved, since (divine) law and order prevail; the student need only embrace the whole to see how interrelated are the forces and events of experience. For every apparent imperfection or injustice there exists a causal chain of meaningful purpose (justice). The apparent evil (conflict) (contrast) is not necessarily deliberate, but it may be accepted as incidental to the greater plan (purpose) and advantage taken of the opportunity (contrast) for further evolutionary experience. This relative absence (imperfection) of goodness coupled with teleological forces (evolutionary principles) (karma) provides the drama of human experience.

Human beings are responsible for their own actions, regardless of impelling factors and their own ignorance (lack of self-control); the forces of consequence

(providence) take into consideration all aspects of merit (motives, quality of consciousness, etc.) (since each aspect is part of the causal chain). The power of man lies in his (relative) freedom (creativity). But each of his causes must return to fruition, one way or another, eventually, for the good of all. Consequences are determined under law, while man the actor determines the specific actions (and responses to effects). Nothing is left to chance in the sense that all that happens is determined by some causal chain, though much that happens under law has little or no significance (being natural and incidental).

The conflict (contrast) of divergent elements brings about an ultimate harmony. Meaningful opposition (interaction) (cooperation) supports coherence and being (since it is internal). Evolution within the lower cosmos proceeds as diverging (contrasting) elements are properly resolved. The logos actually creates difference (the differentiated universe) to the widest possible extent, and completes itself through the resolution of diversity and contrast.

Differentiation can be viewed as a breathing forth of a tremendous energy-field, and as the field reaches its greatest expanse, it interacts with itself in a dynamic, creative way, resolving all differences, through integration, ultimately returning to its original, unified state, greatly enhanced in experience (quality) (potency). The original sending forth is a birthing process, while its fulfillment (fruition) (return) is a process of maturity.

† Commentary No. 259

Autism

The problem of autism is one of misunderstanding. Though orthodox medical science is filled with good intentions and a thorough understanding of physical phenomena (effects), there remains a considerable lack of knowledge and understanding when it comes to causes (and purpose). Consequently, in dealing with effects, medical science often overlooks inner causes and intentions, and bases treatment on invalid assumptions and values; such is the case with autism. Autism is considered by medical science to be a severe mental disorder that impairs the victim's ability to adapt to his (objective) environment and relate to other people. The supposed disorder is characterized by an apparently daydreaming, self-involved personality that is virtually

oblivious to its surroundings. Autistic children are identified and treated in an attempt to bring them into normal society and objective, extroverted experience.

From a metaphysical perspective, autism is in no sense a disorder or illness. Autism is a natural, intentional condition which occurs in the case of certain souls who experience transition into the alien world of ordinary, objective human experience. Guardians (devas) (angelic beings) on subtle levels are assigned to autistic children for protection, to help each individual to maintain the intended subjective rapport while each very gradually adapts to the objective world. The object is to cushion the shock of the objective world, giving the individual (soul) sufficient time to adjust, without losing the subjective (and particularly meaningful (valuable)) contacts. The guardians are devas of a fairly high order who work directly with the aura of the autistic individual, seeking to maintain the natural harmony of subjective awareness. But so often, well-meaning humans interfere in that natural process and actually cause serious problems in their attempts to force their values on the newcomers.

Highly sensitive souls (in the mature, subjective sense) have a great difficulty finding suitable parents, especially where those souls have little human experience and consequently where those souls have little karma in human terms. Thus, many of these individuals are forced to incarnate into families where misunderstanding (of subtle matters) prevails. The orthodox (personality-centered) human presence (of the spiritually insensitive individual) is usually so strong (extroverted) (obnoxious) (with respect to the peace of spiritual existence) that the devas guarding the autistic children are literally driven away, leaving the children to face a difficult situation with only limited subjective contacts. This happens because devas are relatively passive beings, and these deva-guardians in particular are only potent on subtle levels, and unable to deal with the objective intensity of ordinary self-centered humans.

Autistic children should be respected (accepted) and allowed the peace and serenity of their natural subjective environment. In their own time-frame, as they become more accustomed to human experience, they can adjust and accomplish the transition in accordance with their own needs and intentions. But some of these children are forced to transition prematurely, albeit by well-meaning (insensitive) (ignorant) human beings. Where this occurs, the experience may be needlessly painful; the spiritual integrity (potency) of the

children is compromised (impaired); and incarnation may be far less useful than intended.

Though these children may appear incommunicable and without self-identity, they are nevertheless very active (potent) (creative) (communicable) on subjective levels. The natural responsiveness of these (true, autistic) children to inner impression is normally considerable, and this provides the real potency of their incarnation (and their gifts to humanity).

† Commentary No. 260

Group Consciousness 1

Group consciousness in the higher sense (in contrast with mass consciousness) can only be experienced through the soul, and consequently requires that the student achieve a considerable degree of self-consciousness (in the higher sense of soul consciousness). Due to the continuity factor in human evolution (where levels of consciousness overlap to a certain extent), the student who can achieve some degree of alignment with the overshadowing (indwelling) soul can also experience a certain degree of group consciousness.

Like soul consciousness, group consciousness is not objective; it is highly subjective and requires the involvement of both the abstract mind and the intuition (buddhi). Group consciousness is actually a function of realization (understanding) on group levels, where individual thought-forms cannot exist. In a sense, group consciousness is the exercise of a group mind (a group mental organism), except that it does not function on concrete (objective) levels. Only subjective energies (abstract mental impressions complemented with buddhi) can exist within the group consciousness. Those impressions are actually energies (ideas) unresolved into thought-forms. However, the group can precipitate concrete (massive) thought-forms on objective levels, provided the group alignment persists. The group can be highly evocative (creative) in providing needed energies for humanity. Group meditation (on concrete mental levels) provides a stepping-stone (training ground) for the participants and simultaneously provides an important link in the energy chain.

Group consciousness depends on the intelligence and individual capabilities of all the members (of the aligned group) and it depends markedly on the ability of the members to pass beyond their individualities into the deeper union of the group. It also requires a natural harmony (energy relatedness) so that the group can function as a single entity (subjectively).

The group consciousness can be characterized as an interdependence of the group mind-soul and the various (blended) participants. The participants remain independent in the sense that each member can function as a localized (individual) consciousness (on group (abstract) (soul) levels), but they are dependent in the sense that each member contributes to the group effort and actually merges with and draws energy from it. Thus the enlightened individual who experiences group consciousness can be fully aware on both individual and group levels simultaneously; but individual thought-forms cannot be created or related to simultaneously with group consciousness, for that would quite necessarily separate the individual from the group alignment and drop the individual focus of consciousness down onto concrete mental levels (where subjective group alignment (and soul consciousness) is impossible).

With ordinary human consciousness, the individual is absorbed in mass (mundane) consciousness. With some degree of mental self-mastery, the student can intelligently interact with the mass consciousness, but with soul consciousness and group consciousness (in the higher sense), the esoteric group can evoke a considerable (constructive) energy flow with respect to the mass (human) consciousness. Group consciousness can also be extended to an alignment with greater group lives, so that even broader (universal) rapport is possible. Also, once the esoteric student has learned to achieve group alignment on subjective levels, he can guide the (resident) group potency in any meaningful (compatible) application (realization). Thus, the group energy serves as a considerable and potent reservoir that the esoteric student can draw upon and contribute to (impersonally) in spiritual efforts.

The Human Evolution

The human race is a lifewave of approximately sixty-three billion souls (only a subset of which are in incarnation at any one time), a particular (historical) lifewave that just happens to inhabit the human kingdom at the present time. The human kingdom is a stage of experience that the lifewave passes through. The present humanity is one lifewave within a chain of lifewaves which pass (at some time or another) through the human kingdom on their way to (relative) perfection. That chain of lifewaves is a thread (continuity) that extends from the most elementary (involutionary) lifewaves, through the mineral, plant, animal, and human kingdoms; to the superhuman realm (and the progressing lifewaves which have already completed the human experience). That entire chain constitutes the human evolution, an evolutionary scheme with particular purposes, constraints, guidance, and objectives.

The polarity of the human evolution is positive (masculine) (active), particularly so during the passage through the human kingdom where objective experience and positive activity are emphasized. Though the human soul may incarnate through male (positive) or female (negative) personalities (bodies), the polarity of the female can be overcome by the developing consciousness. The female personality serves (to a certain extent) as a check and balance upon the momentum and activity of the predominantly positive human experience. This (overall) positive polarity qualifies almost every aspect of human experience.

Another characteristic of the human evolution is brain consciousness. The brain is a rather peculiar physical instrument utilized by the mind for the physical experience and expression. Though human experience relies upon the brain consciousness, other types of physical plane experience (evolution) can proceed without any form of brain consciousness. Even self-consciousness is no prerequisite for meaningful experience, though self-consciousness is one of the characteristics of human experience. It is an important distinction, however, since self-consciousness is naturally separative. But self-consciousness carries with it other merits, and even the fully self-conscious human being is ultimately absorbed by group consciousness.

The overwhelming characteristic of the human evolution is the (occult) experience of manipulating form by consciousness. This is primarily a function of polarity, aided by self-consciousness and the various positive (head-centered) (occult) talents. Humanity (by definition and design) works directly with the form side of nature, building and utilizing forms for further evolutionary experience. The human experience is therefore basically a creative one, and the contributions of the lifewave are predominantly (relatively) original (within the overall guidelines and intentions of the higher life). Thus (from a higher perspective) the human experience is somewhat a creative experiment. Basic guidelines are established (and enforced by natural laws) and humanity is granted freedom and opportunity to progress within those intentions.

Certainly the human evolution is not the only evolution, not even the only evolution on earth, for coexisting with the human evolution (on earth) is at least one other major evolution as well as several minor ones. The potential of the human evolutionary experience is quite considerable in relation to the others due to the creative potency of the head-centered (externalized) (objective) experience. But all of nature is necessarily interrelated, and as humanity progresses so do the other lifewaves benefit and progress also as a consequence. Moreover, humanity could not progress without the considerable cooperation and support of the other (greater, lesser, and parallel) lifewaves.

† Commentary No. 262

The Third Ennead 3

The third tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled "Providence: Second Treatise," where again Plotinus considers the nature of providence and its relation to humanity in particular. The human being is considered a complex organism having both spiritual and material aspects. The individual human being is considered sovereign, capable of making decisions affecting his immediate experience and his existence in general. But even though man is sovereign, having some degree of free will (according to his particular capacity for free will), each decision is made subject to the guidelines of the grand (providential) plan. Those guidelines may be relatively general (as is usual) or relatively specific (where particular karma is involved). The decision of the

individual is not determined by the plan, but the decision (and its consequences) must necessarily (somehow) fit into the scheme of things.

Providence plays a role in man's interaction with his experience, at least with regard to free will. But the role of providence extends far beyond decision-making. Providence is also an illumination of higher (life) (principles) upon the lower (consciousness). As a multiple organism, the human being embodies a number of principles subject to illumination (stimulation) (encouragement) along evolutionary lines. The highest of human principles is presently beyond the capability of exercise for virtually all of the lifewave. The lowest of human principles is exercised almost continuously, though unconsciously. The lower principles are those of material substance, far removed (in this perspective) from the illumination of higher principles. Yet man (the indwelling consciousness) is expected to respond to the higher principles (encouragement) and deal appropriately with the lower.

Though the various principles are ever present (and subject to illumination), it is up to the individual to properly exercise them. The basic human (multiplex) principle is greater than that of the animal, since the human principle carries with it self-consciousness and concomitant self-responsibility (and accountability). The animal is governed by group instincts and is not accountable for its actions, yet the human being inhabits an animal (material) form and is responsible for the conquest of its own (coarse) material constitution, such constitution being relatively far removed from the illumination of spiritual existence.

Providence is clearly not a uniform (equally distributed) function, but is properly proportioned according to need and merit (taking all things into consideration). There is a universal equality in the sense that each species, individual member, category, aspect, etc. (regardless of order of apparent magnitude) is equally relevant and valuable to the overall whole, but certainly there is no equivalence or equality in every respect. The elements (members) of any category (species) are actually unequal in the sense that each is different (relatively unique) and in the sense that the capabilities (experiences) of each are different. Providence serves also as karma (or at least is irreconcilably interrelated with karma), a force of evolutionary encouragement and restoration.

Since providence embraces a universal, compound, self-interactive living being, it is impossible to discriminate with any real accuracy. The act of discrimination (observation, interpretation, evaluation, realization, etc.) even affects the overall system and the observation (and overall process) is necessarily limited by the quality of the instrument and the imperfection of its consciousness. Thus the discrimination of providence deals with probabilities and possibilities rather than certainties.

† Commentary No. 263

Food and Energy

Food is material substance (in solid or liquid form) that is usually ingested to provide energy for the physical body. Food is actually energy in the form of carbohydrates, fats, proteins, minerals, etc., that is converted within the physical body into the particular forms (of energy) needed to sustain growth, repair, and vital processes. Physical food also carries with it some energy on vital or etheric levels. The consciousness and vitality of the food therefore have some (possibly considerable) impact in terms of quality.

Aside from its constituents, food may take various forms and be prepared in various ways. Cooking food tends to reduce its inherent vitality. The form of food is usually not as relevant as its constituents and overall quality. The purpose of food is quite simple: to provide sustenance and energy. For the spiritual student, food should provide little more than to serve this basic purpose. Food (eating) may be a pleasant experience, but for the most part, those who particularly enjoy eating are distracted from other, more pertinent matters. The spiritual student is concerned about the quality of food and its effects on body and consciousness, but once the student has achieved the proper diet and discipline, he is no longer distracted by undue attention to diet.

In order to achieve that proper diet and self-discipline, however, and in order to make the most constructive use of the available energies, the student studies the effects of food on his consciousness, and adapts his program appropriately. The effects of food on the physical body are relatively well-known (in the superficial sense), but the effects on consciousness are not so well-known, because higher (superphysical) energy processes are involved and because the effects of food are

different depending on the consciousness of the individual. The effects of eating meat, for example, upon the undeveloped consciousness are almost incidental (negligible), while the effects upon the developing consciousness may be quite considerable.

There are a number of factors involved (with regard to consciousness), but primarily it is a matter of the quality of food, the amount of food, and the quality of consciousness. Nutritional factors are important but not particularly so, since the (potent) spiritual student can compensate for nutritional deficiencies. For a given quality (consciousness) of food, the effects of quantity are remarkable. Too little food provides too little energy and the student (who can) is forced to compensate by drawing more directly (but inefficiently) on etheric energies. Too much food is a burden, energy-wise, and the excess is either stored internally or ineffectively released. Excess internal storage (fat) drains the vitality of the physical form and also impairs consciousness. Eating food, in general, stimulates the vitality of the form, but eating too much burdens and dulls both form and consciousness.

The spiritual student is urged to eat sparingly (more frequently, if necessary) especially since there is a time factor in digestion (and corresponding effects). A large intake of food will dull the consciousness to a greater extent and for a longer period of time than small quantities (of quality food) taken more frequently (two or three times per day). The spiritual student should consume only enough food to sustain his immediate (physical) needs and no more. His vitality can be enhanced (to a certain extent, in addition to food) with etheric, vital forces without the burden of physical digestion and the distraction of eating. Of course these effects are true for all, but are almost incidental (inconsequential) for those of ordinary consciousness, and much more pronounced (meaningful) for those who aspire to higher consciousness.

Magic

Magic is generally defined as the use of certain means believed to have supernatural power over natural forces. Those means include a very wide range of resources and their associated activities; such as concentration and mental programming, visualization and creative effort, and prayer or invocation. Magic usually involves some sort of formula, whether it is fairly objective in the form of prayer, meditation, symbols, mantras, etc., or fairly subjective in the form of abstract mental exercises. True magic involves the use of force on some level of consciousness to accomplish some purpose, creative or otherwise.

The magical forces are not really supernatural; they are actually quite natural, yet drawn from superphysical levels of consciousness. The use of magical forces is traditionally a head-centered experience since the mind is the primary instrument, and therefore magic is rightly considered essentially an occult phenomenon rather than a mystical one. However, there are many aspects of magic which involve mystical or heart-centered experience (and in true, esoteric experience, the occult and mystical forces are perfectly blended). Magical force has both ceremonial (seventh ray) and magnetic (second ray) aspects, and where magical forces are combined with religious ceremony (personal or otherwise) there arises a distinct mystical (heart-centered) form of magic.

Though magical forces (through invocation and evocation) can be employed on any level, the mature esoteric student works almost entirely on mental levels. Those who are less prepared or untrained work primarily on emotional or etheric levels, consciously or otherwise (for very much of normal, relatively unconscious human experience along mental and/or emotional lines involves magical forces); the difference being that those who are properly trained are potent and use these forces deliberately and purposefully, while the untrained (and unprepared) use (some) magical forces either unconsciously or without real understanding. Experimentation in magical or psychic matters is discouraged, since these forces can be quite potent and (without understanding) dangerous.

The basic mechanism of magic is that of energy following thought. As the mind is properly focused, the thought-forms attract (magical) energies which are then

directed or programmed in some fashion. Thus, magical expression is essentially creative. Magical constructs (thought-forms on mental, astral, and/or etheric levels) can exist for considerable lengths of time depending on the their potency. Magical constructs can actually take on a "life" of their own, interacting with other phenomena according to the deliberate (or careless) rules implied or specified in their creation. Many such constructs are evoked carelessly through intense mental or emotional effort.

Magic can also refer to the powers involved and to the products (constructs) as well. In this sense, magic refers to an extraordinary power or influence (apparently) arising from supernatural sources. A physical object, for example, may be infused with magical potency by deliberate concentration and magnetic induction. Similarly, prayers (mantras) (combinations of words and sounds) can be magnetically infused. Such products become, in themselves, secondary and tertiary sources of magical energy. Since magic involves creative force, it also interacts with consciousness. Another definition (implication) of magic is enchantment. In this sense, the reactionary minds and emotions of human beings are particularly vulnerable; and the spiritual student is consequently urged to develop self-control (poise) and indifference to imposed (external) forces. In this (particular) context, the entire orthodox world-picture is a magical construct (enchantment) (illusion) of tremendous extent and potency.

† Commentary No. 265

The Deva Evolution

In parallel with the human evolution is a second, major evolution, one which involves the various deva or angelic kingdoms. The deva evolution extends (as a chain of lifewaves) through a number of kingdoms (fields of experience) that are analogous to the subhuman, human, and superhuman kingdoms. But the angelic kingdoms differ widely from the human kingdoms, as the entire purpose and polarity of the deva evolution differs markedly from the human, yet nevertheless remains complementary.

Like the human evolution, the deva evolution is an evolutionary path through various kingdoms of experience and expression, leading ultimately to a

synthesis and final assimilation within the greater life. But unlike the human evolution, the deva path is not an objective one; it is almost entirely subjective. The polarity of the deva evolution is negative (feminine) (passive), where there is no conscious separation from divinity and where no objective incarnations are experienced. The devas do not incarnate in the human sense; their periods of (passive) activity are more rightly described as stages of transitions of very gradual transformation. Neither do the devas incarnate in personality-forms, for the forms of the lower deva orders (races) are extensions of the (divine) life-force rather than reflections into matter.

The higher deva orders do not even extend themselves in form, but remain on levels beyond the concrete mental (analogously to the souls of humanity). The lower deva orders (lifewaves) (kingdoms) (races) are the (mostly) superphysical workers who embody the forces of evolution and provide for the maintenance of the various human kingdoms. The devas work with the life side of evolution, while humanity works with the form (material) side. The devas actually have two distinct tasks in the lower worlds; some exist primarily as matter, while others are free to move about in the angelic domain (the superphysical realm) as the dynamic sustaining forces of all of (lower) manifestation. The higher orders have similar tasks, though much greater consciousness is required.

Much closer ties exist between deva (angelic) (archangelic) kingdoms than exist between the various objective kingdoms. The devas of diverse orders work much more closely together, as a conscious extension of a single life (while humanity experiences the illusion of objective separation). Thus the work of the deva evolution is much more obviously cooperative. In fact, the devas work very closely in support of humanity, regardless of the ordinary human insensitivity. Some orders work closely with the plant or animal kingdoms; others work primarily with humanity (as in providing healing (restorative) energies). But it is quite dangerous for unenlightened humanity to approach or work directly with the devas, because the difference in polarity is tremendous.

A great deal of misunderstanding exists concerning the devas or angels. Man has incorrectly assumed the angels to be relatively human, where in fact the angels are altogether different. They have no brain consciousness (except in the very few who have passed through the human kingdom), nor can they communicate in any objective sense. Though the higher orders possess

considerable potency and considerable consciousness, they are not self-conscious and do not exhibit objective, human characteristics. The human-like forms sometimes attributed to the angelic beings are simply creations in human perception (attempts to interpret alien energies in more familiar patterns). When the human mind passes beyond personality dependence, then the angelic beings can be recognized as particularly helpful cooperators, brothers (sexless) of light and love who are indispensable to the success of the human experiment.

† Commentary No. 266

The Third Ennead 4

The fourth tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled "The Tutelary Spirit." The tutelary or presiding spirit is that aspect of spiritual existence which guides the experience and expression of the lower, personal self, or that aspect to which the lower self is responsive. In the highest sense, that presiding spirit is the monad, the highest aspect of human existence; in the lowest sense, that spirit is the animal group soul. The presiding spirit is, consequently, dependent on the individual consciousness; the greater the consciousness, the greater is the spiritual influence or guiding spirit.

The character or quality of the waking-consciousness can vary widely. Those who are relatively unevolved, yet human, are guided to a large extent by the animal instincts and urges of the lower vehicles, by the animal group soul and the preponderance of external (circumstantial and karmic) forces. Those who are relatively evolved respond much less to the natural animal forces and much more to the forces of the self-consciousness (the mind of the personality). As the individual continues to progress (evolve), he responds more and more to higher (internal) impression, to the subjective quality of the soul, and ultimately to the vast impersonality of the monad. Throughout these processes (of evolution in consciousness), the higher aspects (the soul and the monad) are for all practical purposes detached from the personality, willing to provide only the broadest (subjective) qualification and encouragement. But as the individual evolves, that subjective quality becomes more and more pertinent.

In a sense, the individual is, according to his character and consciousness. The individual who lives an animalistic life is little better than the animal (in consciousness). The individual who lives the spiritual life of identification with the soul is that soul in manifestation. Man's spiritual existence (as a soul or monad) is related by threads of consciousness (correspondence) to the macrocosm. Reincarnation is a progressive evolution leading ultimately to creative (cosmic) existence (divinity). That process includes passage into the next higher kingdom as the individual and group circumstances (and consciousness) warrant. But that process does not allow transmigration into a lower kingdom. An individual may retrogress to a certain extent, even to the point of identification with animal existence, but karmic forces will (ultimately) draw the individual onward and upward.

Prior to any incarnation, the tutelary or presiding spirit is the soul which subjectively determines the most appropriate (available) circumstances for birth. But during the early years (childhood) (and even during the early adult years), the individual (waking-consciousness) is not (normally) responsive to higher impression, so that the external forces and family environment prevail. As the individual progresses along spiritual lines, the energies and character of the soul are increasingly reflected into the mind and personality. But a great deal depends on the interest and determination of the lower self to achieve the most noble state. The guiding spirit is not bound up with the lower self, yet it belongs to the individual (or more correctly, vice versa).

If the individual expects more (apparently) favorable circumstances or opportunities (or abilities) in the next life (incarnation), then the individual must work and progress sufficiently to earn those new circumstances. But the consequences of any particular circumstances depend almost entirely on consciousness and on how the individual responds to the experience (and to the presiding spiritual influence). Thus the enlightened esoteric student is a master of his own consciousness, regardless of circumstances.

Black Magic and White Magic 1

An important distinction exists regarding motives and magical methods. There are basically two types of magic (from this perspective of motives and methods): black magic and white magic. Black magic is basically self-centered and dependent on (mostly lower) external forces. White magic is more group-centered (unselfish) and dependent on (mostly higher) internal forces.

Black magic depends almost entirely on the potency of the concrete mind (personality) and its ability to control external forces. Those external forces are usually the forces of etheric or astral matter (substance) and lower life-forms. Black magic is usually not constructive, since it is (by definition) the magical domain of the potent, predominantly selfish, self-centered, individualistic (separative) personality. Since the motives in black magic are essentially selfish, the black magician is usually not concerned about the effects of his methods or actions upon others, except where the self-interest is served. Or in other words, in black magic there is usually a disregard for ethics, morals, or responsibility. The methods and means merely contribute to the desired objective. This is not the case with white magic.

White magic does also depend upon the potency of the mind (personality), but it depends on the potency of the soul as well, and upon the degree of alignment (rapport) (cooperation) that exists between the mind and the soul. White magic therefore depends heavily on internal forces (the divine, natural forces of the soul itself, or higher forces drawn by the soul onto mental levels). Those forces are drawn from atomic, buddhic, or manasic (mental) levels, and rarely from lower levels. Those forces may, however, be applied on concrete mental levels and can have substantial effects on lower (astral or even etheric) levels. White magic is (by definition) a constructive, cooperative endeavor, serving group (human or higher) purpose and without regard to personal benefit. Thus the motives involved in white magic are relatively pure, refined, and unselfish; and the methods used are carefully cultivated and utilized for constructive results, as the esoteric student takes into consideration all potential effects of the applied forces. Consequently, with white magic the esoteric student demonstrates a

considerable regard for ethics and responsibility. The methods and means must be as appropriate as the objective.

Though the basic distinctions between black magic and white magic are relatively clear, in practice there exists a relatively broad, grey area between the extremes (of well-defined black magic or white magic). This problem arises in part from the use of the imperfect but (hopefully) elevated personality in white magic, and in part to the relatively common heritage of black magicians and white magicians. A (true) magician is one who has achieved potency in dealing with occult (magical) forces. The magician must necessarily have a well-integrated personality, dominated by the well-developed mind.

The magician must also have a considerable amount (and quality) of training and experience in occult matters. The vast majority of people who invoke magical forces are not magicians, for they lack the proper qualifications. But where the basic qualifications are present, there is little difference between the black magician and the white magician; in fact, most black magicians have received their preliminary training along spiritual lines. The difference arises where the black magician fails to develop heart quality and remains or becomes self-centered, and fails to commit himself to the spiritual path; while the white magician develops the heart quality and remains firmly committed to the spiritual path and to constructive (group) evolution.

† Commentary No. 268

Black Magic and White Magic 2

The distinction between black and white magicians is relatively sharp, with the methods and motives relatively well-defined, but the distinction between black magic and white magic is complicated considerably by the large number of people who dabble in magical matters and who have not reached the status or potency of the magician or wizard. Such people generally have little knowledge or training in these matters and simply experiment vainly with forces that they can attract but cannot properly control. Such people usually also fail to discern the significance (effects) of their efforts and fail to exercise ethical discretion. Since most of these people are lacking in spiritual quality, they often fall victim

(seriously or incidentally) to the black magician (less likely) or to the vibratory forces of black magic (more likely).

The black magician usually works alone (meaning that he serves no one beside himself) but manipulates and controls others wherever needed to serve his own purposes. He works predominantly with lower (coarse) mental and astral (emotional) matter (forces) and easily draws upon the resources (and vitality) of others. Fortunately, black magicians are very few in number and are, in themselves, relatively insignificant. Karma (in general) discourages the black (left-handed) path and the farther the individual progresses along that path the greater is the karmic force that he must ultimately reckon with. Karma (usually) eventually forces his return to the mainstream of human evolution (and if he has purified himself, he is welcomed without prejudice). In the meantime, the black magician is virtually ignored (treated with detached compassion and understanding) by those who are more enlightened. The true peril of the black magician (and those who dabble) is simply one of selfishness and ignorance.

The dangers inherent in magical/psychic activity are considerable, particularly where spiritual motive (and preparation) is lacking. The majority of those who dabble in occult matters (without any real training or understanding) lack the self-control and integration necessary to reach the spiritual (finer) levels of consciousness, and are therefore relatively vulnerable along (coarse) astral and mental lines. The problem lies not in falling prey to the black magician, but in falling prey to the (coarse) forces and (lower) superphysical entities that those who dabble deal with (whether or not they are aware of what they are dealing with). To deal with magical forces on lower levels (with an unrefined and undisciplined personality) is to attract relatively potent, subhuman entities (and ignorant, earthbound, disincarnated human beings). These entities often develop a compelling influence over those who dabble (whether the victim realizes what is happening or not).

Also, without proper training, the magical (magnetic) forces evoked by the untrained may be much more potent than can be handled. These forces are (on psychical levels) (potentially) as destructive (or constructive) as the forces of the physical atom. It is mostly a matter of proper knowledge, understanding. Those who play with fire usually fail to recognize these dangers.

However, the spiritual student (an apprentice of white magic) concentrates on personality cultivation (refinement) and self-discipline, learning gradually how to deal properly (safely) with these (potent) superphysical forces. The spiritual student requires considerable patience, for these lessons come slowly, and the spiritual potency is acquired only where all prerequisites are properly met and the student can be trusted to work responsibly with the magical forces, selflessly and impersonally, for the good of the group and ever in accordance (cooperation) with the divine evolutionary plan.

† Commentary No. 269

The Seven Ray Methods

Each of the seven rays is a qualification of energy. Each such qualification is a domain of experience and expression, and each domain has its characteristic methods for experience, expression, and accomplishment. Those characteristic methods are potentially available to anyone, regardless of the individual's personality and soul rays, though an individual who has mastered a particular ray will obviously have a greater understanding of its methods and be able to apply those methods more easily and effectively.

The energy or qualification of any of the rays can be evoked by the student and applied to any constructive purpose, depending on the student's ability and understanding, and depending to a certain extent on the student's particular combination of rays. But each of the rays has its own method of evocation that can be applied to the energy of any of the seven rays. A seventh ray method, for example, might be used to evoke fourth ray energy; that fourth ray energy might then (for example) be applied with fifth ray methods. Obviously, an intelligent prerequisite to such evocation and application is a proper study of the seven rays, their energies and methods, and a thorough study and cultivation of the individual's own consciousness and temperament.

Of particular interest to the aspirant and probationary disciple are the methods of personality cultivation, integration, and alignment associated with each of the seven rays. The student whose personality is properly cultivated (purified, disciplined, and qualified) and integrated into a single, stable, and coherent instrument should be far more effective in spiritual work. The proper

preparation and integration are necessary to any true alignment of the personality and the soul, or of the individual with any group of souls. Each of the seven rays provides methods of cultivation, integration, and alignment which the individual (student) can apply according to his circumstances. And each of the seven ray combinations (of a personality ray and a soul ray) may be approached with any of the seven ray methods (some more successfully or appropriately than others, according to the ray relationships involved).

The evolutionary intention for humanity is for each person (individuality) (soul) to (ultimately) achieve a relatively high degree of mastery along each (all) of the seven ray lines. Consequently, an individual gradually accumulates experience in each of the seven domains, in accordance with the personality ray chosen for a particular incarnation. Any given personality (for incarnation) may or may not be one with which the individual is experienced, and in either case, it takes time for the waking-consciousness to develop (in each life-time) the needed (relative) maturity and control of the personality. Thus an individual may need to conquer an unfamiliar personality-instrument or re-conquer one that is relatively familiar. Depending on the situation, the individual may need to evoke and utilize certain ray energies and/or certain ray methods.

As the student progresses, he achieves a greater degree of control (and understanding) of each of the seven rays. That progress is hastened when the individual achieves proper alignment (of soul and personality). The advanced soul who has mastered all of the rays can easily apply any of the ray methods with confidence, potency, understanding, and wisdom. But long before a soul has (completely) mastered a particular ray, that soul can work with those ray energies intelligently, through its reflection (the personality), to the extent that the personality is properly integrated and aligned. These processes occur quite naturally depending on the experience of the individual, without there necessarily being any formal understanding of the seven rays.

The Third Ennead 5

The fifth tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled "Love." Plotinus draws upon the philosophical writings of Plato and some of the characters of Greek mythology to clarify the quality or nature of love. Considered are both human and divine aspects, and the relationship between the two. Love is first considered as a state of consciousness or character. In human (personality) terms, love is an experience (interaction) on emotional and/or mental levels. In the lower sense, love is a very personal or personality-centered experience related to desire and some degree of selfishness. In the higher human sense, love is more impersonal and related to divine recollection or realization (the recollection or realization of divine beauty (truth) (goodness)). In either case, love is related to beauty and depends on the object of devotion or aspiration. In the lower sense it is a matter of ego and/or related directly to sense-impression. In the higher sense it is the love of beauty (truth) (goodness) itself.

In the human sense, the primary source of love is found in the tendency or character of the soul towards pure beauty (perfection) (unity). Such love is related to the harmony aspect of God (ordered manifestation) (the unity of all life and consciousness) (the balance of evolutionary forces). In this sense, love is concerned with absolute things (wholes) rather than partials, with ideals and archetypes rather than images and reflections. Those who know not the beauty of higher existence are content with the images and reflections of mistaken reality. But the beauty of earthly things may lead ultimately to the beauty of reality (the world of archetypes) (divine beauty) as the consciousness is gradually improved. That beauty represents immortality, the eternal principle (the divine urge toward perfection).

Love is essentially an attractive force (if not the force of attraction), the underlying qualification of all existence which interrelates the entire ordered whole (as a coherent unity). As the character of the soul, the love principle draws the consciousness toward beauty, toward truth (reality) and goodness. The rising of the mental state is an attraction of the lesser self toward the resident divinity (the soul). Pure love seeks beauty (truth) (goodness), without desire; but that (pure) love is indwelling, the spirit within all. In the relatively

impersonal, abstract form, love is a universal principle, embodied within (through) the logos. In this sense, the soul (the aspect of consciousness) is the love principle, a reflection of the cosmos.

As an attractive, unifying force there is the (impersonal) love of God for its creation, a bond or relationship that, in turn, leads to the conscious love of creation for its God. In this latter sense, love is manifested as the energy of aspiration, of striving onward and upward toward divinity. Love is the act of a soul seeking good. Love is a vertical mechanism linking the mind with its soul, and the soul with its divine monad. Love is also a horizontal mechanism, a celestial spirit linking all in oneness.

Thus love is seen to be much more than a state of consciousness or an act of experience. It is a divine principle and a spirit-being of very high order, whose character is reflected into the lesser realms, through a continuous spectrum. That spectrum extends from the dispassionate existence (love) of God, through successive stages, to the more human forms of love (enchantment). As an evolutionary force, love leads from the random attraction (of lesser things) (of images and reflections) to the absolute and authentic good (the greater ideas and archetypes) (reality).

† Commentary No. 271

Ceremonial Magic

Magic in the more esoteric (subjective) sense is properly the domain of the first ray (will) and the second ray (wisdom). But magic in the more exoteric (objective) sense is properly the domain of the remaining rays, and particularly that of the seventh ray. It is the seventh ray which encompasses the most objective field of magic, that of ceremonial magic. In ceremonial magic are found a wide variety of magical forms and methods, particularly objective, and dealing predominantly with physical and etheric forces.

To properly understand ceremonial magic, the student should first understand the seventh ray domain and all of the implications and correlations of the seventh ray. In one sense, the physical plane (the seventh ray domain) is a reflection onto objective levels of the other six rays; or in other words, each of

the (other) six rays contribute in some fashion to the most highly manifested (differentiated) plane of consciousness. Consequently, ceremonial magic is linked in various ways to all of the seven rays, though the seventh ray provides the best qualification and the domain of expression.

Ceremonial magic is that aspect of magic that is most involved with the form or method of creation. The procedures of ceremonial magic were well-known in the ancient mystery schools and were actually introduced to the novice or apprentice in order to demonstrate the utilization of the involved forces. But as the mind of the student is properly developed, these (ceremonial) methods are no longer necessary, since the same effects can be more properly evoked or created using simpler, internal methods. The student begins with ceremonial methods because no special training is needed; anyone can follow an objective, ceremonial procedure to unveil or release magical forces; but only with proper training can the student acquire the proper control and understanding of the evoked forces. In other words, it takes a great deal more than mere ceremony or invocation to safely control and apply the magical forces. Thus the ceremonial methods were intended only as a preliminary step, until the student could develop the proper faculties under supervised training.

The basic problem of ceremonial magic is two-fold: dependence on external forces and dependence on the ceremonial form. With emphasis on the form, the form itself may become a distraction and lose its potency and/or meaning. Thus, care should be taken in any ceremonial effort to maintain the significance (purpose) of the activity in mind, at least until the objectives have been accomplished or the effort is no longer warranted. Ceremonial magic is essentially a creative effort that depends on the instrumentality of some form of ceremony or ritual and the forces attracted by that ritual. The ceremony itself involves both mental and physical procedures, usually including a series of mantras or words of power (invocation). Sometimes words are not even needed, for the physical procedure may suffice to attract the desired forces.

The ceremonial methods are actually quite straight-forward, in principle. The actual method must first be associated with the invocation of a particular force. Through that association or correspondence, the procedure transmits the will to the necessary forces and draws them into manifestation. Through considerable repetition and practice, patterns are established on subtle levels so that the form

(ritual) alone can be used to draw upon associated forces. But there are usually few, if any, safeguards built into the ceremonial forms. The methods can be quite potent and the forces unmanageable. Thus, purely ceremonial or psychic methods are discouraged, as the student learns to utilize the higher, internal faculties (that are more easily controlled).

† Commentary No. 272

The Quality of Food

The quality of food has particular effects on the form (body) and consciousness. The quality of consciousness of the individual is usually reflected in the quality (consciousness) of the food that is consumed (and vice versa). Even the physical body is an energy (vibratory) form (aura) that interacts with the relative consciousness of the ingested food. High quality foods (in nominal quantities) support, sustain, and encourage higher quality of consciousness and limit the independent vibratory activity of the personality.

The effects of the quality of food on physical levels are not as pronounced as on astral (emotional) levels (and similarly, not as pronounced as on mental levels), particularly in the case of the spiritual student (less pronounced in the case of other persons). The quality of food can be broadly categorized as having mineral, plant, and animal elements. Certain minerals (in small quantities) have moderately positive effects upon the physical body, but very little (if any) effect on higher levels. Plant foods (vegetables, fruits, nuts, etc.) (in modest quantities) have rather positive effects on both physical, emotional, and mental levels. Plant foods provide more essential vitality than other foods (mineral or animal) and are much more efficient as far as the physical body (digestive processes) is concerned.

Plant foods tend to increase the sensitivity of the student on both emotional and mental levels, and for this reason it is important to avoid extreme (sudden) changes in diet and to cultivate emotional sublimation (control). Emotional sensitivity, however induced, is worth very little unless the student can properly control it. The sensitivity provided by plant foods (a vegetarian or meatless diet) merely provides the opportunity; it is up to the student to utilize that opportunity through mental and spiritual exercise. The vegetarian diet alone

has naught to do with spirituality, though spirituality (if present) is enhanced by a (proper) meatless diet (and conversely impaired by a diet of animal food).

The simplicity and natural vitality of plant foods (in moderation) provide most efficient and effective means of properly sustaining the physical form and its associated consciousness, minimizing the burden of digestion and being more easily (readily) converted into the needed internal forms. Conversely, the complexity and naturally coarse vibration of animal foods (flesh) (meat) (fish) provide the least effective means of sustaining the physical form. Moreover, animal foods in particular dull the consciousness of the individual for extended periods of time (if not indefinitely). This effect is quite compatible with ordinary consciousness, which is not that far above the animal consciousness. But in the case of the spiritual student seeking to control and uplift his natural (historical) (hereditary) (animal) instincts, the animal food diet is a particularly burdensome adversary. The basic problem is two-fold: overcoming the animal consciousness of the physical body (which is necessarily (in fact) an animal body), and overcoming the consciousness of the food that is ingested.

In the case of plant foods, it is a relatively simple matter of overcoming the (relatively weak) plant consciousness. In the case of animal foods, it is a more difficult task (requiring more energy and attention) of overcoming the relatively strong animal consciousness of the food, which, at the same time, stimulates the animal consciousness of the personality. Thus eating animal foods is counterproductive (at least for the spiritual student). Much of the struggle of the spiritual student with his own lower nature is won when the student achieves a well-disciplined diet of quality (plant) food.

The Human Perspective

One of the perils of the human experience is the tendency of the human personality to be centered on the objective human experience, which is misleading with respect to any greater (broader) (deeper) experience (life) (reality). Through the natural course of human development and evolution, the human being becomes self-centered (self-conscious in the lower sense) and distracted by (entangled in) the illusions of separate (discrete) existence.

This has some rather definite consequences in terms of individual human viewpoints, particularly in the unenlightened. The vision and current experience of the individual is necessarily perceived and interpreted in accordance with the self-centered consciousness and the limited, past experience of the individual. That limited experience and narrow, self-centered perspective is further complicated (reinforced) by the mass objective illusion and the prevailing beliefs in the reality (?) of the human perspective. Consequently, the individual tends to understand only to the extent of his own experience and beliefs. A person may have difficulty in understanding foreign experience (impression) since it may not correlate directly with his own. The individual will (usually) interpret all sense impression in accordance with his own familiar experience, even where such interpretations may require distortion into more familiar terms. An even greater peril (for the spiritual student) exists when that interpretation (misinterpretation) is performed unconsciously.

The spiritual student is ever urged to overcome self-centeredness and to broaden (extend) (deepen) the perspective (awareness) to understand matters in more universal (real) terms. The natural arrogance (illusion) of self-centered consciousness must be overcome if the student is to understand the greater truths and recognize the place of all things in a greater context. As the student progresses, it becomes increasingly important for the student to understand and discern (recognize) relevance; for personal matters (the lessons or values of self-centered existence) become less relevant and impersonal matters (the interrelatedness of the whole) become more and more relevant.

The problems of the human perspective with regard to individual consciousness are similarly existent for human consciousness in general. Humanity has evolved through countless years of self-centered and human-centered experience. Consequently, any experience is interpreted (or misinterpreted) in predominantly human terms. Ordinary human experience merely sustains the illusions of human-centered existence; but extraordinary human experience is even more unfortunately interpreted in human terms by the self-centered. Thus the misunderstanding (conceit) of humanity is considerable, as the normal vision of humanity is centered on humanity rather than the whole of which humanity is merely a part. The tendency of humans to anthropomorphize or humanize the perception (or conception) of God, devas, etc. is one of many common problems in human perspective that create or sustain misunderstanding.

This problem of the human-centered perspective is basically one of wrong assumption. Man assumes self-importance and interprets his experience as if his is the only way to experience. Man assumes a great deal about his life and experience without any real basis; he tends to oversimplify his experience in familiar human (misleading) terms (in his limited (narrow) perspective). The natural remedy comes with some degree of humility (self-honesty) and the consideration of alternatives. With a broader, impersonal perspective, the student is more likely to learn the truth about existence and overcome the petty glammers and prevalent illusions of the self-centered (human) perspective.

† Commentary No. 274

The Third Ennead 6

The sixth tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled "The Impassivity of the Unembodied." Plotinus discusses the relationship of matter to material existence and the relationship of the soul to the personality and its material existence. In Plotinus' terminology, the soul may refer either to the higher (abstract) mind of the soul itself, or to the lower (concrete) mind of the (involved) personality, and matter refers to the base of material existence, not to material substance. A parallel is shown for the soul (spirit) and its personality (form), where the personality is impressed (reflected into) matter. The lessons

of either (personality or form) can be related to the other. But an inverse (double) parallel is also shown, for the soul is impassive with regard to the personality, while matter (the base) is impassive with regard to form.

The soul is virtually immune from personal energy, while its reflection can be involved in personality matters. The soul views objective experience impersonally and subjectively, in consciousness. Feeling and thinking are considered actions upon experience rather than states of consciousness, and are attributed to the lower self (personality) rather than the soul. As the lower self proceeds from latency to actuality (as it approaches the soul in consciousness and contributes to the quality of the soul), that personality (mind) simply achieves the intention of its nature. In that course, the personality may experience (develop) virtue, harmony (natural concordance) with the true (higher) self, drawing upon the higher faculties and consciousness. Conversely, the lesser self may experience vice (the breach of harmony) (discord), through the disregard of the higher faculties (through the distraction of the independent (extended) (objective) experience).

Likes and dislikes, pleasure and pain, all of the personal emotions, opinions, etc. are attributed to the lower self; whereas steady aspiration and spiritual strength (mature detachment) are attributed to the personality that is able to draw upon the quality of the higher self. The (impassive) soul constitutes a much higher awareness, without participation on lower levels. But the personality is subject to direct experience and disturbance, since only material substance can be disturbed. Disturbance (modification) (interaction) lies within the domain of illusion (the pretense of matter). Modification (change) arises from difference (opposition) (contrast). Matter (the base) cannot be destroyed or dissolved, but the form can be modified.

When Plotinus speaks of matter, he speaks of the nature of matter, as matter, not as form (thus are discerned matter from form and matter (form) from archetype). Matter is the receptive (not reactive) base, accepting the presence (shape) (character) of form. Modification implies acquisition or release and holds for form not matter. Forms are compounds of (patterns impressed upon) matter (impressions of ideals (archetypes)). Thus matter participates in form but remains unaffected. Material (objective) existence would be impossible without matter (the substratum), since it is the character of reflection (as is all

of material existence) to appear in something not itself. The base is a mirror, the extreme (immutable) boundary of the sphere of manifestation. Spirit is the other extreme (boundary) (while consciousness is interactive).

The lower self is a form impressed in matter and subject to the limitations and distractions (modifications) of material existence, such as resistance (inertia), glamour (illusion), absorption, and modification. In understanding matter (form), the indwelling consciousness can ultimately conquer the material existence and achieve an elevated state.

† Commentary No. 275

Magic and Religion

The domain of religion is qualified primarily by the sixth ray, though other ray elements are usually present. The ceremonial element (via the seventh ray) plays a major supporting role, but it is the sixth ray energy proper (and its analog in the second ray) that provides the basis of any religion. The type of religion is determined primarily by the particular ray through which it is developed and qualified. A seventh ray religion, for example, will normally emphasize the ceremonial aspects, while a first ray religion will normally emphasize first ray elements.

Where the seventh ray influence provides the ceremonial aspects and associated magical forces, the sixth ray influence (basic qualification) provides magical forces of a different order. Seventh ray magic is largely ceremonial and deals primarily with physical (etheric) forces; sixth ray magic is largely personality-centered and deals primarily with emotional (astral) forces. Magic along sixth ray lines is particularly potent due to the coincidence of magnetic (astral) (personal) forces. Those magnetic forces are particularly useful in any religious movement from the standpoint of impelling influence. There are, of course, advantages (merit) and disadvantages (defects) to magnetic methods. The primary advantage is the ease with which the religious movement can become influential, particularly as the movement grows in scope and potency, and as adherents are attracted and influenced (hopefully) along positive (constructive) lines. The primary disadvantages are the tendency toward the extreme (including imposition), and the undermining of free will.

Sixth ray magic is probably most obvious in the religious leaders who have cultivated a strong personal magnetism and who are usually quite potent along magical (magnetic) (emotional) lines, particularly with those who do not really think for themselves (and who are therefore easily influenced). This is a natural and almost necessary step at some point in the evolution of human consciousness; but, the hypnotic element of any movement that draws upon the emotions and the mind can be easily misused as beliefs or values are imposed rather than presented for consideration. As humanity evolves, so does religion evolve, so that a wide spectrum of influential religions exists, including some which have a mature character and cultivate the intelligence of adherents, and others which are less mature and merely imposes values.

The cultivated image of the founder or central figure can easily exceed the potency of the individual, as magical forces are used to sustain or enhance a powerful thought-form (on concrete mental and astral levels). As more adherents are attracted, the central image is strengthened (unconsciously) even to the extent that the psychic image can interact directly and actively with anyone who visualizes the image or calls upon its influence by name or ceremony. A particularly potent religious movement can be sustained for thousands of years, but the character and temperament is likely to change (gradually) (continuously) according to the mass consciousness of the adherents.

The practical basis of any religion is usually centered in its idealism. Through magical forces, that idealism can be a potent and constructive influence for human progress (culturally, morally, and spiritually), particularly where the individual consciously and intelligently chooses to cooperate. But the dangers of extreme idealism should be tempered or discouraged by moderation and balance. Spiritual students of all faiths are encouraged to work within the domain of popular religion wherever they are comfortable, as the (broader-minded) spiritual students actually serve as a moderating evolutionary force.

First Ray Methods

First ray methods are particularly potent since the first ray provides the power aspect; consequently, first ray methods are relatively drastic and require a considerable self-mastery in order to properly handle the evoked energies. Development along first ray lines is somewhat of a paradox, as the intended qualities are inherently needed in order to properly wield the evoked energies. But, nevertheless, the willing aspirant can evoke first ray energies, and, if the aspirant is sufficiently strong, the aspirant can grow rather rapidly. Otherwise, the first ray methods may prove rather difficult and self-defeating.

First ray methods require a certain degree of will and determination, for the energies come quickly and forcefully, with relatively immediate success or failure; there is little, if any, quarter (middle ground). The first ray methods depend heavily on the self-reliance of the student; the student is often exiled, to stand alone and achieve through self-determination, only to return a stronger, healthier contributor and cooperator. The basic method of achievement (along first ray lines) is the concentration of the will, to overpower any obstacle and to conquer any and all circumstances. The (pure) first ray method of overcoming desire, for example, would be complete (total) (immediate) abstinence, without prelude or gradual cultivation. In a sense, the first ray method is the most direct path, calling for a maximum effort over a short period of time. It is the way of intensity and supreme self-discipline.

Through the concentration of will (force), first ray energies are easily evoked and (if the individual is prepared) applied to the purpose in mind. The first ray method of integration, for example, is the imposition of will upon the entire lower self (personality), forcing the physical (etheric) body, the emotional (astral) body, and the mind into a fully integrated state. Where there is resistance, that aspect of the lower self is either destroyed or overpowered (overwhelmed) by the intensity of will. The problem is one of sustaining integration (or alignment), which requires a more subtle (complete) (deeper) superposition of force. But with preparation (wisdom) comes the ability and understanding to effect permanent results.

One of the basic problems of the first ray arises with the application of first ray methods to external objects. The ethics of self-imposition are unquestionable, but the ethics of external imposition are another matter entirely. The student has the undeniable right to self-determination (insofar as karma permits), but where the rights of others are concerned, the student using first ray methods should be very careful. A (lower) first ray tendency is to dominate others, while another (higher) first ray tendency is to encourage others (by example) toward self-reliance. Throughout there exists a drive toward unification, forcefully (in the lower sense) or otherwise (in the higher sense). The supreme achievement (greater accomplishment) along first ray lines is that of selfless, effortless will, which, in the higher (group) sense, is the self-realized unification (synthesis) of consciousness. But such unification must be imposed from within (as a cooperative achievement), never (effectively) from without (where higher intelligence is concerned).

In one sense, all of humanity experience along first ray lines, since each incarnation is a self-imposed exile (from the spiritual rapport of the soul) for needed experience. The first ray experience certainly cultivates the powers (attributes) of the individual, but with increasing maturity, the first ray experience is tempered by wisdom (love) and a growing humility (rapport with the greater life which embraces all).

† Commentary No. 277

Paths of Intelligence

There are numerous lifewaves within each planetary scheme, and each creates and sustains its own path of progression from lower consciousness to higher consciousness (with sufficient encouragement and guidance). As evolution proceeds, the intelligence of the various lives is increased and expanded, along the particular lines of development intended for the lifewave. There are many paths, and each path has characteristic methods and goals, varying widely one from another. Ultimately, these paths of intelligence converge as the lifewaves (lives) are blended and as the contributions of each are assimilated.

Intelligence is defined in various ways, according to perspective. In general, intelligence refers to the power or capacity for understanding; that power or

capacity depends to some extent on the mental faculties that have been developed, and/or upon the mental resources that can be drawn upon. Human intelligence, in particular, is the product of a path through individualization (the development of self-consciousness) (and the development of brain-consciousness), a path that leads to a highly developed (and structured) mind having a predominantly objective perspective. But human intelligence is only one of many forms of intelligence (described by various paths), and human intelligence (and the corresponding path) differs markedly from other forms.

Many other (major) paths to intelligence do not require the development of brain-consciousness or even the relatively objective, externalized experience that is so characteristic of the human path. Many other paths lead quite easily and effectively to various forms of penetrating (and non-penetrating) subjective intelligence, while some paths lead to far more objective forms than even the human path. But the type of understanding realized depends a great deal upon the type of path (which in turn depends on the degree of objectivity (subjectivity), the degree of externalization, the plane(s) of consciousness involved, the degree of self-consciousness (group-consciousness), etc.).

The human path (somewhat objective, somewhat externalized, involving (primarily) the lower three planes of consciousness (physical, emotional, and mental), and involving considerable self-consciousness) is not particularly common (nor is it particularly rare) but it does afford some interesting experience not generally shared by other paths. The (positive) human path involves a great deal of contrast and illusion; other paths generally offer less contrast and less illusion. The angelic path, for example, is more subjective, is also somewhat externalized, involves (approximately) the same planes of consciousness, but cultivates group consciousness and realization rather than self-consciousness and rational processes. Angelic beings (devas) need no brain-consciousness, for their form of intelligence is developed along entirely different lines altogether. They pass through a kingdom slightly analogous to the human, but without any real contrast. That semi-human experience occurs much earlier in their evolution than the human experience that the current (human) lifewave is passing through.

The understanding achieved by these two paths (human and angelic) differs significantly, yet, the human path leads ultimately to an understanding rather

similar to that of the deva evolution, but at a much later point in (relative) evolution. The pioneers of humanity, for example, deal more with the subjective consciousness and work with group energies (and pass beyond individual consciousness). But the devas are far better equipped to understand the other paths of intelligence than the (ordinary) human, since subjective consciousness predominates through the later stages of (virtually) every known path.

† Commentary No. 278

The Third Ennead 7

The seventh tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled "Time and Eternity." Plotinus considers the nature of time and eternity and the relationship that exists between these two concepts. Eternity is considered to be a concept quite superior to time, yet related to time through various processes of manifestation. Eternity is closely related to being, while time relates more closely with the realm of process. Time is thus considered a representation in image; in a sense, a reflection into lower-dimensional existence.

Eternity is much more august. As the divine envelops its parts, so does eternity embrace its content as a whole, rather than as a dimensional extension of time (multi-dimensional existence approaches non-dimensional (timeless) existence) (the other extreme is one-dimensional existence). Eternity requires repose and a unity that excludes interval (duration). Consequently, perpetuity in the time-order does not constitute eternity. Eternity participates in being (subject), movement (life), and repose (self-identity). Eternity embraces a concentrated diversity, "a life changelessly motionless, a consummation without part or interval." Eternity is the announcement of divine identity, "which characterizes what has no futurity but eternally is."

Engendered things (such as personality) exist in time from some beginning (creation) (emergence) to some end (dissolution) (obscuration) (being amenable to futurity), while unengendered things (such as the soul) exist beyond time. This unengendered existence (eternity) is beyond even perpetual existence (which is merely an extension of time rather than a quality of being). Eternity is God made manifest in the sense of the whole (a plurality of lives, limitless, self-

possessed) of manifestation rather than any objective perspective (dependent on derived manifestation). Thus eternity may be considered the aura of the One, the imperishable being, without regard to process (interval) (term). The everlasting (unbroken continuity) implies duration (time-dependence), where duration in a stream (flow) of time (space) (energy). But eternity is a multidimensional whole (field), beyond duration (having no time-dependence).

Sequential existence describes things and beings in the time-order (being bound in time), while eternity exists as partlessness, complete without sequence. Time is related to movement, though movement can be intermittent while time is (ever) continuous. Time is an attribute or characteristic of externalized existence, distinct from any temporal measurement; time is endless, independent of any measure. Eternity is "unwavering life, undivided totality, limitless, knowing no deviation, at rest in unity and intent upon it," while time is described as a derived quality, a product of perception (or at least dependent upon perception). Time is a product of the processes of manifestation, contained within (dependent upon) differentiation. Thus, engendered (sequential) (spatial) existence sustains the appearance of time (and space) and the perspective of (differentiated) diversity (dimensionality), while unengendered existence remains free from the bonds (processes) of time and space and constitutes a perspective of unity (non-dimensionality) (timelessness) (non-sequential, limitless coexistence).

Time flows with the ceaseless forward movement of life in manifestation. Time is the life of the soul in reflection, as it progresses through (objective) experience; thus (objective) time is a product of the outgoing (personal) phase of the soul. The internal phase of the soul knows only eternity. As the student progresses the consciousness from objective time-perception through subjective time, he is led ever closer to eternity and the One.

Truth and Uncertainty

One of the inherent problems of truth (knowledge) (understanding) in philosophy (religion) (science) is the paradox of certainty (uncertainty). Due to the conditional nature of manifestation and the inherent limitations (imperfections) of differentiated existence, an uncertainty principle governs any approach to truth such that no apparent truth can be known with (absolute) certainty. The appearance of (belief in) some absolute certainty suggests a lack of true (spiritual) humility (which in turn suggests some degree of personal glamour and/or illusion). The spiritual student must be satisfied with relative truth, understanding in accordance with consciousness, experience, and temperament. As consciousness increases, so does the capacity for understanding. But consciousness is ever relative, and the human experience is ever limited and subject to the necessary illusions of manifested existence.

Even if the individual consciousness is able to reach (true) transcendental (impersonal) levels, the realization obtained cannot be brought into the realm of conscious human understanding without being constrained somewhat. With a depth of intuition and a considerable capacity for correlation, discretion, and understanding, it is possible to embrace a great deal of knowledge with a considerable confidence which approaches certainty. But in wisdom, the esoteric student (scholar) recognizes the futility of absolute certainty, and remains relatively detached from even the most firm of his beliefs (realization).

Every presentation of truth (however highly inspired) remains an assertion, albeit founded in the greatest of minds and the greatest of consciousness. Every (perceived) (realized) truth constitutes (corresponds to) a belief, which may very well approach a very high degree of accuracy, but in the final analysis, it remains a belief regardless of its foundation. The greater truths are relatively free from personal energy (distortion), yet nevertheless incomplete and dependent on human means for communication. The human (objective) world merely complicates matters, for it is a world of appearance (reflection) (shadows), where every apparent thing or being (or experience) is a matter of necessarily limited perception (perspective). If some object is viewed in the most narrow way practicable, the knowledge realized will be incomplete (less than absolute), if

only due to its lack of correlation with a greater scheme of things. And even if some object is viewed in the broadest sense practicable, the knowledge gained (realized) will still be incomplete, however universal, if only due to its lack of definition (specificity).

The spiritual student is urged to consider truth (knowledge) (understanding) in the context of a working body of knowledge (beliefs) well-founded in (inner) (sanctioned) experience and verified by consciousness (the enlightened union of mind and heart). But that body of knowledge (accumulation or system of beliefs) must remain relatively flexible (stable but not implacable); the student should accept some degree of uncertainty (open-mindedness) and allow his beliefs to deepen (through modification and expansion) in the light of new experience (realization). With relative confidence (discretion) (appropriateness), there can be no polarity (of right or wrong), only the freedom (humility) of consciousness that approaches truth (reality).

Truth is ever relative. Certainty is relatively impossible. The futility of certainty (arrogance) approaches certainty (illusion). Unquestionable proof cannot exist. Truth remains ever an internal experience. Life is filled with one paradox after another. Along the spiritual path, the student is urged to embrace the relativity of all experience and proceed with confidence.

† Commentary No. 280

Second Ray Methods

The various second ray methods deal predominantly with consciousness (the second aspect) and can be classified into two groups: the inner methods and the outer methods. The inner methods deal with consciousness directly, through meditation (proper) and alignment (though inner methods may be used in conjunction with first ray methods (concentration) and third ray methods (contemplation)). The outer methods deal with consciousness less directly, through activity and association with others on objective levels.

The inner methods involve a conscious identification with the soul and the evocation of soul energies along two lines: internally as the mind (and

personality) is irradiated, and externally as the individual is linked with other souls. The proper evocation of second ray energy requires some degree of impersonality and a relatively well-developed (and mature) heart quality. The mystical experience proper is primarily a second ray experience, although some degree of sixth ray energy is usually incorporated in the method. The mystical method properly calls for the impersonal aspiration that so characterizes the enlightened second ray student. The inner methods depend primarily on the buddhic (intuitional) faculties of the soul, as it is along second ray lines that the intuition is unveiled and drawn into the responsive mind. The inner methods generally involve the pursuit of wisdom (rather than knowledge) and the concomitant sharing of heart-centered energies (as encouragement).

The outer methods include a number of characteristic activities, most of which are service-oriented. The general activity is sharing, though it may take the form of healing or teaching (or on higher levels, illumination through magnetic rapport). The healing (teaching) (sharing) methods call for the establishment of the inner alignment followed by an outpouring of second ray energies. Having achieved some degree of alignment, the student directs the consciousness outward to humanity, as the inclusive second ray energies are allowed to flow unobstructed by the personality-instrument. The teacher-student relationship (along second ray lines) involves mutual respect (and impersonal love), a sharing of the path and a spirit of cooperation. But the student is not allowed to become dependent (as is often the case along sixth ray lines); nor is the student directed. The student is simply encouraged in accordance with the capacity and responsiveness of his consciousness. As the loyalty of the student grows (based upon mutual respect and understanding), so does the student contribute more and more to the group endeavor.

The second ray method of achievement involves self-sacrifice, service, and sharing (which leads incidentally to intuitive insight, perception, and self-illumination). The student thus progresses to the extent that he is selfless (self-forgetting) (and to the extent that his service is relatively impersonal). Specifically, the second ray energies can be used to eliminate impediments and stumbling blocks (to spiritual progress), through non-resistance. The student learns to flow with the stream of (second ray) energy, and the struggle per se is one of allowing that energy to flow.

The student achieves integration through identification with the integrated state (identification being inherently non-resistive), but the student must also have sufficient awareness and freedom from deception. These second ray methods are relatively easy to use, except for those having a preponderance of fourth or sixth ray energy. The problems of the second ray methods include impatience, tendency toward reformation of others (rather than self-reformation), and the vulnerabilities implied through relationships with the fourth and sixth rays.

† Commentary No. 281

Parallel Evolution

The evolutionary design for any given planetary scheme usually involves a succession of lifewaves which differentiate in various ways and pass through various stages (kingdoms) (cycles) on their way to fulfillment. Each lifewave may expand horizontally and/or vertically according to the specifics of the plan and the circumstances to be faced. A horizontal expansion suggests further differentiation into parallel vertical streams, while a vertical expansion suggests that some elements (lives) within the lifewave may progress at different rates, some faster and some slower. As the lifewave spreads out vertically, it may even overlap preceding and/or succeeding lifewaves.

The evolutionary design normally emphasizes horizontal expansion, as the lifewave is differentiated into smaller streams for the purpose of balance and diversification. Examples of diversification can be found throughout the various kingdoms. Humanity is differentiated into various ray types as well as various races. The animal lifewave is clearly differentiated into various species (each having its own animal group-spirit). This type of differentiation is applied to both forms and the lives within the forms, but not necessarily in the same fashion; i.e., the differentiation of forms may be relatively independent from the differentiation of lives. Each stream that is so differentiated (diversified) provides multiple paths (possibilities) for the evolving life. Each path offers new (or different) opportunities, and each such path contributes in some way to the greater life (lifewave).

Differentiation for balance has an entirely different aim from that of differentiation for diversity (short-term). Differentiation for balance (polarity) provides a much more fundamental framework for evolution, affecting the entire scheme and having implications far beyond that of the relatively short-term experience. In the Earth planetary scheme, for example, the primary stream of evolutionary life has been branched into two great parallel streams: the human evolution and the deva evolution. The two branches share a common origin, but diverged very early in their history into two great parallel streams, each having a distinct polarity. The human evolution passes through the various kingdoms (mineral, plant, animal, human) in a positively (actively) polarized fashion, while the deva evolution passes through analogous kingdoms in a negatively (passively) polarized fashion. Each is essential to the overall plan, but the experience and contribution of each are markedly different. There is some overlap between the two paths, primarily in the subhuman kingdoms and (ultimately) far beyond the human kingdoms where the two paths eventually merge and their respective distinctive experiences are integrated.

Parallel evolution in the case of differentiation for diversity is essentially supplementary (merely additional), while parallel evolution in the case of differentiation for balance is essentially complementary (serving some major deficiency or incompleteness) (contrast for gain). Though analogous in some respects, the sexual differentiation of the human form differs markedly from that of parallel evolution in other respects. Sexual differentiation is a very short-term phenomenon as far as the individual is concerned, and only involves the form (personality), not the soul (which remains sexless).

The differentiation into deva and human paths is a very long-term experience which wholly involves the soul aspect. For all practical purposes, a soul is confined to one path or the other for the duration of evolution; while in the case of sexual distinction, the soul experiences both male and female incarnations throughout the relatively brief period from polarity.

The Third Ennead 8

The eighth tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled "Nature, Contemplation, and the One." Nature is the underlying creative and controlling force for the manifested world. Nature is by its own nature a contemplative act, a guiding force distinct from its works. Nature is an intelligent intermediary mechanism, filled with (related to) sweeping lives and forms, a creative mechanism bridging between the creator (logos) and the field (of nature). Nature possesses an indwelling effectiveness, creativity as a consequence of contemplation. Nature is simultaneously an act and an object of contemplation.

Nature is an instrument of evolution, of the same order as karma (and irretrievably merged with karmic processes), an intelligence that has no apparent (objective) evolutionary tendency in its own right (yet the manifold lives which form its activity and mechanism are inherently evolutionary). As an intelligence nature possesses a vast subjective knowledge and understanding, but has no objective faculties of its own. Nature is simply a synthesis of force serving as the agent of archetypal existence. The production of nature is an externalization of the archetype, yet much more complex, as it interacts with externalized phenomena. As an agent, nature participates in creative processes and is governed by various (natural) laws and principles (conditions).

The cause and effect relationship of manifestation is related to a broad, unified chain of contemplative experience. The creator (creative being) (a logos on some level) contemplates some objective. Intermediaries (lives) (laws) (principles) come into being and are impelled or conditioned toward bringing about the objective. The intelligent intermediaries further contemplate their own experience as they participate in the magnetic (creative) vortex of the original (sustained) (overshadowing) contemplation. The immediate general objective is brought into manifestation via a succession of intelligent lives (actors) (agents) (participants) as nature (karma) continues to sustain manifestation (being energized by the original momentum (contemplation)) and the more specific (cultivated) purposes of manifestation are worked out. As the ultimate object is fulfilled, the sustaining forces are withdrawn and the universe gradually dissolves into obscurity (as the lives pass into chaos to await a new

beginning), the wisdom of the experience being incorporated in the higher, contemplative life (logos).

All of this grand process involves a chain of contemplation, from the precursor (logos) to the elementary lives of manifested form. The elementary lives are actually more aware of their own contemplation than the majority of human personalities, who, in their extreme condition of apparent separation, remain asleep with regard to their true, inner nature. That (inner) soul principle extends throughout the universe in a chain of lives within lives, each succeeding from its prior and being different though related and an extension of the contemplation of the prior. The relative strength of the soul varies according to the particulars, but all are encompassed within the greater vision. Action is the result of contemplation and leads to contemplation. Activity springs from incompleteness, as each is incomplete with respect to its prior. As the soul achieves relative completion, it gradually withdraws its instrument from the lower activities and maintains its repose.

All springs from vision. Every life is a form of thought, an emanation more complex than its source. Contemplation is ultimately one with its object; it is for the student to achieve such realization. The advancing conscious contemplation of the student leads to that (divine) (inner) (limitless) union.

† Commentary No. 283

Solitude

The sojourn or pilgrimage of the soul into the external world of the personality (incarnation) involves eventually facing the encumbering glammers and illusions of ordinary (mundane) human experience and reconciling the apparent separation of the lower self from its higher counterpart (and the apparent separation of individuals from the group consciousness).

The vast majority of humanity are so enchanted by ordinary experience (illusion) that they are unaware of their absorption in mundane affairs and are unaware of their true spiritual self. But the spiritual student becomes so

increasingly aware of the true state of his experience that a dilemma is faced with regard to action and involvement.

On the one hand the student is drawn to humanity through the love aspect, the impulse to serve, and the natural tendency to be absorbed in the mundane world. On the other hand the student is drawn away from humanity as he seeks the internal balance (self-realization) and feels more and more alien to the mundane world of ordinary humanity. As spiritual values and spiritual consciousness are brought more into focus within the mind and life of the spiritual student, the contrast increases, and the tendency to withdraw from worldly experience may very well predominate. The student is forced to reject many of the ordinary values and as much of the glamour and illusion as can be realized. At this stage the student must also struggle to avoid absorption in the outer world through increased detachment and impersonality (leading to greater freedom of thinking and a deeper rapport with spiritual existence and the common life). This solitude of the student is essential to ultimate progress, but must usually remain an internal experience, a solitude of inner peace while the student functions (with discretion) in the ordinary world.

The master of solitude is one who has passed through the preliminary stages and who has achieved a state of consciousness in which he is able to live and work in the ordinary world without being absorbed or distracted by mundane concerns. His detachment and impersonality are balanced with wisdom (discretion) and understanding. He refuses to compromise his standards to the extent that his consciousness is affected or to the extent that his ability to serve effectively is impaired. Such a spiritual student places increasing emphasis on subjective work as his abilities and talents are more usefully applied through consciousness. But the student cannot (normally) withdraw completely, for the link with humanity must still be maintained on objective levels (to facilitate the proper passage of spiritual energies). The value of the spiritual student is his place within humanity, for just being among humanity (and being self-realized) is an encouragement to others.

But to master this experience of solitude is not easy. By not accepting normal human values, the student may find himself set apart by others, for he cannot share their mundane rapport and may very much seem alien. Thus the spiritual student must face that challenge (contrast) as well, while allowing the inner

love energy to flow unimpaired by the beliefs or feelings or values of his fellow human beings. The student must accept being misunderstood in many ways, but even misunderstanding is an encouragement to understand. Many are troubled (consciously or unconsciously) by the presence of the spiritual student and are ultimately encouraged to reconcile their dilemma. Consolation for the student comes only from within, as the real unity of human life is recognized. The master of solitude remains ever one with humanity where it matters, inwardly, while on external levels remaining detached and free from enchantment.

† Commentary No. 284

Third Ray Methods

The various third ray methods deal predominantly with intelligence rather than consciousness, and with the mental principle. While the will is the primary instrument of the first ray and the intuition (love) is the primary instrument of the second ray, the mind (light) is the major instrument of the third ray, with considerable emphasis on the higher, abstract mind. The inner third ray methods deal with intelligence directly, through contemplation, while the outer third ray methods deal with various aspects of civilization (active intelligence as a force for evolution and the fulfillment of purpose).

The inner third ray methods are initially concerned with understanding the mind and its relationships, then training the contemplative mental faculties (and cultivating the principle (factor) of intelligence), and finally applying those faculties in contemplation for greater understanding. Along first ray lines, internal adjustments are made through the application of the will; along second ray lines, internal adjustments are made through the application of consciousness; but along third ray lines, internal adjustments are made indirectly (but no less effectively) as a consequence of understanding. The act of understanding (comprehension) (realization) carries with it a flow of energy which qualifies the consciousness and brings about subtle, internal adjustments.

Contemplation can be a potent instrument for understanding, provided the student is properly qualified and responsive. Even contemplation without (preliminary) meditation can be quite helpful, for contemplation (in this lower

sense) is a broad-minded consideration (evaluation) (reasoning) that draws the abstract mind into alignment with the concrete mind (of the waking-consciousness). True contemplation (beyond reasoning (beyond preliminary meditation)) is even more potent for it removes the lower mind (personality) as a hindrance (since the lower mind is brought to a point of responsive tension (perfect quiet) (allegiance)). Third ray methods (chiefly contemplation and subsequent reasoning (correlation) (creative ideation)) are used extensively in philosophic study (e.g., in the study of the plans, purposes, and methods of evolutionary manifestation). These third ray methods characterize the spiritual scholar who involves an active intelligence in the pursuit of understanding.

The third ray bridges between the (inner) realm of aspect and the (outer) realm of attribute (activity). Scholarly understanding may not lead directly to activity, for the consequential adjustments in consciousness may be sufficient in themselves. But understanding may more often lead to outer constructive activity (the application of outer third ray methods). As active evolutionary force, the third ray is involved with change, adaptation, improvement, progress, and development in many aspects of civilization. The third ray is an inherently creative ray, but in a general sense (in contrast with the more specialized creativity of the fourth ray and the seventh ray). Outer third ray methods include or are involved with economic methods, aspects of socialism, diplomacy, various judicial (legal) methods, and various aspects of communication.

The third ray approach leans heavily on the contemplative disposition, and involves patience, caution, impartiality (impersonality) (detachment), discrimination (discretion), goodwill, and the concept of right activity. To some extent, the third ray methods complement those of the fifth ray by emphasizing the abstract, relatively general (universal) principles, concepts, and ideas (while the fifth ray emphasizes particulars). Ultimately, the third ray is much more actively involved in guiding evolution than the four rays of attribute which provide the specifics of active experience.

Advancement

Every experience in the lower worlds has some relative (large or small) significance for the evolution of human consciousness. The entire realm of human activity is a stage for the experience, expression, and progress of the human being. That progress is based almost entirely on experience and is impelled from within and from without by evolutionary (and karmic) forces. Preliminary advancement comes through the development of various abilities and as a broad spectrum of experience is properly assimilated.

Normal, gradual advancement is impelled primarily by external, karmic forces which bring the experience earned by previous activity and needed for individual growth. But for the individual who is conscious of evolutionary purpose and who willingly cooperates with that purpose, the advancement is naturally hastened as internal forces are brought to bear on the individual consciousness. Those internal forces are increasingly derived from the consciousness of the soul, as the soul commits itself by stages to the spiritual path.

Though the accumulation of experience is important (essential) to human progress and though the development of various abilities is similarly important, the true measure of human progress lies in the quality of consciousness, which relies heavily on the assimilation of experience and the reformation of human character. Considerable human evolution cannot occur without a deliberate effort on the part of the spiritual student to reform (improve) his own character, obtain greater self-control and self-discipline, and learn the needed lessons. Much can be learned consciously, from direct experience, observation, and study. Much can also be learned unconsciously, as experience is subjectively assimilated. And in each case where the student is open to his experience (and honest with himself), the progress is hastened. Human advancement naturally accelerates as consciousness is expanded and qualified.

Perhaps the most significant ingredient to human advancement is selflessness. Though the spiritual student is expected to consciously and effectively assist the process of advancement, the student must also take care to evaluate and reform the motives and expectations concerning his own advancement. Self-

centeredness is a major obstruction to human advancement, regardless of ability and experience. Where the student is self-centered (to whatever extent), the student is naturally isolated from the more meaningful adjustments in consciousness which effectively mark the successive progress of the student along the spiritual path. One cannot obtain effective (proper) discipleship until considerable progress has been achieved in overcoming the self-centeredness of the human personality. Where the ego is for all practical purposes fully overcome, the student advances quickly and effectively (safely) through discipleship and the more esoteric stages.

A related factor in human advancement is the relationship between the individual and the race, and the balance of individual karma with the karma of humanity. One cannot progress in advance of the race without first contributing to the progress and advancement of the race. Further, one cannot progress at the expense of any other. Self-centered (but apparently selfless) contributions are ineffective due to the lack of sincerity (rapport with humanity). Not only must the student (ultimately) become essentially selfless, but the student must also work within humanity for the sake of humanity, not for the sake of oneself. The greatest contribution of the esoteric student is his quality, in careful alignment with the quality of humanity. Thus, the advancement of humanity is deeply involved with those who pass naturally beyond the mundane consciousness.

† Commentary No. 286

The Third Ennead 9

The ninth (last) tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled "Detached Consideration." Therein Plotinus considers a number of ideas concerning the intellectual principle and the intellectual object, analysis and correspondence, the partiality (relativity) of the soul, and the relationship of goodness (as an abstraction) to consciousness.

According to Plotinus, the intellectual principle and the intellectual object are distinct, yet the former is contained within the latter (and conversely). The intellectual object is the intellectual principle in repose, the principle being an active manifestation. This leads to a concept of a unity which admits

distinction, so that the contemplative being (repose) contains (sees) the intellectual realm within itself. When Plotinus speaks of the intellect, he speaks of a much higher concept than that of the ordinary, brain-dependent intellect. This higher concept involves the third aspect (creative intelligence, manifestation) which holds the separative principle (which is illustrated by a perspective spectrum of differentiation having an underlying coherent unity). The student may as easily perceive the differentiation (diversity) of life (and form) as the whole, the partials as well as the overwhelming unity, without violating the merit (reality) of either.

A somewhat loosely related concept is the scientific reduction (analysis) of a body of knowledge "into its separate propositions" without shattering its unity, for "in each distinct item is latent the entire body of the science." The analogy for man is similarly relevant, that man as a separate proposition contains inherently within himself the essential nature of the whole, and, similarly, that the principles or character within any person are qualified to some extent by the whole (personal) nature (aura) and to some extent by the overshadowing soul (the higher nature). Thus the highest residual of man offers a link to the divine. Man is a divine microcosm, a potentiality that contains within itself the entire universe (manifestation).

Man's immediate link to divinity and potential universality is the all-soul which does not come and go (as its reflection does). The all-soul remains as being, outside of time and space (unrelated to the time and space of the partial soul (reflection) which incarnates for experience and returns for fulfillment). The soul is ever one with the all-soul (the universal soul aspect), yet related to its reflection to the extent of its maturity. The universality of the soul aspect achieves multiplicity by its omnipresence (through its (reflected) instruments). Plotinus suggests that "universality demands a previous unity," that the unity is greater than the totality of its parts, being both omnipresent and nowhere-present. The (unenergized) parts alone in their totality cannot approach the significance of their unity.

The soul is, on its level, matter with respect to the monad, but spirit with regard to the personality, for matter and spirit are merely the extremes of a continuum, and the soul persists (pervades) a middle ground or region. Or in other words, consciousness gives rise to perception, a relativity of perspectives, equally valid,

but dependent on the view and leading to different (related) conclusions. Similarly, potentiality and actuality stand as one in a succession of derived states, where one is an actuality with regard to its successor and (simultaneously) a potentiality with respect to its precursor. As a potentiality it is free to grow; as an actuality it rests in eternity (reality) (in relation to its successor). The source of consciousness lies beyond consciousness, as the source of life lies beyond life.

† Commentary No. 287

Sanctuary

Sanctuary is defined (in the orthodox sense) as a most sacred place, a place of refuge and protection, and as an immunity from external influence. In the metaphysical context, sanctuary may refer to a number of concepts, each of which contrasts with the ordinary world and worldly consciousness. Sanctuary may refer to the period between lives when the soul is free from the burden of reflection (and free from the burden of assimilation). Sanctuary may refer to the period of sleep between days of activity in the external world, provided that sleep is a refuge from dreams as well (for dreams are related to external experience). On a larger (planetary, solar, or cosmic) scale, sanctuary may refer to pralaya, a period of rest between major cycles of activity (manifestation). Thus, in general, sanctuary refers to some unmanifested state.

In a much greater sense, sanctuary may be thought of as a circle of impersonal energy. Within that circle is an unstructured communion of all life, human and deva, a oneness that passes beyond consciousness. Sanctuary is not a place or a structure; it is a high degree of being. Within this sanctuary there is no hierarchy of consciousness; there is only an awareness which is non-awareness, the essence of being, far beyond the ego and far beyond self-identification. In one sense sanctuary refers to the soul and to its consciousness, but in the higher sense, even the soul is left behind as sanctuary is embraced properly, beyond even the true self.

Sanctuary is an energy of pure silence and pure stillness, an energy which filters out all of the accumulated distractions, glammers, illusions, and thoughts of activity on personality levels, and to some extent even on soul levels; a silence

(stillness) which leaves behind (below) the not-self (the personality) (the ego) and the world of activity. On the first level, all awareness of the objective world ceases; on the second level, all awareness of the individuality ceases; on the third level, all awareness ceases, as the thread (of consciousness) (being) enters the sanctuary of non-activity (non-thinking) (non-awareness). Sanctuary involves a deliberate separation of self from not-self, a qualification of consciousness leading beyond consciousness, an application of will (atma) that allows for the ascension of current being into the sacred circle of impersonal energy that is sanctuary.

In the lesser esoteric sense, sanctuary is the inner circle of the ashram (on the higher levels of the soul); in the greater esoteric sense, sanctuary lies even further, beyond ashramic existence, a sacred circle at the end of the path (though the individual may exist far from that ultimate goal). Human terms can no more describe this sanctuary than the being of the soul, yet a correspondence exists, linking sanctuary with love in its highest, impersonal sense, with healing in its highest, esoteric sense (perfection), and with service (in its highest sense). Sanctuary lies toward the end of the path, as a magic circle, toward the end of a path the direction of which is the direction leading from the personality through the soul, beyond being, to the impersonal that lies beyond all.

This sanctuary cannot be obtained through seeking. It can be invoked (and properly evoked) only to the extent of earned consciousness (quality) and only to the extent that external factors are permissive (the esoteric student is not permitted to withdraw from outer responsibilities) (time (?) spent in sanctuary (retreat) must ultimately serve the purpose of the soul). Following sanctuary, the esoteric student faces the return to the world of activity (where activity is wisely limited and/or qualified), where work can be accomplished.

Fourth Ray Methods

The fourth ray experience is to a large extent common to all of humanity, and particularly to those who are responsive to evolutionary forces (regardless of level or extent of consciousness). That experience involves (primarily) conflict, contrast, and crisis (and resolution), and extends throughout the lower world of human experience. In a sense, experience is a fourth ray function, as all (lower) experience involves some form of contrast leading ultimately to understanding and the growth of consciousness.

Fourth ray methods of experience concern the actual resolution of experience, recognizing the contrast (conflict) (crisis), understanding the opposing or contrasting forces (including motives and purpose), and achieving the intended assimilation through reconciliation and/or balance. There are particular fourth ray methods which deal with each of these actions as well as general fourth ray methods (such as holding the mind steady) which can be applied to any of these actions. Reconciliation proper may not be appropriate, provided that the proper understanding is achieved (even unilaterally). All of life's experience in the lower worlds can be viewed in fourth ray terms, though energy associated with each of the seven rays may as well be appropriate.

Fourth ray methods of expression deal primarily with artistic expression and/or cultural expression (and the cultivation of culture and cultural progress). The methods of artistic expression deal with communication (via the artistic medium), mediation, and/or interpretation (through balance, contrast, harmony, stability, duality, beauty, relatedness, perception, etc.). Similarly, the methods of cultural expression can be related to purposive human experience and progress (understanding and evolution). Fourth ray teaching methods in general draw upon relationships with the second ray and the sixth ray, and to some extent with the seventh ray.

Fourth ray methods may be used to achieve internal balance (resolution) by bringing contrasting forces into balance. The fourth ray method for integrating the personality, for example, involves a subtle blending and balancing of the head and heart. Fourth ray methods of personality cultivation include methods

for personality control (through the dampening of emotions and their controlled elevation into balance with the mental center) and the achievement of confidence, serenity, stability, and overall poise. There are fourth ray methods for balancing each of the various pairs of opposites, the head and the heart, the soul and the personality, the personal and the impersonal, etc., each of which involves some form of blending of forces (with adjustment and polarization). Fourth ray methods may also be applied to interpersonal relationships, the proper balancing of the individual's life-sphere with others. The burden (responsibility) of discretion and adjustment is ever upon the student with respect to others, never upon others with respect to oneself.

Fourth ray methods proper typically involve visualization and/or evocation of the intuition (the higher human faculty, beyond the rational mental). Visualization is a potent means of concentrating force, but the student should be careful in dealing with indisposed (unenlightened and unqualified) imagination (which often leads to self-deception). Qualified imagination and visualization require the achievement of proper balance and stability prior to evocation. Many specific fourth ray methods deal with the various natural cycles (rhythm) and their proper application. Ultimately, fourth ray methods lead to the highest experience (along fourth ray lines), that of rapport. Thus, the fourth ray provides practical methods for human experience and progress.

† Commentary No. 289

Ascension

In the metaphysical context, advancement refers to a progressive upward movement (in consciousness) (along the spiritual path), while ascension refers to the final transition between the human stage and the next higher stage, the culmination of at least several lifetimes of conscious and deliberate evolution. Advancement can be accelerated as the student begins to master his own consciousness, but ascension remains a consequence of advancement and activity.

Many substantial prerequisites exist that must be fulfilled before ascension can occur, virtually all of which involve quality rather than specific achievements

(quality is the integrated result of specific achievements and general accomplishments). All of the various prerequisites are interrelated and are normally fulfilled together, as ascension implies an overall, highly integrated balance of all pertinent forces. One of the most obvious prerequisites for ascension is the attainment of sufficient (earned) objective and subjective experience, both general and particular, and the corequisite karmic fulfillment. All individual karma must be fulfilled (released); ascension is not possible where any karmic ties and responsibilities continue to exist. The student must (ultimately) achieve sufficient detachment (freedom) and subjective polarization (the esoteric student is increasingly detached from objective involvement as he works on more meaningful (subjective) levels).

Another obvious prerequisite is self-mastery (and the mastery of the physical, emotional, and mental planes of consciousness). The candidate for ascension must have developed sufficient (objective and subjective) abilities and talents for working in each of the seven ray domains (and have mastered each of the seven ray energies), and he must have completed several major initiations in consciousness. In addition to potency, the candidate must possess sufficient quality of consciousness. One can master a plane of consciousness with or without the sufficient quality of consciousness and conversely, one can develop sufficient quality of consciousness with or without sufficient mastery; both quality and mastery are required for ascension. In addition to the complete fulfillment of individual karma, the student must also contribute sufficiently to humanity and the planetary consciousness (he must fulfill substantially more than his share of racial (human) and planetary karma). The fulfillment of group karma in no way implies (or allows) the fulfillment of the individual karma of other persons.

One of the more difficult requirements for ascension is a lack of interest or desire for ascension (coupled with a lack of interest or desire for remaining within the human lifewave and/or lower worlds). This requires the achievement of a very delicate balance of desirelessness with service and a responsible commitment (to humanity and to the spiritual path). Since the student is denied interest in ascension (at least at the level for which ascension is possible), it follows that ascension cannot be evoked consciously by the student. Ascension is, however, an inevitable process that can be neither evoked nor deterred, a necessary product of spiritual momentum.

The role of ascension is to encourage the progress of the entire planetary life. The esoteric student, who, fully qualified, withdraws from the world of activity and begins the ascension in consciousness creates a (very potent) magnetic path that embraces probation, discipleship, initiation, and ascension (obscuration). That magnetic vortex (fully integrated and impersonal) continues as a subtle beacon of encouragement to all who are responsive to the magnetic currents of the esoteric path.

† Commentary No. 290

The Fourth Ennead 1-2

The first and second tractates of the Fourth Ennead are entitled "On the Essence of the Soul," (1) and (2) respectively. In these two tractates Plotinus clarifies the existence of the soul; its place, its tendencies, its paradox.

Existing in the middle ground (between spirit and matter) (between the monad (its precursor) and the personality (its successor (reflection))), the soul has a dual tendency. On the one hand, the soul is cognizant of unity (reality), responsive to spirit, and (quite) impersonally detached from its reflection (differentiation) (multiplicity). On the other hand, the soul is drawn into (onto) reflection for experience (divisional existence) (succession) (partition) through karma (and higher evolutionary tendencies). The soul is indivisible in its actuality, bound to the supreme (divine), yet nevertheless sends forth its energy for reflection. While the soul itself maintains its higher vision (repose), its reflection tenders experience and expression.

Reflection depends upon a material base. Matter tends towards separation (partition) (disintegration) due to its relationship (identification) with chaos (and the laws of entropy). Each atom of space-time is a point of tension impressed upon the void, a compressed spring held in place (under tension) by the creative (divine) will. The tendency of such a spring is to return to its natural (zero energy) state, but the pressure of higher forces holds the matter in place and permits the manipulation of matter by intelligence. Consequently, organization (the integration of matter on some level) requires a coherent force to balance the otherwise prevailing forces. Reality (real being) is not identified

with the lesser forces (of material fabric) (tension) but is identified with the greater (higher) forces of union and synthesis. When the will is withdrawn, the binding forces are dissolved and the fabric of time and space is released into the void from which it came. Standing midway between the will aspect and the material foundation upon which the will operates (via the soul), the soul is a qualified intermediary for the force of consciousness.

The reflection of the soul is a diffusion (an impression of energy upon a material base) that must be held properly in place by higher forces. The basic patterns of the reflection (the personality) are held in place on subconscious levels, but the higher (spiritual relevant) patterns require that the personality instrument be responsive far beyond the lesser, sustaining patterns (those which sustain the physical, emotional, and mental form). The higher patterns constitute the inner motivation (the development of consciousness and adherence to the spiritual path) (the will of the soul which can only encourage a responsive instrument). The bridging between the implacable (indivisible) higher nature and the independent (separative) lower nature is accomplished entirely through the second aspect (consciousness).

The paradox of the soul comes from its prismatic stance, reflecting to some extent in both directions. The soul is everywhere, simultaneously partible and impartible. For the reflection, it is the unifying (overriding) consciousness that links the various parts together. The various parts (of the body or personality) are not self-evident nor are they aware of relationships or even of the existence of the other parts to which they are related, yet they exhibit a degree of independence drawn from the material nature and respond to some extent to the unifying force of the integrated personality (consciousness). That personality consciousness may or may not be integrated, though the soul (consciousness) is always integrated on its level. The soul is the instrument of self-consistency and of the higher coherence reflected into the personality.

Justice

Two ways to consider the concept and processes of justice are from the standpoint of administration (imposition) and from the standpoint of receipt. Ideally, justice is the maintenance or administration of what is just, normally through the proper administration of law and the assignment of merited consequence (rewards or punishment?). The emphasis in justice is upon what is just (morally right) and involves fairness, impartiality, merit, equity, and right action. However, problems arise from personal energy, human attempts at judgment, and the misunderstanding of purpose.

The least merited form of (apparent) justice is that which is imposed on individual or personal levels, involving emotional and/or rational energy. Justice (?) imposed on personal levels (retribution) violates a number of basic principles and leads inevitably to greater karmic entanglement (leading to proper understanding). The karmic dilemma (deserved imposition versus the right to impose) is resolved albeit with some difficulty. Man has only a limited awareness of reality; he is normally unaware of cause and effect relationships which underlie and precipitate all experience. Consequently, man has no right of imposing judgment upon others, especially with regard to personal energy.

Karma requires that every experience be merited; an individual receiving some sanction must therefore merit such imposition, regardless of the motives or judgment of the person imposing such sanction. The reality (reasons, cause and effect relationships) is almost always far removed from the reasoning or understanding of the instrument. Though the person performing the imposition (knowingly or otherwise) serves a higher purpose, the lack of proper awareness and understanding coupled with the personal motives (energies) constitutes an impropriety (the end does not necessarily justify the means).

An intermediate form of justice is administered through government sanctions. The same considerations apply for the intermediate form as for the more personal form, except that in the intermediate form there is (hopefully) a greater element of reasoning and understanding. Being less personal, the intermediate form of human justice is more likely to be effective (meaningful) and thereby

contribute to the purpose of justice. In fact, such human justice is allowed (encouraged) to the extent that it is (nominally) fair and reasonable. The significance of the intermediate form goes beyond that of the individuals concerned, for it implies a progressive form of group (cultural) (national) learning, as the group attempts equitable and reasonable self-regulation (analogous to self-control (moderation) of the evolving individual). The entire process of law-making and administration of human laws is a response of the group to the inner (evolutionary) encouragement, and though imperfect, it contributes to the development of the group with which it is applied.

The highest (and only essentially perfect) form of justice is karma, which underlies and overshadows all lesser forms and experience in the lower worlds. Karma is flexible in that it involves wisdom and incorporates all pertinent causes throughout the time-stream, but it is also implacable in the sense that it cannot falter. It does involve mitigation (motives, circumstances) but places the greatest emphasis on individual responsibility. An individual is responsible (accountable for every action) regardless of circumstances, though the circumstances (ignorance) will affect the consequences. The essential purpose of karma is the evolution of consciousness; justice is a lesser albeit important concept which supports the general purpose of karma. The essential purpose of justice, perhaps too often overlooked, is to encourage self-reform.

† Commentary No. 292

Fifth Ray Methods

The fifth ray experience is related directly to the development, training, and application of the lower (concrete) (rational) (objective) mind and is further related to the major goals and qualification of the current (Aryan) (fifth) root-race. The development of the concrete mind proceeds as the mind is properly exercised through focused observation, concentration, specialization, discretion, structured reasoning, and analysis. Anyone who is emotionally polarized generally has an underdeveloped (unstructured, untrained, vaguely defined) concrete mind and is unable to think freely and effectively. It is the fifth ray experience (in its various forms) that leads from the emotional polarization to the fully-developed mental polarization.

Much of the orthodox educational process is related to (designed for) mental development, but the fully-developed mind can only be achieved through continual self-education and mental exercise. This fifth ray drive is the thirst for knowledge and understanding, utilizing various methods of study, thinking, seeking, searching, experimenting, and (ultimately) analysis and correlation. The fifth ray experience involves meaningful structure, various scientific methods and procedures, and organized, developmental thinking (through various ideas with consideration of perceived possible alternatives and implications).

Analysis is the fundamental tool along fifth ray lines. Analysis involves the logical, organized, or systematic study and resolution of some relatively complex object or subject into its component parts or constituent elements. As the differentiated parts are understood, and as the relationships between the various elements are realized, a greater understanding of the whole is possible. Complex objects are thus resolved into relatively simple constituents leading (hopefully) to a mastery of the subject. Fifth ray methods consequently involve clarification and elaboration of details. Accuracy is a particularly important consideration. A fifth ray analysis is vastly improved where the intuition can be brought to bear, impersonally, upon the subject.

The fifth ray approach is not without its difficulties; namely, the tendency toward independence, smallness of vision, narrow-mindedness, a critical disposition, etc. Thus, the fifth ray approach should be tempered and balanced (with third ray and heart-centered energy), and should not be allowed to become an end in itself. When properly applied (with wisdom and discretion), the fifth ray approach can be particularly potent in the mental and spiritual development of the individual, but it is also a stepping-stone, as development preliminary (and necessary) to the effective union of mental and intuitive faculties. In this respect, meditation (spiritual discipline) plays an important role, in applying fifth ray energy to overcome and uplift the emotional nature, in linking the lower (objective) mental with the higher, (subjective) (contemplative) mental, and in correlating details with a greater whole.

Specific fifth ray methods normally involve formulae of one form or another to accomplish the intended development, training, or application. Such formulae

range from simple, self-evident procedures or patterns to highly involved esoteric threads requiring considerable experience and formal training. Fifth ray methods (proper) utilize (primarily) the ajna chakra, as the energy center for mental focus and concentration of attention (energy). As the esoteric student progresses, he learns to utilize fifth ray methods in channeling energy through the various centers (chakras) for specific purposes. Ultimately, the crown chakra is used to overshadow the various fifth ray applications, as the proper balance of head and heart is achieved.

† Commentary No. 293

Experience

The immediate purpose of life on earth is experience leading to evolutionary development. That purpose is implied in the karma which ultimately draws the soul into incarnation and provides the appropriate environment and circumstances (particulars) for experience. Though karma provides the opportunity and though the momentum of the individual plays a significant role, it is the responsiveness and consciousness (awareness) of the individual that determines the relative success (progress) of any particular experience or duration.

Experience can be realized on conscious and/or unconscious levels. In the early stages of human evolution, experience on physical and emotional levels is designed to lead the individual toward mastery of the physical and emotional environment (and instruments). That preliminary experience is intended to set the stage for later, higher experience. In the middle and later stages of human evolution, physical and emotional experience is designed to invoke consciousness by providing a framework for mental assessment and intuitive experience. Through the application of consciousness, the individual learns to perceive, interpret, and evaluate the afforded experience, taking into consideration the various levels upon which it occurs. The more substantial experience (and its assimilation) is realized almost entirely on mental and intuitive levels. Consequently, and quite naturally, the student becomes less involved in physical and emotional experience and more involved in mental and intuitive experience.

The student should learn to discern real (substantive) opportunities from incidental (relatively needless or less substantive) experience. An apparent opportunity may be afforded as a test of discretion, and that test may well hold more value than apparent experience. As the student progresses, the cumulative experience is assimilated and transformed into wisdom (quality), the more so as experience is consciously contemplated and assessed. Merit (karma) will draw whatever experience and conditions are needed; opportunities that remain unfulfilled may slow the individual's progress, depending on the circumstances.

Mental experience may be objective or subjective, and may involve observation, analysis, association (correlation), and contemplation. Intuitive experience (realization) is entirely subjective, but often relates to more objective (mental, rational) experience. Observation is a particularly potent instrument for experience, provided the student makes a conscious effort to assess and evaluate the observed information. It is far easier for the student to progress through observation and analysis than through direct experience (i.e., as an active participant); as an impersonal observer, the student is not entangled in the forces of the experience. Where the student is not responsive to indirect experience, then direct experience may be necessary.

Though individual (and direct) experience is important in the early stages of human evolution, collective (interactive) experience is more important during the later stages. Collective experience includes the assessment of group experience and the experience of the individual in relation to the group (i.e., provided by the interaction). Interactive experience depends on communication, perception, and consciousness. Perception and consciousness are relatively simple factors, at least in the sense that they can (hopefully) be controlled or qualified. Communication (the transference of meaning) is more complicated because the student has only limited control (qualification) of the process and is dependent on the perception and consciousness of the other participants. Interactive experience offers the greater challenge and opportunity for growth, particularly as the process is raised to predominantly mental levels.

The Fourth Ennead 3

The third tractate of the Fourth Ennead is the first of three commentaries entitled "Problems of the Soul." Therein Plotinus considers the relationship of the individual soul to the oversoul and the relationship of the soul to its body (personality). Also considered is the manner in which souls originate, but the central question concerns the divisibility and sharing of the oversoul with regard to the particular (individual) soul.

The central conclusion is that the oversoul remains intact and undivided (unparted) (indivisible), yet nonetheless related to the finite number of particular souls. The individual soul may be considered as a localized expression of the oversoul, though the soul knows no spatiality as it deals only with quality. Individual souls are of the same genus as the oversoul and attain to the same objects (i.e., have the same potentiality), yet remain relatively distinct. The soul (on any level) represents quality, and quality cannot be parted, having neither size nor measure. The soul can be differentiated (in terms of quality) but it cannot be divided; though individual souls appear particular (distinct), they remain nonetheless mere extensions or expressions of the oversoul. Therefore souls of particulars exist only incidentally, while the oversoul exists essentially. The soul (oversoul) is a unity everywhere present but with differing functions.

All souls originate from (and return to) the oversoul; on their level all share a common bond; on the level of their reflection (i.e., on the level of the personality), differences prevail. The various souls are equal but different (not identical in character or quality) (due to the differentiation of ray lives). Plotinus adds that "differences may be induced also by the bodies with which the soul has to do and, even more, by the character and mental operations carried over from the living of previous lives." The soul reflects its own potentiality into the form (which evolves on its own material level, in later cycles to pass through higher stages); thus, within the form are found many correspondences to the soul and the higher life. Each form is linked with its archetype, and all levels participate in the life of the oversoul (divinity). The soul is the mediation between the monad (intelligence) and the body (form). The monad is not reflected upon matter; the body is a reflection of the reflection

of the monad. The influence of the monad is felt only to the extent that the form (mind) (personality) is responsive to the mediation of the soul.

The soul descends without deliberation, creating its instrument and incarnating as a consequence of karmic force (the soul creates its own destiny and then must live in accordance with that which it has created). The creator is bound subjectively to its creation, at least until its destiny (usefulness) is fulfilled, whereupon the creation (in matter) is dissolved and the creator is further liberated. All occurrences in the lesser world are subject to order (enlightenment) and are therefore interrelated. The monad is as a center of light, the soul as a reflector of light, and the personality (mind) as a shadow partially enlightened. The soul (the reflector) does not belong to the body (the personality) (the shadow); the body belongs to the soul.

The soul contains the body (but not vice versa) and overshadows the body without spatiality. The body is merely accessory to the principle (the soul). The body resides within the soul, but the soul persists far beyond the personality (as well). The purified (elevated, completed) soul so transcends the personality that it is no longer subject to the attraction of external existence (incarnation) and the personality matrix (archetype) is dissolved.

† Commentary No. 295

Meaning

One of the challenges of the esoteric philosophy is the cultivation of wisdom (understanding) (quality) through the presentation of ideas for consideration and application. The philosophy tends to address the more significant concepts (ideas) (principles) (teachings), which coincidentally tend to be more abstract and less easily conveyed than the relatively mundane (familiar) (more objective) (less significant) aspects. The problem of meaning can arise wherever attempts are made to communicate ideas. It can also arise with respect to the significance of life (experience) (philosophy).

In the communicative process, meaning refers to the idea intended to be conveyed and to the idea actually conveyed or received (understood). Problems

arises from limitation, as the intended idea is translated into some symbolic form or message (language) and as the received message is translated into some idea or understanding that the recipient correlates with the intended message. Problems are compounded by perception, prejudiced thinking (narrow-minded or premature assumptions), and selective interpretation based on disposition or habit. Consequently, the student should exercise considerable care (insight) in communication to ensure (to the extent that it is possible or reasonable) accuracy and proper significance. The student should also evaluate the possible interpretations of the message and consider the responsiveness and background of the recipient. As a recipient, the student should seek clarification of the meaning conveyed and evaluate the message or communication in context.

Context is important because it provides information which may clarify the intended meaning. Character and psychology both contribute to the context or framework of the communication. The words themselves are normally insufficient, because most words have several or more meanings (definitions) (denotations), some common, some not so common. The attachment that people tend to have with regard to particular definitions also contributes to the problem. Misunderstanding often arises from a failure to respect or understand the definitions of others, particularly where the individual (utilizing the concrete mind) associates only his own limited definitions of words (concepts) (actions). This is particularly a problem for spiritual students and for relatively subjective concepts. The concept of impersonality, for example, is frequently misunderstood by spiritual students, and communication often fails to impart the proper meaning. This is due to the limitations of language as well as to common preconceptions and predispositions (based on limited experience or ability).

The esoteric philosophy in a sense embraces a very particular terminology, where ordinary words takes on both academic definitions and connotations as well as special (subtle) associations and correspondences, making far greater use of the available language than ordinary communication. Consequently, the student must learn to recognize the context and implications of philosophical writing and pertinent communication. A broad vocabulary and an open mind are essential to the understanding of the various aspects of the esoteric philosophy.

The meaning of any idea (concept) (thought) can be properly conveyed, but only where the proper energy (qualification) is present and only where the recipient is responsive. Where serious philosophical writing is read casually (and where ordinary or common meanings are presumed) a great deal of the meaning may not be conveyed. Interactive communication (where feedback is permitted) is preferred, particularly where the interaction is simultaneous. The esoteric student should ultimately be in touch with the energy of the communication so that the entire meaning can be embraced with insight and confidence.

† Commentary No. 296

Sixth Ray Methods

The sixth ray experience generally embraces idealism, devotion, aspiration, religion, and the probationary path. Sixth ray energy provides a potent force of encouragement for the bulk of humanity, as the vast majority of human beings are responsive to sixth ray energy in one form or another (i.e., most are responsive to emotional energy or some form of idealism and/or glamour).

Thus, religion plays a major role in the cultivation and qualification of humanity, at least where it is responsive to higher guidance. Where religion becomes crystallized and inflexible, its utility for good is impaired. Where religion remains moderate (reasonable), it cultivates a considerable motivation for self-improvement and cooperation. In a broader sense, motivation itself is a derivative of sixth ray energy. Where motivation is without excessive emotion or narrow-mindedness, it can be a potent force for good.

Historically, much of the spiritual path has involved sixth ray methods, from the intrinsic spiritual motivation of the aspirant to the contemplation of divinity, from the reverence of the spiritual student for life (God) to the dedicated service to humanity of the disciple. But sixth ray energy is particularly vulnerable to personal energy; therefore, the student should exercise considerable care in dealing with sixth ray energies (and applying sixth ray methods), to avoid glamour and personal distractions. Where sixth ray energy is evoked impersonally, it is a particularly potent force for spiritual application. As the spiritual path evolves (as the spiritual path lives), so do the sixth ray

methods evolve. As the sixth ray energy matures, it becomes less personal, less imposing, and more responsive (moderate) to higher impression.

The evolving spiritual student is concerned with the discipline and control of the emotions, while the esoteric student, having conquered the emotional self, is more concerned with the evolution of sixth ray energies which are responsive to mental and intuitional guidance. Most of the practical (higher) sixth ray methods involve an opening of the heart center and the controlled release of heart-centered energy, qualified as it needs to be by the soul. The force (and associated methods) of aspiration is as pertinent to the probationary student as to the experienced disciple. Properly qualified (moderate) (non-reactive) heart energies can be used to strengthen good qualities wherever found, to encourage spiritual progress without imposition, to sharpen awareness and understanding through a mature rapport with humanity, and to elevate the overall consciousness to successively higher levels. Wherever magnetic lines of force are needed, sixth ray methods can be applied and utilized.

The real potency of the sixth ray is revealed where (when) the mature sixth ray energy is blended with the appropriate element of second ray energy to produce a high-order reflection (i.e., the reflection of higher-order energy onto lower levels). The actual process of incarnation (externalization) is related to a subtle blend of heart-centered energies (in balance with the blend of head-centered energies required for manifestation). All magnetic processes are qualified by heart-centered energy, involving elements of second ray and sixth ray energy (while the fourth ray provides balance and the head-centered rays provide moderation). In the evocation of sixth ray energies, the esoteric student relies upon the heart center (the second ray center) rather than the solar plexus (the sixth ray center). The solar plexus (alone) cannot be used to evoke higher energies, as it is aligned predominantly with etheric and astral forces. Where the heart center is properly opened, then the subordinated solar plexus can be used energy-wise to complement the evoked forces.

Meaning and Experience

There are two ways in which an individual evolves through the assimilation (integration) (correlation) of experience. The first method is common to all and involves primarily unconscious, after the fact, assimilation of particular experience. The bulk of humanity assimilate experience at a far slower rate than the rate of experience accrual. The volume of information is usually too large for consciousness to process during the lifetime, so a period between incarnations is needed for proper review (assimilation).

The second method is far less common, and is the method used by the esoteric student (and to some extent by anyone who is reasonably intelligent and consciously aware of his experience) to consciously and deliberately assimilate experience (simultaneously as experience is being realized). This second method requires some degree of awareness of the situation (context) of the experience and the relationship of the individual to the experience (i.e., an honest assessment of one's own motivation and ability), and the ability to correlate information and discern significance. It is a relatively difficult task for the untrained to discern the meaning of any experience, because (usually) a large number of factors (forces) must be considered, correlated, and evaluated, and that can only properly be accomplished via the abstract mind and the intuition.

One of the problems of discernment occurs when the student makes a judgment (assessment) based on superficial factors and reasoning. Such an oversimplification can easily lead to more erroneous (misleading) conclusions. The other extreme can also be a problem, where the student unnecessarily complicates his assessment by relying too heavily on the rational (concrete) mind. The student is encouraged to remain relatively detached from his experience and his assessment of meaning, thus precluding either complication. With a balanced (moderate) approach, the student can consider various possibilities and implications without drawing rigid (limiting) conclusions (which impair further understanding). This balanced approach is important because meaning can only be properly realized in breadth. The forces which combine to produce experience (and which further produce the disposition of the

individual with respect to the experience) are necessarily related to other non-apparent factors.

No experience is altogether isolated or independent. Any experience is related to the continuity of the individual (with past, present and future relationships) (and even to preceding and succeeding lifetimes) and to the world context (the relationship of the individual to group karma). Thus, the forces of any experience are related to numerous other factors. It is however possible to understand some of the meaning intended to be conveyed by experience, particularly as the student is able to correlate diverse factors over a period of time (continual evaluation and reconsideration (meaning that all conclusions are tentative and subject to further experience and consideration)).

In the first method (unconscious assimilation), the student learns more or less unconsciously as more and more experience is considered. Unconsciously, the mind is able to correlate considerable amounts and diverse threads of information, relating them to the consciousness of the individual. The second method (conscious and deliberate assimilation) does not replace the former method entirely; it simply complements the first method as the conscious mind interacts with the normal (and paranormal) abilities of the unconscious (and super-conscious) mind. Through deliberate observation, conscious evaluation, contemplation, and alignment with the higher self, the individual can hasten the process of assimilation of experience and interact with new experience.

† Commentary No. 298

The Fourth Ennead 4

The fourth tractate of the Fourth Ennead is the second of three tractates entitled "Problems of the Soul." According to Plotinus, the life of the oversoul flows through the lives of the particular souls, being a unity simultaneously present in all things. The oversoul does not abandon its reflections (as does the particular soul); the soul (oversoul) is both transcendent (relating to the monad) and immanent (relating to all lesser (internal) lives), ever brooding over its expression, ever at rest (repose) with regard to the objective manifestation. The

passions of the soul are its cycles of existence (reflection), in accordance with the natural order.

The soul possesses an interior disposition and does not reason; it is simply aware (subjectively) (on its own level); only the lesser self (the personality) is drawn to reasoning (until the intuition or realization of the soul can be evoked). All knowledge exists and can be accessed, and in this sense, the soul embraces an integrated memory in addition to its own recollectedness, but that memory involves the integration of energy patterns rather than specifics.

The consciousness of the soul on its own level is the contemplation of the order of its own level. The soul has no knowledge (memory) of earthly experience, only quality. The contemplation of the soul involves no discursive thought or reasoning, since the (contemplative) intuition enfolds the entire subject and its inherent (internal) correlations without recourse to analysis. In contemplative vision there is no awareness of the personality (or anything ordered in space-time), only an identity of essence. However, if the focus of consciousness is perfectly balanced between the abstract mind of the soul and the concrete mind of the personality, then the vision can extend to some extent in both directions (simultaneously). The memory of the personality is temporary (transient) and involves specifics, while the memory of the soul is long-lived and involves quality (character). There is a mechanism of recognition between souls regardless of form that passes beyond the short-lived memory and involves a rapport based upon the quality embraced by the souls themselves. Such a rapport need not be related to any historical significance.

The soul is a participant (directly or indirectly depending on the level or quality achieved) in the ordering of the universe (by higher impression). Such ordering is not by direct manipulation of specific affairs, but by adjustment (qualification) (conditioning) of energy fields which impart their adjustments (character) upon the fabric (domain) of manifestation. The leading principle (order) is unity; thus the administration of the universe proceeds as action determined internally, according to natural law. Wisdom (peace) on any level is far superior to reasoning (a struggle). Reasoning (perplexity) (memory) pertains to the lower order; wisdom (peace) (quality) (knowledge in repose) pertains to the higher order. Nature is a consequence of wisdom. Wisdom transcends

time; that which is imbedded in time (the medium of diversity) (e.g., the human personality) is of an order less than that of time itself.

All events in time and space (and all non-events) exist simultaneously; it is only to the lesser (partial) (time-dependent and/or space-dependent) vision that specific (uncorrelated) (distinct) existence can be perceived. Within the one vision, all events in time and/or space appear interrelated one with another, and the only reality is that which embraces all. Sense-impression occurs only in the (lesser) domain of partials (what need would a totality have of such impressions?). A linking exists between all lives which is an instrument of the (universal) oversoul. Unbound life is not possible.

† Commentary No. 299

Human Sexuality

Sexuality refers to the quality (condition) of being sexual (or bisexual) in contrast to being nonsexual, and in the human sense, refers to the condition of the personality instrument. The soul is nonsexual, without regard to either sex, but able to integrate both male and female forces (principles). Consequently, the human personality matrix (from which the human personality is created or evoked into incarnation) is bisexual (hermaphroditic) (androgynous).

Though the personality matrix (archetype) is bisexual, the actual (manifested) personality (form) (body) is either male or female, as one or the other of the two sexual principles dominates the form. When a soul incarnates (as it is drawn into incarnation by karmic forces), it chooses the sex of its physical instrument depending on cultural conditions (opportunities), the need for particular experience (male or female), and proper karmic consideration. The soul incarnates (alternately or as needed) a sufficient number of times as a male personality to properly develop the male principles (and male character) and a sufficient number of times as a female personality to properly develop the female principles (and female character), in a balanced way so that ultimately the male and female principles can be fully integrated within the personality.

Every human form has both a male and female potentiality within itself, but (generally) only one or the other is developed in any one lifetime. A male personality is designed for the male experience (and conversely, the female personality is designed for the female experience), even though female (male) characteristics (principles) are potentially available. The soul, being impersonal with respect to the personality, does not identify with either male or female, but the personality that is properly formed and balanced will naturally identify with the (physical) sexual nature, male or female as the case may be. With regard to consciousness, however, the spiritual student should accept the basic male or female personality as an instrument (of the soul) and identify with the soul nature rather than the nature of the personality form.

The natural (normal) human (personality) condition (orientation) is heterosexual, but due to the complicated (bisexual) nature of the personality matrix, the personality form may acquire (potentially) homosexual preferences. This can result from a lack of balance between the intended predominant male (female) nature and its subtle counterpart, or simply from strong personal affections (with regard to particular persons (due to previous experiences (in earlier lifetimes) where the sexual orientation (relationships) may have been quite different)). It is quite natural for individuals to experience a deep affection (brotherhood) for others without regard to sexual orientation, but the spiritual student should not be confused or distracted by any (strong) identification with the physical form, regardless of sexual orientation.

Any substantial sexual urge (desire), heterosexual or otherwise, is an indication of identification with the physical and emotional nature of the (lower self) personality rather than with the mental and spiritual nature. When the student is mentally or spiritually polarized (and where the lower nature has been properly qualified, the student is no longer vulnerable to physical and/or emotional distraction. Human sexual distinction is designed for the purpose of creation, both procreation (propagation) and upliftment of creative (sexual) force into mental and spiritual abilities (creative potential on mental and spiritual levels). As male and female creative forces are properly uplifted and balanced, the individual becomes a potent creator in mental, astral, and etheric matter (without regard to the particular sexual nature of the personality form).

Seventh Ray Methods

Though the first ray properly contains the overall plan for manifestation and the evolution of consciousness, it is the seventh ray which provides the basic framework and specific methodology (organization) for manifestation. The various seventh ray methods all relate in some way to the creation (building) or manipulation (differentiation) (integration) (ordering) of matter (energy patterns), and usually involve the systematic integration of constituents to form some greater or more useful configuration.

Seventh ray methods include ceremony, ritual, invocation (evocation), prayer, construction, organization, etc., including most methods associated with magic. Many occult orders incorporate seventh ray methods which establish and strengthen various energy patterns which in turn provide a framework for operation (application of energy). Much of the ritual and ceremonial forms found in occult orders (and in the various churches and religious orders) involves seventh ray energy. Each time a prayer or invocation is repeated (for example) (or each time a ritual is followed), an energy pattern is evoked and sustained which (structurally) relates the individual (participant) or group to the associated energy (or threads of energy). Each symbol utilized relates the participant to the knowledge (energy) held within the symbol (via threads or patterns of energy), depending on the quality and coherence (and strength) of association and depending on the responsiveness and ability of the participant.

The building process is inherently a seventh ray process, as building is basically associative and constructive (where building can refer as well to physical matter as to character building and the formation of subtle structures in consciousness). Most esoteric orders (and many exoteric metaphysical orders) involve meaningful (practical) structure and various seventh ray methods in support of their (particular) primary ray association. This is particularly so in the case of seventh ray orders (such as Masonry).

The most fundamental of the seventh ray methods involve occult chemistry and a deep understanding of the material (atomic and molecular) structure underlying manifestation. Matter on various levels can be qualified and utilized

(formed or reformed) (manipulated), at least to the extent that the individual understands matter (energy) and the various direct methods of working with matter. The resort to ritual (ceremony) (invocation) involves less direct methods. In either case, the energies are associative and results depend on the ability of the individual and the suitability of the effort. The human creative potency increases dramatically as the abstract mind is used in conjunction with the concrete mind (as multiple correlations and subtle programming becomes possible). Esoteric students along each of the seven ray lines are trained in various direct seventh ray methods so that creative potencies may be properly applied (with discretion) to constructive purposes.

One of the keys to the seventh ray methods involves understanding the natural order of manifestation (and recognizing the natural place of any or all things). Where this understanding is achieved, the student can apply the various seventh ray methods with wisdom, maintaining the natural order yet at the same time contributing to the natural development of manifestation. Another of the keys involves the relationship of devas (angelic or magnetic beings) to matter (and to energy qualification). The various orders of devas each have particular roles to play in the various processes of manifestation, and considerable cooperation (albeit subjective) of the devas is implied in the application of seventh ray methods (creative forces).



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