

The Upper Triad Material

Commentaries XI

Edited by Peter Hamilton

August 2004

The Upper Triad Material

Commentaries XI

Third Edition, August 2004

Published by

The Upper Triad Association

P.O. Box 40

Willow Spring, North Carolina 27592

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.

www.uppertriad.org

The Full List of Upper Triad Books:

December 2008

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 XI 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

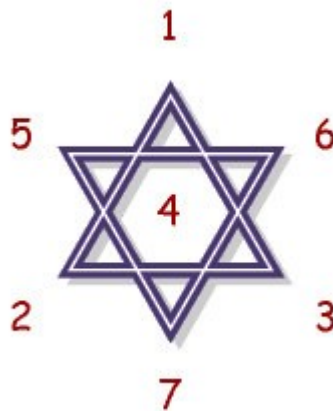
Peter Hamilton is the editor's pseudonym. For questions and comments on the Upper Triad Material, he may be contacted via the following email address.

peter@uppertriad.org

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.



Contents I

C 1001	Semantic Conditioning	1
C 1002	Purpose	2
C 1003	Manifestation and Seven Planes	4
C 1004	The Absolute	6
C 1005	Evolution	7
C 1006	Cosmic Law	9
C 1007	Evolutionary Impulse	11
C 1008	The Physical Plane	12
C 1009	Vibhuti Pada 7	14
C 1010	Vibhuti Pada 8	16
C 1011	Gender-Neutral Language	17
C 1012	Government	19
C 1013	Human Evolution	21
C 1014	Initiation	22
C 1015	The Path of Initiation	24
C 1016	Progressive and Inertial Forces	26
C 1017	Karmic and Personal Forces	27
C 1018	Precursory Effort	29
C 1019	Kaivalya Pada 1	31
C 1020	Kaivalya Pada 2	32
C 1021	Community	34
C 1022	Dharma	36
C 1023	Kaivalya Pada 3	37
C 1024	Kaivalya Pada 4	39
C 1025	The Dark Night of the Soul 1	41
C 1026	The Dark Night of the Soul 2	42
C 1027	The Dark Night of the Soul 3	44
C 1028	The Dark Night of the Soul 4	46
C 1029	Having, Doing, and Being	47
C 1030	The Spiritual Group	49
C 1031	Spiritual Groups 1	51
C 1032	Spiritual Groups 2	52
C 1033	Perception and Truth 1	54
C 1034	Perception and Truth 2	56
C 1035	Importance 2	57
C 1036	The Basis of Importance	59

Contents 2

C 1037	Human Constitution 1	61
C 1038	Human Constitution 2	62
C 1039	The Ego 1	64
C 1040	Egoism	66
C 1041	Aspects of Consciousness	67
C 1042	Types of Consciousness	69
C 1043	Titles and Credentials	71
C 1044	Self and Not-Self	72
C 1045	Spiritual Absorption 1	74
C 1046	Spiritual Absorption 2	76
C 1047	Repression	77
C 1048	Flattery and Praise	79
C 1049	Health and Healing	81
C 1050	Human Nature	82
C 1051	Speciousness	84
C 1052	Flattery and Detraction	86
C 1053	Anger	87
C 1054	The Head and Heart-Centeredness	89
C 1055	The Heart and Head-Centeredness	91
C 1056	Zeitgeist	92
C 1057	Distinctions	94
C 1058	Centeredness and Polarization 1	96
C 1059	Centeredness and Polarization 2	97
C 1060	Realism and Denial	99
C 1061	The Noble Self	101
C 1062	The New Age Movement	102
C 1063	Prosperity	104
C 1064	Connectedness	106
C 1065	Tempering the Emotions	107
C 1066	The Emotional Mind	109
C 1067	Justice, Law, and Truth	111
C 1068	Interior Silence	112
C 1069	Mystical Experience 1	114
C 1070	Mystical Experience 2	116
C 1071	Mystical Experience 3	117
C 1072	Mystical Experience 4	119

Contents 3

C 1073	Gullibility 1	121
C 1074	Gullibility 2	122
C 1075	Channeling	124
C 1076	Regeneration	126
C 1077	External Haunting	127
C 1078	Internal Haunting	129
C 1079	Otherworldliness 1	131
C 1080	Otherworldliness 2	132
C 1081	Feng Shui 1	134
C 1082	Feng Shui 2	136
C 1083	Feng Shui 3	137
C 1084	Baconian Prejudice	139
C 1085	Seven-Fold Human Constitution	141
C 1086	Prescription	142
C 1087	Acceptance	144
C 1088	Self-Acceptance	146
C 1089	The Fallacy of Conceit	147
C 1090	Smoking	149
C 1091	The Basis of Human Nature	151
C 1092	Surrender	152
C 1093	Projection	154
C 1094	Karmic Notions	156
C 1095	Intelligence 2	157
C 1096	Personality Investment	159
C 1097	Religion 2	161
C 1098	Alcohol 1	162
C 1099	Superiority	164
C 1100	Truth and Wholeness	166
	Index	169

Semantic Conditioning

Semantic conditioning refers to the conditioned tendency of people to mindlessly associate specific meanings to respective words, largely independently of the contexts in which the words are encountered, and largely independently of the intended meanings. This is a natural consequence of the educational process reinforced by cultural conditioning.

Language (words and their meanings) is learned through education and experience. Language is evolutionary, or at least not entirely stable. It changes over time and it changes from one culture or sub-culture to another. Thus even dictionary definitions of words change over time, as dictionaries tend to eventually track actual word usage rather than original intentions or meanings. Although there is a mass consciousness that unconsciously conveys “mass” meanings of words, word meanings do also vary to some extent from person to person, because each person is differentially conditioned and/or each person responds differently to conditioning. Individual experience, education, training, and conditioning, can vary markedly from one to another. This is, actually, a strength, in the sense of the cultural diversity of humanity and the contributions that each makes (ultimately) to the whole of consciousness (assimilation of experience). But what this means is that the implied or intended meanings of words depend very much on the circumstances and context.

Without appreciation for these differences, one would tend to mindlessly (unconsciously) assume that any encountered usage of a word conveys the same meaning as one would intend. Thus, if the word “soul” means to one person the deeper emotional component of the human personality (which necessarily exhibits personality attributes), and it means to another person the overshadowing higher self of atma-buddhi-manas (which is above and beyond the human personality and has no personality attributes), then no real communication between the two persons is possible unless both are appreciative of each others conditioning. Another example is the word “meat” which originally meant “food” but has since become particularized to mean “flesh food.” Of course there is a difference between meat and food. The use of the

word “meat” without appreciation for its historical context can lead to (significant or otherwise) misunderstanding.

The problem is compounded by the egoistic tendency of people to mindlessly make assumptions, to unconsciously presume understanding where real knowledge and understanding do not exist, and to be inhibited (by ego) from admitting that one does not understand another’s intended meaning. With honesty and humility, there is a better likelihood of real understanding. By mindfully or intuitively looking at the context of words, one is much more likely to grasp the intended meaning. By asking for clarification, likewise.

The spiritual student is, properly, trained to look carefully at the context of things, not reading into that context anything that is not intended, by reactive association or presumption, but looking for the meaning in context. In this way, spiritual students (authors) in different cultures, different languages, and different times in history, can convey meaningful philosophical and spiritual insights. If Plotinus appears to use the word “mind” to mean “soul” and the word “soul” to mean “mind,” then it should be relatively obvious to the mindful or intuitive reader-student. Serious philosophical writings utilize a context-sensitive and particular (not generally orthodox) terminology. By reading and listening mindfully (or preferably intuitively), without attachments to (or unconscious presumptions about) word meanings, one can overcome the inhibiting and misleading tendencies of semantic conditioning.

† Commentary No. 1002

Purpose

One of the most basic assumptions or realizations concerning “life” is that there is (must be) an underlying purpose. The rationalist can only properly make assumptions in this regard (that there is a purpose, that there may be a purpose, or that there is not, and if so, what the nature of that purpose may be); the self-realized (and many who simply sense and therefore believe) simply know and understand that there is an underlying purpose and that that underlying purpose is the evolution of consciousness according to some divine scheme or pattern.

It matters not that the underlying causes are not fully apprehended. It matters not that "God" however conceived is conceived only partially. It matters not that the details of manifestation are not fully realized. It matters not that one may not fully (if at all) understand the seven planes of consciousness and/or the seven rays of divine expression. What matters is that there is a purpose, and that each human being has a role to play, a contribution to make.

Those who do not realize the purpose of life, simply flow through life passively or undertake their own (contrived) purposes. In either case, they (unrealized) play a role, as they are still part of the overshadowing consciousness (humanity as a lifewave) and still contribute to the experience and expression of that lifewave. Those who do realize the purpose of life generally (eventually) undertake to play some role, consciously and deliberately, in cooperation or collaboration with the perceived purpose (to the extent that it is understood), to the best of their abilities and opportunities, inertia notwithstanding. It matters not that even the realized are largely self-deceived at some level. What matters is that there is a purpose, however dimly perceived, and that each human being (and every unit of consciousness within every lifeform), realized or unrealized, has a role to play, however humble it may be (all roles are humble).

The primary importance or relevance of purpose is that there is purpose. The secondary importance or relevance of purpose is that it is both external and internal, that there is a God, immanent and transcendent, and that that God conveys purpose, somehow. God and God's purpose are (should be) both perceived as being greater than the human being, yet the human being is (should be perceived as being) within that God-consciousness (and therefore being a noble creature). The aspect of purpose (God) (life) (power) thus provides for the underlying unity of all life, all consciousness, and all matter. An important co-realization is that "man" is divine (as is all life) and yet relatively insignificant within the great cosmic scheme of life. Man's humility is an essential part of his effectiveness, particularly for those who are developed and relatively potent (without humility there is no real responsiveness to the underlying purpose).

The underlying purpose (which is the only "real" purpose) is conveyed through the qualification of the manifested universe, i.e., the universe is purposive or teleological. Universal manifestation proceeds through lives within lives, all of

which are God and each of which is impressed in some way with the underlying teleology. It matters not that even God on the level of God is not fully aware of all the details, as details are consequential. What matters is that all is qualified by purpose and that details emerge or follow as a consequence of that purpose and in support of that purpose. What matters is that all lives embody that purpose.

† Commentary No. 1003

Manifestation and the Seven Planes

In support of the manifestation of life (through the seven rays and lives within lives), there must first be, for convenience, an underlying fabric of consciousness within which to manifest (for experience and expression), for each unit of life and its associated consciousness are merely induced within the underlying fabric. That fabric of manifestation is constituted as seven planes of consciousness (and seven sub-planes of consciousness within each plane) which are inherently related one to another and qualified in various ways by the seven ray lives.

From the standpoint of manifestation, each successive (lower) plane of consciousness is relatively coarser or denser. Higher planes are not "higher" in any spatial sense, but simply more refined in the material sense. But although planes of consciousness may be viewed materialistically (and improperly) in terms of density of matter, they are more properly viewed in terms of dimensions of reality, where the higher planes are simply more subtle. All is primarily a matter of perspective, with planes of consciousness being able to be perceived as matter, consciousness, or spirit, depending on the point of view. The material perspective is simply the most misleading (and only applies more or less correctly to the lowest or coarsest levels). Even the perspective of consciousness is not as potent as the perspective of spirit (being), but the perspective of consciousness is the more practical way of viewing the fabric of manifestation.

Manifestation begins at the highest or deepest level (plane of consciousness) as the absolute or unmanifested "life" induces the fabric of the universe in that highest sense, then manifested "life" successively differentiates the fabric of the

universe until there is a full spectrum of seven planes and seven sub-planes within seven planes (and seven sub-sub-planes, etc.). The panorama of manifestation of life and consciousness actually unfolds synergistically with the unfolding (differentiation of the) planes of consciousness. As the highest plane is able to support consciousness (the experience and expression of some lifewave), so does that life emerge on that level. Likewise at every successively lower level until a full spectrum of manifested life is evident.

These are, of course, merely perspectives on manifestation. In actuality, manifestation is multi-dimensional and simultaneous. But in order to understand the patterns and their implications for evolving life (consciousness), it helps to see the patterns in some sequential sense (and there is a natural and apparent sequential pattern). The panorama of lives can be viewed discretely (as each lifewave (life) constitutes some entity) or it can be viewed as a continuum (as each lifewave (life) is connected to both preceding and succeeding (and every other) lifewave (life)). Lives appropriate (create) (induce) forms within the field of matter. Those forms are themselves lives on some level.

Thus the seven planes of consciousness form a field of manifestation for the experience and expression of a diversity of lifewaves within lifewaves (lives within lifewaves and lives within lives). And the seven planes are also ensouled as lives (since all is life). When the conglomeration of "user" lives have expended their evolutionary impulse, the process of ultimate assimilation (withdrawal) takes place, and "user" lives are withdrawn from manifestation as the fabric of manifestation ("server" lives) is (are) dissolved (withdrawn) to successively higher (deeper) levels. Until the unmanifested state is again realized.

The Absolute

The absolute refers to the unmanifested reality that underlies and undermines all of universal manifestation. It underlies in the sense that the absolute evokes and sustains (somehow) all of manifestation. It undermines in the sense of being ultimately indescribable and non-understandable. The problem of the absolute is that it is simply not possible to discern any attributes or characteristics of the absolute by virtue of it being (a) in an unmanifested state and (b) beyond the ken of any consciousness within the manifested state (and therefore beyond semantics). Thus what is “known” about the absolute is a matter of intuitive inference, based upon the attributes and characteristics of manifestation, and particularly, upon the qualified purpose inherent in that manifestation.

The absolute is known primarily by what it is not. It is not the manifested state. It is everything else, whatever that may be (or not be). The absolute is that which precedes manifestation and contains all of life, consciousness, and form, in the unmanifested, pre-existing, unconditioned state (if such can be considered a “state”). Unmanifested existence is unconditioned, timeless, and without any relativity. Manifested existence is conditioned with purpose, timely (at least in perspective), and inherently relative. Without the absolute, unmanifested state, there would be no (could not be) manifestation. It is the absolute that somehow induces manifestation. The absolute is perfect, in the sense of ultimate perfection, while perfection in manifestation is relative perfection.

To attribute “human” attributes or characteristics to any absolute existence, even analogously, is misleading. Yet, somehow there must arise a first cause or something analogous to intention, which results in the emergence of manifested life. In this sense, the absolute is not absolute, but merely unmanifested. The absolute is the most subjective existence conceivable (yet inconceivable). Even the term “quiescence” is ineffective in describing the absolute, yet the absolute must in some sense be analogous to the quiescence of pralaya (of the periods of partial withdrawal from manifestation by various manifested lives). The difference between the absolute and mere pralaya is that in pralaya there is

quiet (non-active, non-passive assimilation). In the absolute there is no conceivable sense of assimilation, yet there must be something remotely analogous to assimilation. Pralaya is simply relatively absolute (or is the absolute merely absolutely relative).

Through various occult means and techniques, one can conceptually approach the absolute. In order to do so, besides being properly trained (more properly untrained in the deliberate sense) and capable (of being incapable, even for a few moments), one must let go of and transcend all attachments, all beliefs, all knowledge, all understanding, all wisdom, all preconceived notions about the absolute (and about anything and everything else). As one successfully (conceptually) approaches the absolute, one naturally evokes the most subtle and indescribable realizations. One simply cannot describe the sense of the absolute, however artificial or partial that sense might be. Words and even thoughts are simply not sufficient to convey any sense of the experience of approaching the absolute.

In the final analysis (which is non-analysis), that which is perceived as the absolute is not the absolute, and as one approaches the absolute in consciousness (being) in the highest and deepest conceivable sense, the absolute, as the absolute, recedes.

† Commentary No. 1005

Evolution

Manifestation is the first process. It provides the framework for the work of fulfilling the purpose implied in manifestation. Evolution is the second process. It is the work of manifestation. It is both the purpose and result of manifestation.

Evolution is the evolution of consciousness, the unfolding and expansion of consciousness according to the underlying qualification which provides some general goals and some rather broad boundaries or structure for evolutionary experience, growth, and assimilation of that experience. Evolution utilizes the field of manifestation and builds upon it. The forces associated with manifestation are primary and convey the underlying purpose and provide the

fabric for and means of manifestation. The forces associated with evolution are secondary (in this sense) and are induced within or evoked into the field of manifestation as a consequence of the underlying purpose. Evolutionary forces provide the impulse for the evolution in (of) consciousness for every life within the field of manifestation.

Evolution occurs at every level of manifested existence. The atomic and molecular lives are evolving in consciousness. The cellular lives within the mineral, plant, animal, and human forms are evolving in consciousness. Each lifewave is evolving in consciousness as its components contribute to the assimilation of experience of the lifewave as a whole. For those lifewaves that are considered sub-human (not lesser, just merely preliminary to the human stage), component lives are involving rather than evolving per se. For those lifewaves that include more-or-less-self-conscious lives (e.g., human), each of the components (e.g., human souls) is (properly) evolving in consciousness simultaneously with the lifewave as a whole. Beyond and beside humanity are many lifewaves, greater and lesser in perspective, each evolving in its own manner in accordance with the greater evolutionary plan.

While evolution in consciousness is bound or limited by the field of manifestation and the structure of universal manifestation, there is nonetheless considerable opportunity for diversity of experience and expression and the unfoldment of non-specifically-anticipated attributes and characteristics in consciousness. Through the assimilation process there is a subjective assessment of these attributes and characteristics, and those which are considered to be "of value" are accepted (and assimilated into the matrix for the respective life or lifewave) and those which are not considered to be of value are simply not included (meaning that in the next cycle of experience those (non-accepted) attributes and characteristics will not emerge as pre-existing potential). At the human level, the subjective assessment is performed by the soul or higher self, not in any rational manner (as the soul is beyond rationality) but in a qualitative and subjective manner. What matters in the context of evolution in consciousness is the quality of consciousness. That which conforms to and is consistent with the intended quality of consciousness is of value.

In a sense, the field of evolution (within the field of manifestation) is an experimental field of endeavor (experience and expression) leading to growth of quality of consciousness. Since the underlying purpose of manifestation is the evolution of consciousness, "existence" is not an attribute of manifestation, but an attribute of evolution. Thus one exists not in order to manifest, but in order to evolve. One manifests only for the purpose of evolution. All else is incidental.

† Commentary No. 1006

Cosmic Law

Cosmic law is a fundamental consequence of purpose and subsequent manifestation (and leads to evolution in consciousness). While purpose is the source of manifestation and evolution is the work of manifestation, cosmic law provides the underlying impetus of the rules of manifestation that facilitate the fulfillment of the underlying purpose (evolution in consciousness).

Cosmic law is an effect of the existence of (cosmic) purpose or evolutionary intention. Having formulated purpose on some level and in some way, the logos then expresses itself in the form of the energy of expectation (cosmic law) on its level, which provides general and particular constraints on the processes of manifestation and subsequent evolution in consciousness within the respective field of manifestation (ring-pass-not of the logos). The purpose of those constraints is to (1) discourage the evolving life-consciousness-matter from going too far afield of the underlying purpose, (2) encourage the evolving life-consciousness-matter to be somewhat focused in ways that will facilitate the intended evolution, and (3) provide the means for unanticipated (constructive) evolutionary factors to emerge. In other words, cosmic law provides guidance to the processes of manifestation and evolution.

Cosmic law refers to the collection of cosmic factors and includes laws (conditions) relating to virtually every aspect of manifestation and evolution in consciousness, not the least of which is the law of karma (which provides wisdom to the context of action and consequence). But cosmic law is not really very specific, for the details of manifestation are largely consequential, and the products of evolution in consciousness are relatively general with details

relatively unanticipated at the logoc level. Yet cosmic law is quite intelligent, both in the sense that manifested life embodies cosmic law and vice versa. The "life" of cosmic law conveys guidance interactively with the unfolding processes of manifestation and evolution in consciousness. Cosmic law is not contrived in any sense, yet it embodies purpose and intelligence and it facilitates the working out of the evolutionary impulse (and fulfillment of cosmic purpose).

Cosmic law provides a natural order to manifestation. Cosmic law provides conditions in consciousness that convey much of the evolutionary intention in subjective ways. Cosmic law provides boundaries as well as objectives, however generalized they may be. Being uncontrived yet purposive and intelligent, cosmic law allows and encourages flexibility and adaptation to circumstances. Cosmic law is responsive to (very general, assimilated) circumstances in the sense that the parameters of cosmic law can be adjusted (can adjust themselves) as manifestation and concurrent evolution proceed (according to the results or consequences of manifestation and evolution).

Cosmic law is fundamentally and ultimately merely a qualification of manifestation that affects every aspect of manifestation, every lifewave, every unit of consciousness, every living atom of matter. Some of the details of manifested experience and expression may seem to be uncorrelatable or even non-sensible (unfair) or inconsistent, but that appearance is a result of a too-narrow view of manifestation. Much of the correlative aspect is veiled by the limited and very partial perspective of humanity embedded and entangled in the illusion of space-time. There is underlying and intelligent purpose. Manifestation is the consequence of that higher purpose. Evolution in consciousness proceeds and occurs in various ways and through various means, ever in accord with cosmic law.

Evolutionary Impulse

The most fundamental force in (of) manifestation is the evolutionary impulse that emerges in manifestation as a consequence of underlying purpose and accord with cosmic law. The evolutionary impulse is both a wave of embodied life and a qualification of evolving consciousness.

While power may be perceived as an inherent reservoir of energy and energy may be perceived as a source of force, force is the actual expression or implementation of power or energy (i.e., force is derived from (more fundamental) energy and energy is derived from (more fundamental) power). Thus evolutionary impulse is the force of evolution that prods all of life and consciousness and matter onward toward fulfillment. Evolutionary impulse is not the same as karma, which provides balance. Evolutionary impulse is the complement of karma (and is actually more fundamental than karma). Evolutionary impulse is a central force that acts in the direction of evolution, from the source of manifestation, through the evolving life, and back toward the source. Karma is a force of restoration and acts perpendicular to the direction of evolution, thus facilitating evolutionary impulse by ensuring that evolving lives are responsive to the “direction” of evolutionary momentum (i.e., by restoring the focus of life-consciousness-matter).

The real work of evolution in consciousness occurs in the friction or contrast between the evolutionary force (impulse) (momentum) and the retarding force (inertia) (resistance) of matter (at whatever level of consciousness). The evolutionary impulse is almost always “stronger” than the inertial or retarding force (the only time it is weaker is during withdrawal from manifestation), but never substantially stronger. Thus it is in the relatively small difference in strength between the progressive and regressive forces that experience and expression occurs in the evolutionary context. The regressive force prevents explosive (non-assimilable and/or non-manageable) experience, yet the stronger progressive force invariably “forces” the life (unit of consciousness) onward.

Identification or alignment with the progressive force (evolutionary impulse) implies conscious evolution (white magic). Identification or alignment with

(entanglement with) the regressive force implies retardation (which evokes karmic force to restore the balance to the extent that such a “life” is responsive). Most lives evolve passively, either through involution in the case of non-self-conscious subhuman lives or through non-deliberate evolution in the case of nominally-self-conscious humanity, without any real or conscious appreciation of evolutionary forces. But where lives are more conscious and more intelligently able to deliberately cooperate or collaborate with evolution, then evolution in consciousness is further facilitated.

In one sense, evolutionary impulse and the panorama of lifewaves emerging from the Godhead are equivalent or synonymous. Each lifewave actually embodies the evolutionary impulse and is therefore internally conditioned thereby. Evolutionary impulse (life) is measured and the momentum thereof is eventually expended. Once the peak of “experience and expression” has passed, the lifewave gradually returns to the source (is withdrawn from manifestation). The forces then sustaining manifestation are withdrawn and “matter” is dissolved. While the succession of lifewaves is a continuum, they form an impulsive “wave” of higher evolutionary expression that is expended (fulfilled) by virtue of its contact (involvement) in matter and consciousness (i.e., experience results from the interaction of life, consciousness, and matter).

† Commentary No. 1008

The Physical Plane

The physical plane is the lowest, most “material” of the seven planes of consciousness that form the field of manifestation for the human lifewave (and other lives). It is the plane upon which the human being naturally perceives, even though the process of perception involves both emotional and mental levels of consciousness.

The physical plane consists of seven sub-planes of consciousness, the lower three being considered the “dense” physical region and the upper four being considered the etheric region. The dense physical region is the familiar realm of more-or-less objective physical human experience and expression. It is important to humanity only in terms of the forms that it provides and the

experience (on higher (emotional and mental) levels) that it facilitates. The etheric region is more vital in the sense that it is the realm of physical plane forces that underlie all of physical plane phenomena. It is the etheric region that provides prana or vitality for subsistence on physical levels.

However, the physical plane is taken for granted and is very poorly (incorrectly) perceived by the vast majority of humanity, and the etheric region is (for virtually all people) hardly perceived at all. Most people perceive the physical plane as the only reality, with emotional and mental processes being part of the physical plane experience (i.e., emotional and mental phenomena are usually but incorrectly perceived as “physical” plane phenomena). By taking the physical plane merely at face (apparent) value, unconscious assumptions are made which lead to substantial misunderstanding of cause and effect relationships that broadly condition the human experience. By only viewing “life” in the apparent (obvious) physical perspective, one is very substantially limited in one’s ability to understand experience. Cause and effect relationships, for example, almost always involve aspects (factors) on etheric, emotional, and/or mental levels. The mind and the brain are actually two separate but related instruments, one utilizing the other. The brain has no function without the mind, but the mind can exist and function quite nicely without the brain.

By viewing the (dense) physical plane as the only reality, one fails to appreciate the role of the etheric, emotional (astral), and mental planes. The physical plane is almost entirely a plane of effects, with virtually no causes. Without appreciation for the relationships between physical, emotional, and mental levels (and the fact that they are three separate but related dimensions in consciousness), psychological confusion (self-deception) results. Of course that is part of the human experience, but the evolving student must eventually transcend these physical plane limitations and illusions. By placing the physical plane in the context of seven planes of consciousness (and by placing the physical body in the context of seven bodies or vehicles in consciousness), one is eventually able to properly recognize cause and effect relationships and facilitate evolution (experience, expression, and service).

The results of scientific research into the fundamentals of material existence is leading to a more widespread appreciation of the insubstantiality of the physical world, but the “links” to other planes are not yet so readily apparent. The role

of emotional and mental “causes” of physical plane consequences is beginning to be appreciated in the medical community, but the perspective is still substantially limited by presumptions about the physical plane. The materialistic perspective must eventually yield to a broader and more comprehensive view, one that places the physical plane in its proper place, one that transcends the illusion of separate and material existence.

† Commentary No. 1009

Vibhuti Pada 7

Liberation is achieved as the student fully realizes that energy follows thought. By qualifying and focusing the mind, consciously and deliberately, as needed, the student achieves freedom from the various emotional attachments and entanglements. And by tempering the mind’s tendency to focus itself (i.e., to pursue its own interests), the student achieves freedom from the various attachments and entanglements (and separateness) of the mind. The key to achieving the quiet mind is always holding the mind at a point of (occult) tension.

As prana (upana) is properly controlled, one’s entire nature can be tempered. Liberation includes freedom from absorption in physical life (maya), freedom from the astral or emotional life (desires, distractions, entanglements, glimmers), and freedom from kama-manas (the desire mind) (combination and interaction of the desire nature and the concrete mental nature). As these freedoms are gained, the power of ascension is realized. As prana (samana) is subjugated, the radiant life emerges. The irradiation of the lower self (personality) (mind) (heart) by the higher self comes as the head-centered nature and the heart-centered nature are refined and balanced through effective use of upana and samana, respectively. “By the means of one-pointed meditation upon the relationship between the akasha and sound, spiritual hearing unfolds.” Sound manifests on all levels of consciousness but in different forms and in different ways. The voice (sound) of the silence is the “still small voice of the Christ (God-self) within.”

“By the means on one-pointed meditation upon the relationship existing between the body and akasha, ascension out of matter is achieved.” The state of illumination follows the overcoming of “that which veils the light.”

Although the various bodies (physical, emotional, and concrete mental) facilitate experience and expression, they inhibit realization. As the inhibiting tendencies of matter (form) (the body) are transcended, the light of the soul or higher self irradiates the personality or lower self. The personality (mind) (ego) is destroyed as an independent and inhibiting entity, yet continues to facilitate the higher expression (more correctly, the ego is destroyed while the mind and personality are tempered).

“One-pointed meditation upon the five forms which every element takes, produces mastery over every element. These five forms are the gross nature, the elemental form (character), the quality (subtlety), the pervasiveness (inherence) (concomitance) (the three gunas (tamas, rajas, sattva) (inertia, activity, rhythm)) and the basic purpose (usefulness).” Magical work is facilitated as the occult student understands the nature of matter and consciousness and the various relationships (forces) (powers). Knowledge leads to some power over matter. Understanding leads to greater power over matter and some discretion in working with matter. Wisdom leads to real power and complete discretion. The black (lower-self-centered) magician draws (appropriates) power from the lower nature (matter). The white (non-lower-self-centered) magician draws (evokes) power from the higher nature (soul consciousness) and works with the power of the lower nature.

“Through this mastery, various powers are attained.” Through refinement and spiritual discipline comes some realization. Through that realization comes “complete subjugation of the lower nature and control of the senses.” Through that subjugation comes greater realization and the (subtle) manifestation of the higher powers (wisdom). [Book III, Sutras 38-45]

Vibhuti Pada 8

Bodily perfection is (properly) the perfection of the etheric body of which the dense physical body is merely an outer covering. The etheric body must be balanced in a number of ways in order to facilitate higher consciousness. As the etheric body is qualified and balanced, as the astral or emotional nature is refined and balanced, and as the concrete mind is refined and balanced, the whole personality or lower self can be integrated. Then and only then can that lower self be aligned properly with the higher self.

“Mastery over the senses is brought about through concentrated meditation upon their nature, peculiar attributes, egoism, pervasiveness, and useful purpose.” Once one has dealt effectively with the illusions of the objective nature, one must then deal effectively with the illusions and glammers of the subjective nature, which are more subtle. The whole of the sutras deal with this notion, building upon one realization after another through understanding and tempering the senses and the mind until one transcends them altogether. Then one achieves direct (spiritual) perception (intuition), that is, perception independent of the sense organs and independent of the emotional and concrete mental interpretation of sense impressions.

“The man who can discriminate between the lower self and the higher self achieves supremacy over all conditions and becomes omniscient.” This discrimination between the personality (lower self of physical, emotional, and concrete mental nature) and the soul (higher self or upper triad of atma-buddhi-manas) is a necessary and major step in disentanglement and subsequent realization (ascension). The process of unfolding discernment is long and difficult, filled with self-deceptions as the mind masquerades as the higher self, but eventually, with sufficient refinement (impersonality) one learns to discriminate and the hold (impediment) of the lower self is loosened and overcome. Ultimately one becomes omnipresent as the unity of all life is realized, omniscient as a rapport with all life and consciousness is achieved, and omnipotent as alignment with the God-head is evoked. Those who wish to become omnipresent, omniscient, and/or omnipotent are prevented by that wish.

Success comes not through seeking, but through non-seeking. Success comes not through “doing” but through being (passion-less-ness).

Proper spiritual realization includes unresponsiveness to allurements. Only through desirelessness can one ascend beyond the world of desire. For as long as one has desires or goals or expectations one will remain at that (relatively low) level. Intuitive knowledge (understanding) (wisdom) and associated discrimination follows from desirelessness. But spiritual desirelessness is not a passive state by any means. It is an active (yet non-having and non-doing) state of spiritual concentration (focus), spiritual meditation (contemplation), and spiritual service. The spiritual intuition unfolds as the whole is embraced, and is inhibited or limited by any separative perspective. One learns to distinguish without separateness, to recognize distinctions (within the real and within the unreal (and between the real and the unreal)) without embracing duality. Past, present, and future are one.

“When the objective forms and the soul have reached a condition of equal purity, then is at-one-ment achieved and liberation results.” To some, liberation implies an end to the cycle of rebirths. More properly liberation conveys a fulfillment of karma such that rebirth is not obligatory. The very act of seeking to avoid rebirth is preventative of liberation. In liberation one proceeds entirely according to dharma. [Book III, Sutras 47-55]

† Commentary No. 1011

Gender-Neutral Language

The human being is an inherently sexless soul or higher self manifesting periodically as a male-female personality, with one or the other sex predominating in any given incarnation (and generally alternately as male and female). Consequently, the equality of the male and female is implied and each component (male and female) is present to some extent in every personality (sometimes even in a confusing manner). Each sex contributes equally to the whole, both within a person and within the race.

There is some value to gender-neutral language. Wherever practicable, one should appreciate and respect the equality of the sexes and minimize prejudicial

or biased interpretations and reactions through gender-neutrality. On the other hand, there is nothing “wrong” with using generic terms such as “man” and “mankind” and “humanity” to refer to the entire race or lifeworld, provided that that is what is meant. Generic terms, without intended distinction or implied prejudice with regard to sex, should not be offensive to anyone. The actual “taking-offense” at something (reactive association) is a much more significant problem, i.e., it implies a reactive and separative nature, and relative immaturity. Carelessness in utilization of language is a much lesser concern. Of course, unfounded sexual bias is a real concern, in any substantive form.

But the mere use of ambiguous or mis-interpretable language is not a substantive concern (since all language is inherently ambiguous and mis-interpretable, one should attempt to minimize the likelihood of ambiguity or misinterpretation but realize that in the final analysis it is impossible to prevent someone who is predisposed (conditioned) (reactive) to distort the intended meaning from doing so). Likewise, attempts to constrain the natural and sincere language of anyone is another problem. Any such attempts constitute unwarranted imposition. Any attempt to artificially revise any previously published material to eliminate gender-specific references or other “offensive” terms is inherently dishonest, however openly and sincerely it may be performed. For example, a succession of revisionist meddling with The Holy Bible has resulted in considerable distortion in many of its chapters.

The real problem of gender-specific-language-sensitivity is the separative element that that sensitivity introduces, which is comparable to the historically male-or-female-dominated periods of cultural and language development (historically, there have been periods of male-dominated society and periods of female-dominated society, but gradually the race is evolving toward appreciation of male-female equality, not in the trendy sense of separate-but-equal, but in the sense of each person being male-female, in which the distinction of the personality being one or the other (male or female) becomes irrelevant). The separative element is pervasive at the lower personality levels where a person identifies with being male or female (or black or white) instead of being human. Thus the real problem is the delusion of a man thinking of himself as a man and the delusion of a woman thinking of herself as a woman, instead of each thinking of himself or herself as a human being.

In the final analysis, if one views each man and each woman as equal and non-sexual in the higher sense, then gender-neutral language is not really important. Instead of reacting to “words” the gender-sensitive reader should be encouraged to rise above the separative perspective and to focus more on the quality and character and content and relative value of any spoken or written material. A person who reacts to gender-specific language can hardly be expected to focus on more substantive issues.

† Commentary No. 1012

Government

Government is defined as “the act or process of governing.” There are at least three general contexts of government, (1) the inner government or spiritual hierarchy of the planet, (2) the various outer governments of the world, and (3) self-government in the sense of individual (personal) discretion, poise, responsibility, etc. Government is the human cultural context of the first ray.

There exists an inner world government, not a government in any impositional or authoritative sense, but a government in the sense of intelligent and conscious divine qualification and gentle guidance (encouragement) of all aspects of human endeavor. The spiritual hierarchy of the planet consists of some of the “perfected” human beings who have passed beyond the need to incarnate in human form yet remain associated with humanity and the planetary evolution in the sense of service. The inner government is organized into three and seven departments, the three being correlated with the three primary rays (racial development, spiritual development, and civilization) and the seven being correlated with the seven ray energies and respective soul groups. Also considered within the context of inner government is the notion of ashrams and their relationship in bridging between the inner government and the unfolding race of humanity.

Because the inner government works on subtle levels and the spiritual hierarchy has not yet been evoked into outer manifestation, outer (human) (secular) governments exist in accordance with human (cultural) needs. As humanity evolves so do human institutions such as government, as outer government is a reflection of the consciousness of the affected people. In the early stages of

human civilization when "man" was largely incapable of regulating human affairs, outer governments were principally a matter of the largesse of superhuman beings who assisted humanity. As humanity evolved, the superhuman "roles" were replaced gradually by the best of humanity in the form of divinely-inspired priest-kings. As humanity evolved further, the spiritual inspiration faded as the leaders of humanity (in incarnation) became more involved and entangled in the materialism and egoism of human existence (thereby being less responsive to the higher guidance). The spiritual element has never withdrawn completely, as guidance continues in relatively subtle ways.

The key to outer government is the need or requirement for humanity to evolve itself, without direct intervention or control by higher elements, as a reflection of the quality of consciousness achieved to date by the race. Consequently, as humanity evolves so do the human institutions evolve. Dictatorial governments (benevolent or otherwise) are gradually replaced by more democratic and more socialistic forms. Democratic governments will eventually and gradually be replaced by even higher forms.

Thus self-government is a matter of maturity in consciousness, both collectively in the cultural context and individually in the personal context. In the higher sense, self-government implies (and requires) conscious, willing, and intelligent conformity to higher qualification. As this is achieved by people on a large scale, so will the various outer governments reflect that achievement and become receptive and responsive to the subjective guidance of the inner government. Ultimately, the inner government will be manifested outwardly and subsume the various governments of the world. But that cannot occur until humanity has progressed substantially further, so that both humanity and human governments approach the hierarchy in (with) quality of consciousness.

Human Evolution

Human evolution refers to the process of evolution in the collective consciousness of humanity and the relationship of evolving individuals to that collective consciousness, while “the” human evolution refers to the human lifewave or that lifewave that is presently passing through the “human” stage or the human kingdom.

Human evolution proceeds through the various root-races and subsidiaries as each soul incarnates progressively and successively according to its stage in evolution and the (resulting) coincidence of opportunities both needed and afforded. Within the field of human evolution are pioneers in consciousness who are evolving consciously and deliberately, some of whom are moving into the preceding lifewave, the bulk of humanity who are evolving passively and more gradually, and stragglers who are much less responsive to the evolutionary impulse and who are slipping into the succeeding lifewave. Considered within the subject of human evolution are the notions of inertia, initiative, and momentum, as they relate to the cooperation with the work of evolution.

The development of the individual in incarnation is only significant in the context of the race as a whole. Individuals develop and evolve in consciousness, thereby contributing to the collective consciousness. What actually evolves is the human soul or higher self, at the individual level, and humanity as a lifewave, at the soul level. Human beings incarnate for experience and expression. That experience is intended to be relatively diverse, as the individual incarnates successively through a variety of diverse cultures and racial contexts. There is a diversity-of-experience factor in the human karmic relationship, but depending on the particular experiences of the individual, a person may incarnate a number of times in particular cultures, ever according to need at the individual and group levels.

There is also a depth-and-quality-of-experience factor in karma. There are relatively general goals for humanity as a whole and for the individual as a member of humanity. Fulfillment of those goals requires sufficient experience and development such that a certain measure of ability, quality of

consciousness, etc., is achieved. The particular path an individual takes is determined by the cause and effect relationships that emerge from experience (including how free will is exercised, to some extent), but karma generally (inevitably) places the individual in the context of the evolving (human) race and planetary evolution. While experience and expression are relatively important, the human being naturally evolves from the “having” and “doing” stages (self-absorption) to the “being” stage of increasing responsive to the higher self.

Of course a distinction must be made between (1) the form through which a person experiences and expresses himself (herself) and through which a person actually evolves in consciousness and (2) the soul or higher self which is the actual unit of consciousness (evolutionary unit). The human form (physical body, etheric double, emotional or astral body, and concrete mind) is merely the instrument through which a soul incarnates for experience and expression. However, that incarnated “soul” must relate to the artificial consciousness of the form (personality) (ego). The early stages of human evolution deal with development of the form and its various capabilities, including development of the personality (ego) as an artificial entity. But much of the latter stages of human evolution deal with transcending that artificial consciousness and allowing the higher self to emerge into activity.

† Commentary No. 1014

Initiation

Initiation is the “process of being initiated” or being introduced to something beyond one’s direct experience to date. There are at least three particular meanings of initiation. There is (1) initiation in the sense of progressive, individual, self-revelation, (2) initiation in the sense of being formally or ceremonially initiated into some (exoteric) group or organization or practice, and (3) initiation in the sense of the path of initiation which is the highest stage of the spiritual path.

Initiation in the first sense, of progressive, individual, self-revelation, is a continual experience. As people learn and grow in consciousness they naturally and to some extent assimilate that experience (however unconsciously the process of assimilation may be) and continually “realize” something as a

consequence, the fact that that realization may be slight or modest and largely unconscious notwithstanding. As people progress further in consciousness, these realizations or mini-revelations become more frequent and more conscious. In this sense, every change in attitude, every recognition of significance, etc., is an initiation of sorts, as it is a new beginning, based upon the experience and understanding achieved to that point in evolution of consciousness.

Initiation in the second sense of being formally or ceremonially introduced or initiated into some (exoteric) group or organization or practice covers a wide range of conventional (cultural) (fraternal) (professional) (religious) and unconventional (metaphysical) (theosophical) (occult) practices. Generally there are (real or superficial) qualifications involved, but in this second sense there is not necessarily any real significance to the process or ceremony (or qualifications). There may be, or there may not be (significance), depending on the particulars (the individuals involved, the character of the organization). Many initiations of this second sense are merely superficial and concerned with (artificial) (social) (professional) status, although they may convey certain rights or opportunities not otherwise afforded. Some initiations of this second type are meaningful in the sense that the qualifications may be substantial (i.e., the initiation is earned or merited) and/or the ceremonial aspects may be meaningful and/or the rights and opportunities afforded may have some value. But the "student" should be wary of the glamour of these sorts of things and should therefore look carefully at the character and quality and temperament and values of the associated organization and members.

So-called "occult" initiations or initiations into presumed mysteries (fraternal orders, secret societies, etc.) should also be carefully considered before the student becomes entangled in processes beyond his or her control and/or entangled in associated and unsuspected unsavories, however sincere the members and however noble the organization and its apparent objectives may appear to be. Invariably, these "occult" initiations are all personality-centered experiences, despite whatever claims may be made to the contrary. In the case of the "better" groups there may indeed be relatively noble purposes and no real dangers (and some worthwhile opportunities). But in the case of the "darker" groups (which often appear otherwise) there is real danger for the unwary participant (and even for the wary participant). Ultimately, there are no initiations in this second sense that are required for further evolution.

Initiation in the third sense of the path of initiation which is the highest stage of the spiritual path is another matter altogether and directly involves the spiritual hierarchy of the planet and the soul or higher self of the individual candidate.

† Commentary No. 1015

The Path of Initiation

The path of initiation is properly that part of the formal spiritual path that is common to all religious and spiritual disciplines (approaches), that is sanctioned by the planetary hierarchy and involves the soul or higher self of the spiritual student (disciple).

In this context there are both major and minor, formal and informal initiations, with a relatively wide range of significance. In the minor and informal sense there is naturally a succession of revelatory and sanctioned experiences that are evoked for the properly qualified student. In the broadest sense, every major expansion or repolarization of consciousness is a significant new beginning (initiation) that involves the soul or higher self (which may or may not involve the waking-consciousness of the personality or lower self). The repolarization of consciousness from the physical plane to the emotional plane, or from the emotional plane to the mental (manasic) plane is a major informal initiation of significance. And the repolarization of consciousness from the mental plane to the intuitional (buddhic) plane is a major and formal initiation of significance.

But there are three very definite requirements for an initiatory process to be properly considered as being sanctioned by the spiritual hierarchy (and therefore real in the context of the formal spiritual path). The first requirement is simply one of qualification. The student invariably must have achieved whatever level of or ability in consciousness is required for admission to the next stage of evolutionary opportunity (experience, expression, and (but mostly) service). The second requirement is that the soul or higher self be actively involved in the process (the soul generally only touches the lower self directly during the process of (proper) initiation (which is mainly a matter of selected vivification)) (those who are not receptive to or responsive to the soul in any real (mature)

(sensible) way are simply not (yet) qualified). And the third requirement is that the initiation be conducted in the context of an affiliated esoteric group (i.e., within the context of the planetary hierarchy).

The problem with the path of initiation is the breadth of delusion (glamour) that exists in the metaphysical and theosophical and occult field concerning initiation. Many people and organizations make claims pertaining to (their) initiation as being hierarchically sanctioned, etc., when in fact no such person or organization (anyone who makes such claims) is so sanctioned (although some may be deluded into sincerely believing they are so sanctioned). No one who is an initiate in this higher sense would ever make such a claim. And no organization truly (directly) affiliated with the spiritual hierarchy would ever sanction such claims. In contrast, the actuality of the path and process of initiation in this higher (proper) sense is that initiation occurs only for those who are both qualified and non-seeking, and that no outer or physical plane ceremony is involved. That leaves the problem of delusion of astral experience involving initiation. Of course anyone who claims such experience (initiation) is either deluded or dishonest (or both). The maturity required for such experience precludes any such claims-making. But since initiation in the higher sense can only occur through non-seeking, it is simply not a subject that the serious spiritual student is interested in.

Real initiation is simply the accomplishment or achievement of the level of or ability in consciousness implied therein. Formal initiation in this sense is simply an acknowledgement of that consciousness and a vivification process (of spiritual renewal on subtle levels).

Progressive and Inertial Forces

The underlying evolutionary force is progressive, that is, it conveys life (and consciousness) onward and upward along the spiral circuit (path) (way). If the course of evolution is viewed as having an axis, then the evolutionary force acts along that axis from the lowest point of the evolutionary arc to the ultimate conclusion of manifestation. In the broader sense, the spiral path is considered a circuit, as a current (life and consciousness) flows along the path from the source (God-head) through the downward (involutionary) arc (descension into and through increasingly dense matter, and on through the upward (evolutionary) arc (ascension through and from increasingly more refined matter)). That life and consciousness actually constitute the path (axis of manifestation).

The path is a spiral in the sense that analogous experience and expression is afforded under a wide range of conditions and circumstances (levels of consciousness) and is repeated many times to insure that the intended lessons are learned (that the intended consciousness is properly cultivated expanded). Experience must be reinforced (recapitulated) a number of times in order to be assimilated. This is due in part to the substantial inhibiting factor of the inertial force (status quo).

So, during the involutionary period of manifestation, the progressive force is involutionary, pulling life (consciousness) downward, and during the evolutionary period, that same force is evolutionary, pushing life (consciousness) gently upward and onward, ever affording the needed circumstances (field of experience and expression). The involutionary and evolutionary (progressive) force is substantially tempered by an inertial force, inherent in matter, which acts along the same axis but in the opposite direction. The inertial force resists progress. That resistive force of matter impedes the onward (downward or upward) flow, affording experience and expression, by virtue of the resistance or contrast between the involutionary or evolutionary force and the inertial force. In practice, the progressive force always exceeds the inertial force, but only by a relatively small measure. This prevents unmanageable (inassimilable)

experience (meaningless progress) yet affords a steady and timely progression through the various stages of evolution.

One of the problems of evolution in consciousness is the tendency of the indwelling life and consciousness to identify with the form aspect (matter) (the inertial force), in which case progress becomes very slow. If the identification (materialism) (egoism) is very strong, then the consciousness can be lost (destroyed) (wholly and irrevocably absorbed in matter). But in general, other forces tend to restore the balance and insure that some progress is achieved in each incarnation or series of incarnations. On the other hand, as one progresses along the spiritual path, consciously and deliberately, one is actually identifying with the evolutionary (progressive) force (consciously becoming that force (more correctly, consciously realizing that one is that force)) and progress is accelerated as the balance (differential) between the progressive and inertial forces is increased.

The push of evolution is gentle yet persistent (relentless). It is unavoidable. Those who align themselves with the inertial force, persistently enough, bring about their own destruction. Those who align themselves intelligently with evolution facilitate their own evolution and that of the race. And in alignment with the progressive force comes the realization that individual progress is not really possible except in the collective context.

† Commentary No. 1017

Karmic and Personal Forces

While the progressive and inertial forces act along the axis of the spiral circuit (path of involution and evolution), karma acts radially inward, in a direction perpendicular to that axis, in order to restore the balance. This is required by virtue of personal force (desire, will, activity not aligned with the direction of evolution).

Thus karma facilitates evolution by responding to every instance of imbalance with wisdom that affords the experience needed in order for the evolving life (consciousness) to progress in consciousness. There is no question of punishment. There is only a matter of learning. In the early stages of evolution,

the domain of personal activity is relatively broad and the karmic force is not very strong. Any action not aligned directly with evolution contributes to the reservoir of unfulfilled karma, to be balanced in subsequent experience. As action is taken that is directed directly against the path and flow of evolution, the evolutionary force pushes the life (consciousness) in the direction of evolution. But as action is taken that is not directly aligned either with the progressive or inertial directions (i.e., with a component that acts radially outward), then karma comes into play to restore the balance. As progress is made, as lessons are learned, as experience is assimilated into knowledge, understanding, and (most properly) wisdom, then karma is fulfilled.

Relatively unevolved people have little karma but “acquire” karma at a much greater pace than others. Average people have lots of karma but acquire karma at more or less the same rate that it is fulfilled, affording more variety in circumstances and experience. Relatively highly evolved people have little karma and tend to assimilate their experience (fulfill their karma) more or less at the same time as the experience, thus having little or no accumulation. Another factor is the magnitude of the personal force, which tends to increase as a person evolves in consciousness. Thus consequences are “earned” in accordance with the appropriateness of the action (the extent to which it facilitates or hinders evolution) and in accordance with the magnitude of the personal force invested in the experience or expression.

The karmic response is, in part, proportional to the radial component of the personal force. Yet the further afield the action is, the stronger the restoring force (karma) becomes, so that recognizable limits are placed on the field of activity (experience and expression) afforded. This is a matter of efficiency and effectiveness in the context of underlying purpose. While diverse experience contributes to evolution, particularly in the early stages of the path, there must be some limits in order to guide the experience and expression in the ways and means intended (i.e., there are specific goals in consciousness for each lifewave and each planetary scheme).

As life (consciousness) proceeds onward and upward, the band (field) of affordable experience and expression is constrained in the sense that it becomes closer and closer to the axis of evolution and the magnitude or strength of the restoring force becomes greater, meaning that results (consequences of action

(behavior, feelings, thoughts)) come more quickly and more forcefully. This simply facilitates evolution for those who are more dedicated and more aligned with the flow. Yet with this “constraint” of karma, there is actually more freedom for the spiritually realized person by virtue of the degree of alignment with the evolutionary force. There is simply (progressively) an absence of (lower) individuality and ego (desire, willfulness at the personality level), so that every action is a matter of dharma and aligned with the flow (the way).

† Commentary No. 1018

Precursory Effort

The efforts of the soul and personality during the pralaya between incarnations goes a long way toward determining the characteristics to be manifested during the subsequent incarnation. The period of withdrawal following the end of an incarnation is largely a matter of assimilation of experience and reinforcement of the positive attributes (which facilitate evolution in consciousness) cultivated or developed during the lifetime (and discouragement of any negative or counter-evolutionary attributes). At the end of that process of withdrawal, there is no personality and the soul simply “rests” for a while on its own level.

After suitable rest, the soul begins its preparation for rebirth by qualifying (creating) its intended personality. The work of the soul is qualitative and subjective. But as the soul advances in this process, the personality aspect emerges and plays an unconscious but more direct role in preparation by virtue of its conditioning from previous experience. Thus a personality (matrix) with a great deal of emphasis on physical attributes will result in much preparation along the lines of the physical body (e.g., physical beauty, physical strength, artful or skillful (e.g., musical) talents, etc.). Similarly, a personality matrix with more emphasis on emotional lines will result in much preparation (qualification) of the emotional nature (e.g., perceptive abilities, sensitivities). And likewise, a personality matrix that evokes a mentally polarized personality will result in much preparation (qualification) of the mental nature.

In short, what emerges into incarnation is the prepared and qualified personality, having been subjected to karmic constraints (both earned

limitations and earned opportunities) and the “emphasis” of the momentum of previous personality experience. Even though it is a different personality that emerges than the one that was left behind (dissolved) at the end of the previous incarnation (e.g., it may be a different sex, a different race, with different attributes and characteristics), the “new” personality carries with it the karma of previous experience and a large part of the accumulated “development” achieved in earlier lives. Thus it will have certain tendencies in common with previous lives but it will be not entirely constrained thereby. A lot depends on the ability of the soul to craft and tailor the personality matrix to support its intended experience and expression.

An unevolved soul will not be able to create or cultivate an “advanced” body and its associated physical, emotional, and concrete mental attributes and characteristics. Such a soul simply will not have the experience or wherewithal to produce something beyond its means. Susceptibility to disease and deformity is entirely karmic, but in part it is a matter of the relative ability of the soul to produce a healthy body. Another problem is that of emphasis, where a personality may be cultivated or developed in one aspect in particular without any real balance (e.g., a “beautiful” body without any substantive brain capacity (or vice versa)). As the soul advances and as the corresponding personality matrix is fulfilled, the resulting personality is more balanced and extremes of abilities are tempered by that balance (i.e., overall health is more valuable to experience and expression than extremes in appearance or strength).

The precursory efforts of the soul prior to the rebirth (incarnation) of the personality have effects on subsequent experience. But the inherent tendencies of the personality are relatively more valuable, e.g., responsiveness can to some extent overcome various inherited traits and conditioning.

Kaivalya Pada 1

The fourth and concluding book or section of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras considers liberation (illumination) (kaivalya pada) (the fulfillment of yoga). This is the culmination of raja yoga, the evocation of the "presence" of the soul or higher self in the consciousness of the lower self or personality and conscious union with the God within.

The powers and results of raja yoga include the lower (fallible) psychic powers (siddhis) as needed and, more properly, the higher spiritual powers (siddhis) (which are relatively infallible (tempered by wisdom)). The lower powers can be evoked artificially (e.g., through drugs and various (lower) occult practices) but have little value without proper training and quality of consciousness. The higher powers cannot be evoked artificially, but can be evoked only as a consequence of spiritual practice (higher occult practices), spiritual unfoldment, and spiritual realization. The use of artificial means simply precludes any higher development and realization. For example, drugs merely remove certain protective barriers on astral and concrete mental levels such that the "user" suffers lack of control, inability to discern the real from the unreal, etc. The proper use of mantras and other techniques are more effective (less artificial), particularly when accompanied by genuine spiritual practice (refinement of the lower nature). But only selfless aspiration and proper meditation evoke the higher powers. Lower powers and anything obtained artificially come from the form aspect (matter), while the higher powers come from the aspect of (spiritual group) consciousness. While the unqualified seeker looks for power and is self-centered in perspective, the true aspirant seeks understanding and wisdom and is non-self-centered in perspective.

"The transfer of the consciousness from a lower vehicle into a higher is part of the great creative and evolutionary process." Involution proceeds as the primitive consciousness descends into matter (the lower planes). Evolution proceeds as that consciousness ascends, sub-plane by sub-plane and plane by plane. The human being evolves as the consciousness is transferred (over many lives) from the physical plane (physical polarization of consciousness) to the astral or emotional plane (emotional polarization of consciousness) to the

concrete mental plane (mental polarization of consciousness) and beyond to the intuitive (and higher) levels of the soul.

Thus evolution involves experience, the assimilation of experience, and the transformation (consequential elevation) of one's consciousness. This can occur gradually (over many, many lives), through ordinary experience and the overall momentum of the evolutionary impulse. Or it can occur more rapidly (over relatively few lives) as the student consciously and deliberately cooperates with the evolutionary force, i.e., in accordance with Patanjali's methods of raja yoga or some comparable system (ultimately the practices and rules are the same for all (proper) paths).

"The practices and methods are not the true cause of the transfer of consciousness, but they serve to remove obstacles." All of spiritual practice (yoga) is preparatory and preliminary. The real work is simply afforded and facilitated by these (necessary) practices. Without a foundation upon which to build, there is no spiritual progress. There are no short cuts or easy paths (except to delusion). The soul or higher self creates the personality (matrix) for experience and expression, then assimilates that experience. As long as the perspective of the waking consciousness is externally oriented, the "student" will be entangled in the senses. [Book IV, Sutras 1-4]

† Commentary No. 1020

Kaivalya Pada 2

As the perspective or focus of the waking consciousness is properly and internally oriented (without losing awareness of external factors), then the unity of consciousness can be realized. That unity produces the many and various forms, for experience and expression, but the student must ultimately overcome the delusion of independent (egoistic) existence and consciously collaborate with the higher self (losing one's lower (separative) perspective as it is assimilated into the higher).

"Among the forms which consciousness assumes, only that which is the result of meditation is free from latent karma." As Bailey suggests ... "Forms are the

result of desire and the result of an outward-going urge or tendency. Meditation is the result of an inward-turning tendency, of the capacity to abstract the consciousness from form substance and to center it within itself." Thus, in pure meditation (meditative life), the serious student fulfills dharma and is not entangled in the senses, or in karma. The student is still subject to karmic law, but living a meditative life (in desirelessness), serving according to dharma, one simply does not get entangled in the lower world.

"The activities of the liberated soul are free from the pairs of opposites." The enlightened personality, aligned with the soul or higher self, is not encumbered by duality, for the focus of consciousness is broader and deeper such that underlying reality (unity) is embraced. There are three (four) kinds of karma. (1) There is black karma, associated with gross materialism (egoism), great ignorance, and the physical plane. (2) There is black-white (grey) karma, subject to the various pairs of opposites, associated with the ordinary life of action (desire) and consequence, and the emotional plane. (3) There is white karma, associated with the spiritual path of the aspirant and disciple, and the mental plane. (4) And there is a (very subtle) karma that is neither black nor white, in which there is no bondage "to the form side of manifestation" (which is only applicable to those who have fulfilled the goals of human evolution).

Each of the first three kinds of karma produces forms (consequences) appropriate to the fulfillment of (that) karma. The purpose of karma is equilibrium in the context of the evolutionary force. As actions are undertaken, karma is produced in order to guide the student in the direction of the evolutionary flow. For every action on physical, emotional, and concrete mental levels, there are consequences. The collective consequences constitute the circumstances of life in the lower worlds. The memory of nature is such that all is eventually balanced, "even when separated by species, time, and space." The causal chain is essentially endless. "Desire to live being eternal, these mind-created forms are without known beginning." One cannot escape the past or the present (or the future), but one can transcend the domain of karma through ascension (transcending the mind which produces forms).

"These forms, being created and held together through desire, the basic cause, personality, the effective result, mental vitality, or the will to live, and the support of the outward-going life or object, when these cease to attract, then the

forms cease likewise to be." All of our circumstances in the lower worlds (and our very existence or manifestation) are consequences. The ultimate consequence is that of transmutation of activity onto levels beyond the lower world. Wherever there is (the delusion of) independent activity, there is a causal chain and bondage. When one transcends and transforms the lower self (ego) (mind) (personality), then all subsequent "action" is a matter of dharma and not karma. [Book IV, Sutras 5-II]

† Commentary No. 1021

Community

Community is defined as a more-or-less-unified body of individuals, people with more-or-less-common interests living in a particular area or otherwise linked together through association, communication, and other forms of interaction. There are two spiritual aspects to community, the spiritual component of an otherwise ordinary (general) community and the spiritual community per se.

Communities in the ordinary sense are (almost invariably) predominantly personality-centered in nature, but may vary greatly in the relative quality of overall consciousness (from relatively coarse to relatively civilized). Spiritual communities are also (almost invariably) predominantly personality-centered in nature, with some exceptions, but with (hopefully) more substantial spiritual quality than is evident in the larger community as a whole. Advanced spiritual communities exhibit much less personality-centeredness and are self-governing through consensual meritocracy and consensus of quality rather than in any autocratic or democratic sense. Most (proper) spiritual communities afford the opportunity for each student to rise above and beyond his or her (normal) personality-centered nature.

An ordinary community is defined by various cultural, economic, geographical, political, religious factors, with or without any noticeable spiritual component or emphasis. However, each community has a spiritual component that reflects the quality and character of spiritual consciousness exhibited or manifested, however subtly, by the community. Where there is a generally widespread and healthy regard for community (common) values (and where those values are

sensible), then that spiritual component will be relatively strong, indicating that the people are somewhat responsive to the forces of evolution.

A spiritual student who happens to live in a particular community has some responsibility for manifesting spiritual quality in the context of that community. The community contributes to the consciousness of the spiritual student, to some extent. And the spiritual student likewise contributes to the consciousness of the community. The existence (and subtle manifestation) of spiritual students within a community is a relatively important aspect of the community. And there are always (some) spiritual students in every community, although quality of consciousness may vary substantially and the community may very well inhibit or otherwise condition the spiritual student to some extent. More importantly, the spiritual student is a force of encouragement wherever he or she may live. That encouragement is conveyed generally through the character, temperament, and values of the student (i.e., through a spiritual lifestyle, ethics, morals, etc., without imposition).

A spiritual community is generally a community within a broader community, with the spiritual community being either the spiritual component of a community or a distinct (geographical) community within some larger context. A spiritual community may take one or another of various forms, have some degree of integration, have some overall character, temperament, and values, etc. Spiritual communities provide (internal) encouragement among the various participants (residents) (students) as well as (external) encouragement in the sense of the effects of the spiritual community on the general community and the role that the spiritual community may play in the larger context. The value (effect) of an integrated spiritual community substantially exceeds that of the collection of individual (spiritual) students.

Dharma

Dharma means many things in its ordinary or secular context, but particularly in the context of the spiritual path. Dharma means (and/or embraces), variously and collectively, conduct, duty, equity, justice, law, responsibility, and virtue. Dharma is also “the nature or essential quality or peculiar condition of anything; that which supports” and that which holds things together.

“Dharma is the collective Indian conception of the religious, social, and moral rule of conduct.” It is one’s duty, responsibility, or obligation. In the higher sense, dharma is that which is encouraged by conscience and the higher self, and in the lower sense, dharma is that which is prescribed or that which is natural to the lower self at whatever level of consciousness that lower self is functioning. In the lower sense (apparent or superficial) dharma may be prescribed or imposed by cultural, family, and/or religious traditions (dogma) and expectations. In the higher sense, (real) dharma is simply realized and embraced, more or less consciously and deliberately, according to the “sense” of the student. In contrast with karma, which is the law of accountability in action and consequence, dharma is the law of appropriateness (conscience) (discretion) (wisdom) and responsibility in action and being. Thus, dharma is an aspect and refinement of karmic law, particularly in the case of the spiritual student.

In the context of the spiritual path, dharma is that which is expected of the spiritual student, according to character, temperament, quality of consciousness, and values. Once the student has actually made a commitment to the spiritual path, i.e., to conscious evolution in consciousness, then dharma is more properly defined (prescribed by the path as guidelines along the way) and the student’s embrace of dharma becomes relatively more deliberate. Dharma thus embraces all of the activities and practices of the path and extends as well to all of life’s activities and practices (and eventually there is no distinction between life and the path).

In a higher sense, dharma is the flow of one’s spiritual life (and as one proceeds along the path all of the various aspects of one’s life becomes spiritually

qualified). To perform one's dharma is to conduct oneself consistently with that flow (i.e., to be oneself in some higher sense). For the soul that is committed to the path, the dharma of the lower self is to align oneself with the soul and with the path, i.e., in acknowledgement of that commitment. Then dharma becomes a matter of living in accordance with the qualification of the soul, in embracing spiritual discipline, spiritual practice, and spiritual work. In addition to individual duty, and like karma, dharma is also a matter of group endeavor. Thus dharma is also a group energy "flow" and collective responsiveness.

In another sense, dharma is "adherence" (that which relates individuals to the path). The extent to which a student adheres to the rules and practices of the path is the extent to which dharma is embraced and fulfilled. Thus, dharma is both that which one is called upon to do and be, as well as that which one does and is. It is both the calling and its fulfillment. At first dharma is a matter of the calling and its consideration. Then dharma becomes a matter of embracing that calling and (progressively) all of its implications. In the final analysis, the spiritual student is his or her own dharma and the spiritual group or community is likewise collective dharma. Dharma is the being of the spiritual student (and group).

† Commentary No. 1023

Kaivalya Pada 3

"The past and the present exist in reality. The form assumed in the time concept of the present is the result of developed characteristics, and holds latent seeds of future quality." This is true, from the pragmatic perspective of the student in time and space, and from the perspective of the apparent processes and relationships of causes and effects. From a higher perspective, the continuity of past, present, and future is fully integrated. "The characteristics, whether latent or potent, partake of the nature of the three gunas (the three qualities of matter)." All characteristics of forms are merely qualities. The human being is embedded in form and lives in the world of forms and is subject to the tendencies of form. Understanding this is essential to transcending the (physical and psychological) tendencies of form.

“The manifestation of the objective form is due to the one-pointedness of the effect-producing cause (the unification of the modification of the mind stuff).” While the soul or higher self remains above and beyond the levels of personality, the focus of the (group) soul is such that manifestation is evoked. The group soul identifies (in the abstract mental sense) initially with the force of involution and subsequently (gradually yet increasingly) with the force of evolution. At the personality level, there is entanglement in experience and expression (the karmic field). At the soul level there is identification with the force of evolution.

Matter, form, and consciousness, while distinct, are all closely related. Matter is evolving on its level. Forms are artificial. Consciousness is evolving on its level, through the appropriation and utilization of forms. Yet, matter is a form of consciousness. It is a matter of perspective. What really matters is for the student to not identify with matter or with the form, but with consciousness. As the student progresses, that identification is raised to the higher consciousness and the ego (which is the inertial or “form” component of (lower) consciousness) is transcended.

“The many modifications of the one mind produce the diverse forms, which depend for existence upon those many mind impulses.” A distinction must be drawn between the universal context and the particular, and between the particular in the sense of experience and expression and in the sense of entanglement and transcendence. It is natural and necessary that people are “involved” in the creative aspects of kama-manas, at least during the “having” and “doing” phases of human evolution. But when the soul begins to withdraw from the lower worlds, as evolution proceeds beyond experience and expression in the lower worlds, one must transcend identification with matter, one must transcend entanglement in the senses, one must transcend the desire nature, and one must transcend the will of the lower self (personality) (ego) (mind). One must transcend the modifications of the mind, such that all of the focus becomes qualified by the higher nature, so that “action” is egoless and therefore pure and perfectly aligned with evolutionary force.

“These forms are cognized or not, according to the qualities latent in the perceiving consciousness.” Reality can be perceived only to the extent that one embraces reality. The distinction between external and internal eventually

dissolves in liberation. The true perceiver has awareness without entanglement. The true actor is as incapable of willful "action" or activeness as it is incapable of passiveness. The key to this aspect of liberation is awareness and realization. In subtle ways, the very "act" of being aware and self-realized is a cause. [Book IV, Sutras 12-18]

† Commentary No. 1024

Kaivalya Pada 4

The mind is an instrument and "is not the source of illumination." Yet the student finds great difficulty in discriminating between some object of the mind and the conditioning characteristics of the mind. The "life" of the mind as a mind is artificial, induced by and through the form aspect. Thus the mind is capable of activity "independent" of the true self. The mind is not self-conscious, yet it "behaves" and appears as if it were the self-conscious human being. The real "thinker" merely utilizes the mind. But the waking-consciousness is not the real thinker. The waking-consciousness is (for virtually everyone) falsely identified with and entangled in some or another aspect of the lower self. In liberation, the waking-consciousness is freed from these lower associations and attachments. "When the spiritual intelligence, which stands alone and freed from objects, reflects itself in the mind stuff, then comes awareness of the self."

Through quiescence comes omniscience. When the mind functions clearly and completely in response to the higher self, without any hint of separative or independent activity (noise), then it serves as the most effective instrument of the higher self in relation to the lower worlds. Such a mind functions as a unifying bridge between the soul or higher self and the lower (integrated and aligned) instrument (personality or lower self). That bridge is greatly inhibited by the nature of the personality and the (wrong and misleading) assumptions of that personality with regard to the higher self. But as those assumptions are discarded and as the personality nature is understood and tempered, then the bridge (antahkarana) is built and the lower self is effectively irradiated by the higher self.

“The state of isolated unity (withdrawn into the true nature of the Self) is the reward of the man who can discriminate between the mind stuff and the Self.” The detachment of the mind from its “lower reactions and tendencies” and the tempering of the mind from its self-interested activities leads to isolated unity (freedom) (rapport with all of life). Then a fuller realization of the nature of the Self is achieved. Illumination is evoked. Yet the one who knows is inhibited by that knowledge. And the one who understands can proceed. But the one who has (is) wisdom, transcends all of this. True progress comes in the realization of relativity, in the freedom of non-attachment (to anything, even to the notion of freedom of non-attachment).

“The man who develops non-attachment even in his aspiration after illumination and isolated unity becomes aware, eventually, of the overshadowing cloud of spiritual knowledge.” All that appears noble and is indeed necessary to spiritual advancement (and service) must eventually be transcended. As all hindrances are overcome and as all karma is fulfilled, there is simply the one and the way. Perfection is achieved. The goal of human evolution is realized. “The modifications of the mind, through the inherent nature of the three gunas come to an end.” “Time, which is the sequence of the modifications of the mind, likewise terminates, giving place to eternity.” This eternity is not an extension of time or endless time. It is beyond time. It is the integral of time and space (and everything else). “The pure spiritual consciousness withdraws into the One.”

Time and time again the student is reminded of the methods and requirements for liberation. The keys to the path stand revealed. The student need only sincerely make the commitment and determination to proceed. Thus end the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. [Book IV, Sutras 19-34]

The Dark Night of the Soul 1

What has been called “the dark night of the soul” is actually a number of different phenomena. In one sense it is the descension or reflection of the soul into matter or incarnation, which blocks or hinders the light of the soul from reaching the waking-consciousness of the incarnated personality. In that sense the entire incarnation is “the dark night of the soul.” In another sense it refers to the state of being absorbed in personality consciousness, in which case it is possible, for the properly trained and qualified student, to become enlightened or awakened and thereby transcend the lower experience. In yet another sense it refers to various periods of trials and difficulties encountered by the spiritual aspirant. In these various trials and difficulties the weaknesses and limitations of the student are brought to the surface of consciousness, by virtue of stress, such that the student can recognize them and transcend them.

There is also a more proper (deliberate) process of self-transformation that can be evoked by the soul, or within the context of a soul group, for its lower self. In this sense, the “dark night” can last for a period of a few months to many years, depending on the needs of the soul, the needs of the student (as recognized by the soul), the difficulties required to be faced, and the abilities of the student to recognize the process and associated opportunities (and the ability of the student to face those difficulties and opportunities and the effectiveness of the student in so facing).

In this sense of (major) self-transformation, the process is generally one of (1) making the transition from being emotionally-polarized to being mentally-polarized in consciousness, (2) making the transition from being mentally-polarized to being intuitively-polarized, (3) making the transition from being predominantly self-centered to being predominantly non-self-centered, (4) making the transition from heart-centeredness to having a balance of heart and head, (5) making the transition from head-centeredness to having a balance of head and heart, (6) making the transition from being relatively coarse to being relatively refined in consciousness, and/or (7) becoming self-realized (enlightened in the higher sense of achieving conscious alignment between the mind of the personality and the overshadowing soul).

In some cases a combination of these transitions and associated processes may be undertaken, e.g., a repolarization as well as a shift between the head and heart nature. The student may be largely unconscious of the process, in which case it generally takes several to many years (or even more than one lifetime) to complete, or the student may be more-or-less fully conscious of the process (i.e., where the student realizes that the process has been evoked and then consciously collaborates with the process), in which case the student generally progresses more rapidly to fulfillment (through a period of months to a few years).

None of these phenomena are evoked directly or indirectly by the mind (ego) (personality). It is not a matter of desire or aspiration, though desire or aspiration may be present. It is a matter of sufficient preparation, sufficient qualification, and suitable readiness to undertake the transition, and the determination of that readiness can be made only by the soul and only in the context of the soul group. Thus it is the soul or soul-realized mentor (on soul levels) that actually evokes the process of self-transformation. It is, ultimately, a matter of appropriateness that takes precedence over the more common aspects of the particular incarnation.

† Commentary No. 1026

The Dark Night of the Soul 2

In the sense of self-renewal or self-transformation one might ask why the outcome cannot be achieved in the normal course of human evolution rather than through the hastened or intensive period of considerable stress (dark night of the soul). The answer is, for the most part, that the inertia of the personality in incarnation is normally extremely inhibitive of these processes. The habits established by a personality generally preclude "gradual" enlightenment or self-transformation. This includes "good" habits that serve the student well in the context of learning from experience and in the context of performing useful work (service expression). Unless a student is able to periodically undertake a fully-unconditioned state, real progress comes very slowly.

Another "answer" is that there comes a time, periodically, for each student on the path, when the student has progressed as far as he or she can in the normal course of events and circumstances (and karma). In order to progress farther, in order to be more effective in spiritual work, in order to be more receptive and responsive to higher impression, the bonds (conditioning) (habits) of the personality must be broken and the "spirit laid bare" to facilitate transformation. This is a most difficult and trying period. It means that the personality must be substantially disrupted and rendered. The integrated personality must be destroyed and the pieces of the personality must then be put back together again in a new and improved pattern (leaving out much of the previous conditioning and including new, more progressive (yet more nominal) conditioning) [ultimately one reaches the limits facilitated by the new conditioning and the process must be repeated in some manner or another].

The period of personality-rendering is probably the most difficult non-subtle experience on the path. The normally poised and well-integrated spiritual student may be faced with a ruptured aura, with external forces hitherto held at bay by the quality and integrity of that aura. The (previously mentally polarized) student unaccustomed to emotional swings may through this process periodically face the depths of despair, loneliness (because no one else is participating in the process (it is intensely (and intensively) personal)), frustration, irritation, etc. Being exposed to the most intense feelings (e.g., utter despair) awakens the student in ways that would be impossible in the integrated, mentally-polarized state.

Through this process the deepest of weaknesses (at least those to be resolved) are evoked to the surface of the personality awareness so that they can be recognized and dealt with. But they are evoked at the times at which the student is least able to bear them or deal with them in a sensible fashion. This also leaves a great impression on the personality matrix. This stressing (testing) of the inner strength and reliance of the student is intended to destroy (or greatly diminish) the strength of ego and the strength of personality conditioning. It is a great and wonderful (albeit exceedingly painful) opportunity for growth and readjustment (renewal).

The whole process thus includes a period or periods of darkness (particularly enduring if the student is not really consciously aware of what the process

entails) interspersed with more peaceful (less intense) periods of contemplation and assessment (and resolve). If the student is able to overcome the conditioning of the personality, then the cycle is ended and the (new) person emerges. Otherwise the cycle repeats itself, with greater intensity, and again, until the intended transformation has been properly concluded.

† Commentary No. 1027

The Dark Night of the Soul 3

Is the evocation of the dark night grounds for ignoring or neglecting one's otherwise legitimate obligations and responsibilities? No. One must do the best one can to meet one's obligations and responsibilities, yet still take the opportunity for self-transformation very seriously. On the other hand, one must also break free from whatever habits and conditioning there may be. So one may need to re-evaluate one's obligations and responsibilities, and meet them in new or different, ultimately more effective, ways.

Is the evocation of the dark night an opportunity for self-indulgence? No, not really. With a non-integrated personality, for a while, there is a natural focusing on the lower self and its apparent needs, but ultimately one must turn properly inward, toward the deepest, highest aspect of the human being, and transcend the merely apparent needs of the lower nature. The lower self may be in turmoil for a while, with periods of untempered experience, as the student is unaccustomed to the non-integrated state and is not really able to properly temper the reaction or response to circumstances. But the inner strength, that brought the student to the integrated state in the first place, will come, encouraging the student to rise above the non-integrated state, to a new, more effective integration.

Does the evocation of the dark night bring even more stress to the lower self? Yes, but the important stress is the dark night itself (i.e., evolutionary pressure in its most intensive form). All other stresses must be overcome in order to focus properly on the needed lessons and aspects of transformation. The student must become more detached, more relaxed in regard to mundane pressures, so that the student may properly focus on the inner self and what it

reveals about the outer self. This process cannot be properly concluded where the student is not free to realize the truth about himself or herself. This means a lessening of outer stress. This means being more detached, withdrawing somewhat from whatever entanglements there may be, so that understanding can be achieved concerning the conditioning to be overcome and the adjustments to be made.

Why does the dark night invariably include the experience of intense loneliness? This is nature's way of allowing the student to become free from the usual mundane and personal conditioning. In the intensity of loneliness, the spiritual student naturally turns within to the inner, higher self, which is the only real self. It does not mean that the student is alone. Nor does it mean that the student is separated from humanity. It simply means that the connection with others and with humanity is based more properly on inner relationships than (superficial) outer experience. The spiritual path is itself a lonely path, even without the more intense loneliness evoked by virtue of the dark night. It is lonely in the sense that the student is awakening to a realization for which most everyone else is asleep. Those who share this experience tend to be few and far between. Thus a sense of loneliness helps to awaken the spiritual student, provided the student does not dwell in loneliness as an end in itself.

Why should the student passing through this experience be so misunderstood by others? Because most other people have no conscious experience of these matters and cannot properly relate to the experience of the dark night. On the other hand, the spiritual student is generally misunderstood by others anyway, for the same reason. The spiritual student is generally (more creatively) non-conforming to the mundane and personal expectations of culture and society.

The Dark Night of the Soul 4

So who can help the student who is passing through the dark night of the soul in this proper sense? No one, really. The student must rely on the soul for encouragement and guidance. That encouragement and guidance is necessarily qualitative and subjective in nature, and it is up to the (mind of the) student to make the best use of that encouragement and guidance. Real friends are simply patient (non-judging) and accepting of the experience being evoked.

In addition to the apparent conditioning, what else must the student overcome? Generally, there are various elements and aspects of conditioning. Some of the most important yet more subtle elements and aspects to be overcome are the various defense mechanisms and walls that are built into one's consciousness by the apparent conditioning (experience). Those walls and barriers serve to protect the student from himself or herself, in the lower self, yet impede or inhibit realization. In effect, each wall is a barrier to truth and realization. The lower self must not have "wanted" to deal with something, ergo a protective wall or barrier was created. In some cases walls are built in response to fear, real or imagined. In some cases walls are built by the ego to protect itself, to prevent or hinder the higher self from threatening the false reality of the ego (i.e., with the truth about oneself and the relative illusion (reality) of the ego and the outer world). Some walls are built as buffers, where reality cannot be comprehended directly. But all walls are essentially artificial and fabricated by the lower self and ultimately must be removed.

As the student grows and deepens spiritually, the various walls and barriers in consciousness become less protective and more limiting and inhibitive. As the student grows and deepens in consciousness, the various walls must be dealt with, one by one, and the truth of what they contain or convey or imply must be faced and realized. The dark night of the soul is simply a much-more-intensive-than-normal means of facilitating this progress, through intensive focus rather than as an incidental aspect of life-as-usual in the lower worlds. The spiritually-oriented person who is absorbed in mundane, personality-centered life as well as the student who is absorbed in spiritual work may have this experience evoked for them (by their respective souls), in order to disrupt that

absorbed state, effectively forcing the student to deal with the various nooks and crannies of lower consciousness.

Normal (mundane, conventional) psychological analysis is generally insufficient to resolve the difficulties presented by the (process of the) dark night. This is because some or all of the walls and barriers are inherited from earlier lifetimes. It is only when one effectively turns within to the higher self, that the essence in consciousness can be embraced and the issues of these inherited walls and barriers can be confronted. The details of previous experience are not really important. What is important is understanding the nature and quality of consciousness that created the wall or barrier.

The dark night of the soul is a wonderful, albeit painful and intensely lonely, experience and opportunity. As the student responds more consciously and more deliberately to this evocation he or she is better able to weather the associated difficulties and focus on the essence of the experience (which is the higher nature in relationship to the lower). Every truly God-centered person in history has passed through the dark night of the soul in one form or another. It is more than just a rite of passage, it is a very real and vital deepening and transformation.

† Commentary No. 1029

Having, Doing, and Being

There is a relatively ancient (timeless) notion of three stages of personality emphasis (focus) (orientation), with a somewhat loose correlation to polarization in consciousness, characterized by having, doing, and being.

In the “having” stage, a person is predominantly materialistic and/or possessive, being concerned primarily with having things, and/or having people under one’s influence (e.g., personal power, financial resources, material and people possessions). This is an “early” emphasis in personality development and corresponds loosely with physical and emotional polarization. There is in this stage not much appreciation for the transient nature of material life or the need to develop character to carry forth into the next life. Nonetheless,

character is slowly developed through rather lengthy experience and expression at this level.

In the "doing" stage, a person is predominantly experiential, being concerned primarily with doing things, experiencing "sensations," and/or achieving something (i.e., egoistic satisfaction). This is an "intermediate" emphasis in personality development and corresponds loosely with emotional and mental polarization. This stage has three major sub-stages or categories of "doing," one that is primarily self-centered in the sense of self-centered (physical and emotional) experience (excitement, enjoyment, etc.), one that is self-centered in the sense of ambitious (egoistic) undertakings (in physical, emotional, and/or intellectual terms), however noble they may or may not be, but primarily motivated by ego (the need for recognition of accomplishment), and one that is primarily self-centered in the somewhat more noble sense of learning and growing, with or without a motive beyond one's own interests. In this stage one still "has" things, but without so much of the sense of attachment characterized by the first stage. In this stage character is developed relatively more quickly than in the first stage, depending on which of the three sub-stages is actually embraced.

In the "being" stage, a person is predominantly focused in consciousness and being, being concerned about matters non-material and non-egoistic. This is an "advanced" emphasis of personality development and corresponds loosely with mental and intuitional polarization. In this stage one may still "have" things, but primarily in the sense of the utility of living in this world and in facilitating one's being. In this stage one may also still "do" things, but without ambition or any sense of achievement or need for self-fulfillment, as these things have been accomplished previously and are no longer needed or valued. In the being stage one may still "learn" from experience and expression, but the focus remains on being, on sharing one's energy rather than more directly facilitating "activity" in experience or expression.

In practice, each person in incarnation exhibits all three stages or foci, to some extent and/or for some periods of time, in various ways, but as the personality experience stabilizes, one or another of these three foci will tend to dominate. Except in the case of recapitulation, the first (having) stage lasts the longest, the second (doing) is relatively shorter, and the third (being) may be relatively

short in the case of those who pass on to the next lifewave (kingdom) but may be relatively long for those who choose to remain in this world. The having stage gradually yields to the doing stage, and the doing stage gradually yields to the being stage, over the course of many lives and/or in the course of each lifetime (in the sense of recapitulation for those who have previously reached the second or third stage).

† Commentary No. 1030

The Spiritual Group

The spiritual group is, properly, the contextual relationship between the spiritual student and the spiritual path. While the student in incarnation inevitably and eventually turns inward in approaching the soul or higher self and while that soul or higher self serves as the inner relationship of the student to the path, the spiritual group provides the broader context of the path and the qualified connection between the student and the lifewave (humanity) in which he or she works.

The human being in incarnation is an expression and component of the lifewave, humanity. On the highest level of human expression (the monadic level), the distinction of individual human beings is virtually non-existent. On the lowest level of human expression (at the level of the coarse human personality) are vast numbers of relatively (more apparently than really) independent and separative human beings in manifestation. Between these two levels is the middle ground of the soul, and on that level, coexistent with and not really separate from the soul, is the hierarchy of spiritual groups in the proper sense of groups of souls. In this sense there is little distinction between the soul of the individual and the soul group or spiritual group on the level of the soul (spiritual groups in manifestation, on human personality levels, are another matter altogether).

The spiritual group in this higher, soul-level existence, provides the common thread of qualification in the context of the spiritual path, as in most cases all of the members of a soul group are more-or-less at the same level and committed to the spiritual path. Those who are approaching the path, as souls, are simply loosely affiliated with one or another of the seven ray ashrams but have not been incorporated into one or another of the spiritual groups in this sense, even if

there are karmic relationships with one or another of the various groups. But those who have been incorporated, through approach, qualification, and integration at the soul level, then become expressions of that group. Thus, incorporation conveys both qualification of the soul by the group and expression and representation of the group (energy) (quality) by the soul through its personality, to whatever extent it is capable.

The spiritual group is a wave of relative pioneers within the human lifewave. The human lifewave serves as the basis of brotherhood, but the spiritual student does not (cannot) function entirely independently of his or her respective spiritual group. The soul lives in the context of the group. The spiritual student or personality-incarnation of the soul is an expression of the soul, more-or-less-responsive to that soul, or at least striving to become responsive to that soul. So even an apparently isolated spiritual student has a soul and therefore a relationship with his or her soul group. But more importantly, each spiritual student has, by virtue of that relationship, compatriots along the way, some in incarnation, some others not so, some in proximity, some others not so. Thus a community exists for each spiritual group in manifestation, whether or not, and to whatever extent, that group is cohesively manifested (focused) in space and time.

Spiritual groups in manifestation (and any group that approximates or seeks to manifest as a spiritual group) vary substantially in expressed common character, temperament, and values (quality of consciousness). Three of the aspects or components of the spiritual group in manifestation are brotherhood, community, and the teacher (the relationship of the student to his or her mentor(s)).

Spiritual Groups 1

In the higher sense, spiritual groups exist at the level of the soul and form the structure (depth and breadth) of the spiritual hierarchy or inner government. In the lower sense, spiritual groups are manifested at the personality level, each with some degree of alignment with the character and quality of the group in its inner, higher sense.

At the higher level, spiritual groups are organized in relationship to the hierarchy. At the lower level, each spiritual group is manifested according to the charter of the higher group and to some extent according to the needs, abilities, and interests of the members in incarnation. Some groups are manifested in a well-focused manner, being relatively distinct in space and time and composition and character. Other groups are manifested in a less-well-focused manner, with more subjective coordination of its participants (members and representatives). At the higher level, the coherence and position (quality) of a group is readily apparent. At the lower level this is not necessarily so, as spiritual students in incarnation are not necessarily or even generally all integrated as personalities nor aligned with and responsive to their respective souls. Thus groups in manifestation vary rather widely according to apparent character, temperament, and values.

There are two major distinctions for the various spiritual groups in manifestation, both of which have a bearing on the character and quality manifested by the group as a group and through its members. The first distinction is whether or not the group is sanctioned, i.e., existent at the level of the soul and therefore sanctioned by the hierarchy by virtue of its place within the hierarchical scheme, while the second distinction is whether or not the group in manifestation is more-or-less personality-centered. A sanctioned group has a more direct connection or relationship to soul levels and is therefore substantially more potent (in the spiritual sense, not necessarily in the physical, emotional, or intellectual sense). Since very, very few people in incarnation are anything other than personality-centered, and this is true as much for spiritual students as it is for humanity as a whole, the vast majority of spiritual groups in manifestation are likewise personality-centered.

A sanctioned group may be personality-centered and therefore less potent or it may have some degree of transcendence of personality-centeredness and therefore be relatively more potent (responsive) (effective in expressing spiritual quality). An unsanctioned group is personality-centered and cannot be other-than-personality-centered. If there is a soul connection in evidence (rather than merely latent), then a group exists in the sense of a sanctioned spiritual group. The challenge for most (sanctioned) spiritual groups in manifestation is simply to provide a forum for spiritual growth and spiritual expression (service) in some area of endeavor. The challenge for relatively advanced groups includes as well the encouragement and opportunity for overcoming the relative personality-centeredness. Unsanctioned, necessarily personality-centered groups, may be relatively sincere and approaching the path, or they may be personality cults or special interest groups without regard for the broader context of the spiritual path in its more proper sense.

Indications of the character and quality (e.g., degree of personality-centeredness) of a spiritual group may be discerned from the expression of the group through its members. Claims of sanction are simply not made by anyone who is consciously a member of a sanctioned group. The real issue is to what extent do personalities dominate (weaken) the activities of the group?

† Commentary No. 1032

Spiritual Groups 2

Many spiritual groups exist within the framework of humanity in manifestation. All generally serve the purpose of evolution in consciousness in the sense of providing encouragement to the bulk of humanity (or some segment thereof) in the direction of evolution. Some spiritual groups are relatively externalized (objective) and well-integrated with mainstream (more ordinary human) activities, working more directly with progressive issues, while some other spiritual groups are relatively subjective in nature, working along more subtle lines of encouragement. The various groups serve in various ways and through various means, depending on their respective charters, character, temperament, and values (composition).

Some groups are focused primarily on spiritual growth and on attracting people to the spiritual path. Some groups are focused primarily on training qualified students. Some groups are focused more directly on particular issues pertaining to evolution in consciousness. Some groups are more focused along cultural, geographic, and/or religious lines. Some groups serve particular functions within humanity (and hierarchy). Some groups are predominantly karmic in nature (i.e., members are more directly linked by karmic considerations than by common quality in consciousness). Some groups work with other kingdoms and lifewaves, serving to bridge between them. Some groups work primarily with spiritual students of other groups, in the sense of encouraging specific transformations (e.g., overcoming personality-centeredness).

Some groups work primarily on physical levels, with or without being fully externalized. Other groups work on etheric, astral, and/or mental levels, with respective energy in some context or application. Some groups work diversely (geographically or otherwise). Some groups work primarily locally. Some groups have a relatively uniform composition (i.e., all of the members having similar character, quality, temperament, and values). Some groups have considerable compositional diversity (i.e., having a balance of members of varying (ray) talents within some spread of character, quality, temperament, and values).

Some groups manifest through an informal network of members. Some groups are much more formal. Some groups have a collective but geographically diverse composition and character. Some groups have centers or communities of focused activities. Some groups are relatively spiritually immature in manifestation (being rather personality-centered but nonetheless sincere). Some groups are relatively spiritually mature, without being weakened by the presence of substantial personalities. Some groups are relatively extroverted and have a relatively active focus. Some others are relatively introverted and are more contemplative in nature. Some groups provide a balance between activity in the world of human (personality) endeavor and the periodic withdrawal from the distractions of the outer world. Some groups have very large and highly visible memberships. Some groups (equally or more significant) have relatively few members and remain obscure.

In every case, (sanctioned) spiritual groups serve some purpose within the context of the spiritual path and the field of humanity. And in every case, (sanctioned) groups contribute to humanity beyond the near-field of their apparent endeavors. The key for the spiritual student is to grow and serve effectively within the context of the spiritual path, with or without being fully conscious of the group connection. The spiritual student properly embraces the group context, and, in subjective alignment with the group, participates in its work.

† Commentary No. 1033

Perception and Truth 1

One can make a distinction between what is true in fact and what is merely believed or perceived to be true. However there are a number of problems in these regards. (1) One generally fails to make that distinction between perception and truth, as one generally unconsciously equates what is perceived to be true to be actually true. (2) One can never really know what is (absolutely) true, because the nature of human experience (manifested existence) is dominated by relativity. Perception is a relative and partial process and perspective. Knowledge, understanding, and wisdom are all relative concepts. The human being is not omniscient and does not perceive the whole of anything and is therefore subject to very substantial limitations.

(3) All perception (and associated beliefs) is (are) biased by whatever one already believes (and by whatever other conditioning is in effect). Our beliefs and opinions (i.e., our (presumed) knowledge and understanding) serve to help in our experience and expression but also to hinder in the sense of that bias and resulting conditioning. If one believes something, then there is a tendency to interpret whatever one perceives to support what one believes, neglecting to some extent what may appear to be contrary to our beliefs and focusing largely on what appears to support our beliefs and values. We tend to see and hear and feel whatever we want to see and hear and feel. We tend to seek to be comfortable and “accept” whatever generates comfort and “reject” whatever lessens that comfort. This problem is exaggerated wherever beliefs become opinions, i.e., wherever one is attached to one’s beliefs. (4) One generally does not believe that one is biased, that one is attached to one’s beliefs, etc.

(5) The ego is a help and a hindrance. It is the ego or self-centered aspect of the lower (personality) consciousness that does whatever it takes to sustain its own (artificial) existence. It is the ego that makes judgments, has beliefs, forms opinions, etc. These things (judgment, beliefs) are relatively necessary to ordinary (practical) human existence (experience and expression) but become substantial hindrances to the spiritual student (who seeks to transcend these limitations of lower (personality) consciousness, in union with the higher). It is the ego that prevents or inhibits any realization that might threaten its own position and influence. (6) One normally fails to make any distinction between ego and (real) self. Most people operate as if they were their respective egos, without any realization that they are, indeed, something else (higher, deeper, more inclusive). In other words, what most people "are" is merely the most superficial part of what they truly are. That superficial part is still (relatively) real and useful, but it is not even a substantial part of the whole self.

(7) Tentativeness is relatively awkward for most people. Most people find comfort in being attached to beliefs, to things being right or wrong, one way or some other way, of things being settled or established with certainty, without gradation or relativity or tentativeness. But truth is, unfortunately, quite relative, and in order to be able to (effectively) embrace truth, one needs to embrace relativity and tentativeness, and transcend the whole arena of having opinions.

(8) There is a tendency of the ego to make relativity and tentativeness excuses for evading the truth as it could be more effectively understood and to use relativity as a means of justifying what one wants to believe or do rather than recognizing what is truly needed and appropriate and acting accordingly. Shades of grey do not convey the right to ignore the conscience.

Perception and Truth 2

There is relativity to truth. Since the whole is generally not regarded (and is not practically or practicably regardable), truth is relative and depends on the context of the truth being regarded and the context or conditioning (bias) of the person or consciousness regarding. That which is beyond one's experience is most difficult to properly perceive and interpret. The natural human tendency is to perceive everything in terms according to one's own previous experience and understanding (and beliefs), however limited (partial) and unrelated (and unrealistic) that experience and understanding (bias) may be.

There is also tentativeness to truth as it is perceived and embraced. Information may be regarded as true, as tentatively true, of undetermined truth, tentatively false, or false. The human tendency is to perceive something as either true or false. With some measure of honesty and objectivity, one can perceive something as being undetermined in truth. But, believing something as true or believing something as false is limiting and inhibiting of understanding. Believing something as true or believing something as false conveys inertia to deeper or broader understanding, even if what is believed is relatively correct.

For the spiritual student there is a more potent range of embracing truth, and that is to perceive something as relatively and tentatively true (or as relatively and tentatively false (or as undetermined in truth)). In this way the inertia of belief (which leads to having opinions or attachments to beliefs) and the inertia of conditioning are minimized (and eventually transcended) and the student is more able to remain open to deeper and broader understanding. However, to be effective in this regard one must learn to minimize the role of the intellect. If the ring of truth is determined largely by the intellect then all conclusions should be suspect. If the ring of truth is less conclusive and determined largely through intuition, then there should be some (tentative and relative) confidence.

The human being experiences normally primarily through a process that is largely unconscious, involving observation, perception, judgment, and conclusion. Perception is clouded and hindered or constrained by beliefs and conditioning. The intellect tends to judge and thereby convert beliefs into

opinions resulting in more substantial bias. However, the student who remains relatively open-minded, who is more conscious in observing and perceiving, and who tempers the process of judgment and conclusion, is more able to realize the truth. In this sense, perception with openness leads to realization, and perception with closed-ness leads to judgment and opinion.

The whole process is compounded further through the distinction between what one really believes and what one merely thinks one believes. What one believes is generally not the same as what one thinks one believes or what one professes to believe. What one really believes, one believes on unconscious levels and results in some appreciable extent of manifestation through character, temperament, and values, even while there is little conscious realization of same. For someone who is basically honest and uncontrived, what one believes consciously becomes what one believes unconsciously. Otherwise there is a growing tension between the two aspects of belief. In either case, the spiritual student should endeavor to be consciously aware of the subconscious dimension (beliefs, conditioning, and other biases) and to avoid "having" conclusive beliefs (opinions).

† Commentary No. 1035

Importance 2

There are no important people. There is no important work to do. However, there is worthwhile work to do, and there are many people who "do" worthwhile things, but nothing is really important and no one is particularly important. There is a certain subtle equivalence between saying that someone or something is important and saying that everyone or everything is important. As all lives and all work proceed within God, then all lives (and all work) are "special" (of course "special" loses its conventional meaning in the process). This is not to convey any sense of hopelessness. There is always hope (realistic or otherwise), but hope should be recognized as a somewhat delusive means. The spiritual student is properly and generally hopeful, confident, etc., but not in any particular regard.

The distinction between important and worthwhile is relatively important. Important means substantially significant with a hint or measure of urgency

(glamour). Worthwhile simply means being worth the investment of time and effort. Both imply judgment, but a sense of importance or special-ness suggests and invites glamour much more so than a sense of worthwhile-ness. The distinction is more a matter of degree than kind, but one is more moderate than the other and therefore more amenable to the way (path). Importance inhibits realization, while worthwhile-ness does not so much inhibit realization.

To sense something or someone as important is to be to some extent englamoured and deluded; to sense oneself as important and/or to sense (believe) one's work as important is to separate oneself from what truly is, from God, from life, from humanity. Whenever anyone thinks of oneself and/or one's work as special or substantially different, then that is, to a large extent, a manifestation of ego and separateness. To proceed in humility, doing whatever seems worthwhile to do, this is what is expected of us along the way.

Many things are (seem to be) relatively important or worthwhile, but none particularly or non-relatively so. No person is relatively more important than any other. To think of oneself as better than any other or important in any way is the curse of egoism. On the other hand, to think of oneself as in any sense inferior to others is also and equally a matter of (negative) egoism (i.e., the ego may promote a sense of inferiority in order to maintain its hold on the waking consciousness, but more generally inferiority comes from the unintegrated astral nature seeking further stimulation). There are no important people, though there are some people who "do" relatively worthwhile things. Since all people live in God, God is manifested through all people. Some are more responsive than others, or at least appear to be so in ways that we perceive to be relatively significant. But if one person were not "there" to "do" something that really needs to be done, then someone else would be there instead. On the other hand, any sense of momentousness is probably very much distorted by glamour, and any such sense of the importance of events or circumstances is exaggerated by the ego.

In attachment to objectives, one can lose sight of the value of the process. In attachment to objectives, one becomes biased (relatively closed) to deeper and broader realization. The spiritual student is encouraged to "do" whatever he or she is called upon (by common sense and conscience) to do. The spiritual student is encouraged to "do" worthwhile things, not so much because they are

worthwhile (i.e., appearing to have worthwhile objectives) but because in the “doing” of worthwhile things one has worthwhile experience and expression, developing character and proper temperament, values, etc.

† Commentary No. 1036

The Basis of Importance

In addition to the aspect of glamour (self-delusion) regarding a sense of importance, there is a matter of basis of importance. Each person generally has some sense of what is important and what is not important, or at least (and preferably) what is relatively important, but can anyone ever really know what is important, or even what is relatively important?

Perception of relative importance is based on one’s values and those values are the result of experience (evolution in consciousness) and a measure of realization (knowledge, understanding, wisdom). But all things, all lives, and all processes are related by karma, the underlying law and force of cause and effect. Thus, what is relatively important (and what is good) is a measure of what facilitates evolution in consciousness (i.e., what is consistent with karmic intent), but the human being cannot generally discern cause and effect relationships except in the relatively superficial (limited, relatively immediate (near-field), and non-conclusive) sense. Karma has two dimensions that transcend human perception and the potential ability to grasp specific cause and effect relationships. The first is the temporal aspect, with karmic forces transcending the time-span of the existing lifetime and the perspective of incarnation, and the second is the aspect of interrelatedness of all lives and circumstances (significantly and otherwise).

As the human being evolves in consciousness there is an expansion of the discernment regarding karma, in the breadth and depth of karmic balance and in some pertinent details, but not in any conclusive detailed sense. The real depth and breadth of karma and the complexity of detail is simply beyond human capacity both qualitatively and quantitatively. Thus not being able to discern details of karma limits the human ability to determine what is really important. Yet, discernment of relative importance (worthwhile-ness) based upon one’s

values and understanding of principles suffices (and provided that one consciously acknowledges the relativity and tentativeness of any discernment and realization, then one can adapt (grow) appropriately to a deeper sense of propriety).

There are a number of underlying means of discernment of relative importance, both unconscious and conscious, relating to embraced (and to some extent professed) values. At the most primitive level (physical polarization) there are various instincts inherited from passage through the animal kingdom (e.g., survival). At the next level (emotional polarization) there are various higher instincts, self-interest, and what is appealing to the desire nature. At the next level (mental polarization) there is self-interest and what is intellectually appealing (the intellect generally (but not completely) supersedes much of the instinctive nature). Hopefully, in the transition between the emotional polarization and the mental polarization there is a lessening on self-interest and a broadening of appreciation for the context of humanity (and life) as a whole. And at the highest practical level, there is intuitive recognition of appropriateness and propriety.

As the student transcends reliance on instinct and intellect, relying increasingly and instead on the intuition, and as the student transcends the whole arena of attachment (beliefs, opinions) and ego, then there is immediate and effective realization of appropriateness (valuation of relative worthwhile-ness), yet that realization is not really a matter of realization of importance (which it is not, really) as much as it is a matter of realization of appropriateness. One simply learns to do what is before oneself to do.

Human Constitution 1

The human being is considerably more than what appears to be, and in some ways considerably less. That which appears to be is the human personality as a distinct lifeform in space and time, having a physical, emotional, and concrete mental form (personality). The reality is a being (lifeform) in three aspects, distributed in space and time (more correctly transcending space and time).

The three aspects are the monad, the soul or higher self, and the personality or lower self. The monad is the highest, deepest, most noble aspect of the human being, which resides in-or-near God-consciousness and which does not suffer any sense of individual distinction or separation from that God-consciousness. The monad is a unit of life within a greater life (God), but distinctions within that oneness are merely academic. The monad resides on a plane of consciousness well beyond the physical, emotional, and concrete mental realm of ordinary human experience.

The soul is the periodic reflection of the monad into and onto lower levels (atma-buddhi-manas) and is the inner and higher self that utilizes the human personality for experience and expression. More correctly, the soul is the accumulation (integration) of all such reflections over space and time such that the soul is itself space-less and time-less (as is the monad), but nonetheless is approximate or in indirect contact with its reflection in time and space (i.e., the human personality consciousness). Like the monad, the soul does not suffer any sense of individual distinction except in the very most subtle sense of simultaneously being one with the monad (and humanity) (and all of life) and being able to live indirectly through all human lifeforms.

It is not really possible to describe monadic or soul consciousness, for none of the words or notions available in human language convey the sense of that consciousness, even partially. Those who are able to participate in the higher consciousness are simply unable to effectively describe the experience. It is more a matter of describing what the experience is not. It is not a human personality consciousness. There is only a very subtle sense of individuality, of being aware that there is an individuality but being unable (at the soul level) to

experience individuality (for as soon as one experiences individuality or separateness there is a lowering of the focus of consciousness back to the personality level). There is no thinking (mental activity) and no feeling (emotional activity), but there is a depth and breadth of intuitive realization (higher feeling, being a distinctly non-emotional and non-intellectual experience).

The soul in turn reflects itself periodically onto objective levels and incarnates (more or less alternately) as a male or female personality (while the soul and monad remain neither male nor female). The personality is what has form and manifests in the lower worlds, with a dense physical body, an etheric double, an emotional or astral body, and a concrete mental body (mind). In each incarnation there is a new (and hopefully improved) personality. In each incarnation there is additional depth and breadth of experience and expression that contributes to the growth and evolution of the higher self as that soul assimilates the experience of its lower self. In turn that which is assimilated by the soul is somehow conveyed to the monad. Thus the human constitution includes all of this, a triad-in-God (monad, soul, and personality), an upper triad (triune higher self) (atma-buddhi-manas), and a lower triad (triune lower self) (physical, emotional, concrete mental personality).

† Commentary No. 1038

Human Constitution 2

Given the depth and breadth of what constitutes the human being (monad, soul or higher self, and personality or lower self), that which appears to be is merely the most superficial aspect, that of the human personality apparently isolated or individualized in time and space. But even what appears to be of the human personality is merely superficial, for there is a considerable depth of sub-consciousness and super-consciousness of which the waking-consciousness (normally being self-absorbed) is generally largely unaware.

The problem of the human constitution, though, is the false identification of waking-consciousness with the reality (totality) of individual humanness. In a sense, only the monad is real (enduring), while the soul or higher self is transient

and the personality or lower self even more so transient (very ephemeral). The waking-consciousness (that which thinks and feels more-or-less self-consciously) is artificial and superficial, as is the sense of individuality or ego. Of course these artificialities and superficialities exist within the context of the real self, which is inclusive, but for one to identify with the artificial and superficial aspect(s) of the human being is to be deluded by the ego and the senses and to miss the realization of being, in fact, the inner, deeper, higher self. The (relatively) immediate evolutionary objective of the ordinary human being (i.e., within the foreseeable future) is the achievement of conscious realization of the next level of inner reality (i.e., the unity of the soul). That means overcoming the illusions of artificial and superficial existence and transcending the ego in realization of the higher (deeper) (inner) self.

What appears to be the human being is really the most outward symbol of what is human. That symbol (personality lifeform) has a role to play and a contribution to make, but it is still a symbol and not the reality that underlies and overshadows the apparent lifeform. Of greater reality than the symbol is the matrix or archetypal existence of the human being. The soul of upper triad (atma-buddhi-manas) is of a higher order of reality. And the monad likewise and even more so. This false identification gives power to the artificial-superficial ego (personality-centeredness). Transcending the ego brings freedom and realization.

In one sense, the human being is far less than what it appears to be, for the ego is artificial and transient and the individual human being is not a law unto itself as the ego may believe, but is, rather, merely an element of a much greater, composite lifeform (humanity). Those who view themselves as one with humanity (and/or one with all life) have taken the first (albeit intellectual) step toward true realization. But that realization is not actually achieved until all sense of separateness is overcome, not merely as an intellectual concept, however effectively it may be embraced. The individual human being is still sacred and has value, but that sacredness and value need to be viewed in the broader context.

In another sense and broader context, the real human being is (God), being both immanent and transcendent with regard to the human personality. And the real human being is the human lifewave that extends through a substantial range of

time and space (and as God is all of life). Thus the human being is much greater than what it appears to be. The dimensionality of being human is far greater than what appears in space-time. It is not that one is transformed into something higher and greater, but that one comes to realize what truly is. It is simply a matter of perspective.

† Commentary No. 1039

The Ego 1

In conventional terms the ego is the conscious part of the personality that is derived from contact with the external world based on perception and interpretation of sense-impressions and from contact with the internal world of the subconsciousness. In less conventional, more metaphysical terms, the ego is a broader part of the personality and includes the subconscious (unconscious) element and reflects in various ways all of the conditioning and associated habits of the personality, however conscious or unconscious a person may be concerning that conditioning and those habits. The problem of ego is compounded by a person's failure to consciously recognize that there is a subconscious dimension to personality expression, e.g., behavior and attitudes, the basis and expression of which the waking-consciousness is not consciously or fully aware.

The ego is actually an artificial element or entity, produced and sustained at the point of interaction between inner and outer worlds, i.e., between the personality as a whole and the external world in which the personality operates. The personality is more substantial, being an expression of the personality matrix or archetype that is the reflection of the soul or higher self. The ego is simply an artificial aspect of the personality, but one which tends to dominate the waking-consciousness or interface with external reality.

The basis of ego is the delusion of independent, individual, self-consciousness. This basis arises from identification with the personality existence (consciousness) and reliance on sense-impressions for determination of perceived reality. In short, aeons of conditioning (experience) produce apparent self-consciousness, apparent separateness (duality), and apparent individuality. Thus the ego is a natural (albeit artificial) product of human development and is

confirmed (compounded) by experience. For much of the duration of human personality development and experience and expression, the ego is a progressive factor, i.e., in those periods in which personality is developed and strengthened the ego emerges and is sustained thereby and contributes thereto.

The ego is also the aspect of personality that incorporates instinct, including self-preservation and pursuit of self-interest. An outgrowth of self-preservation is the compelling need of the ego to sustain its own artificial existence. Thus the ego will contrive to manipulate the perception and interpretation of sense-impressions, emotional and intellectual activity, etc., in pursuit of its own interests (mainly preservation and strengthening of its position and power over the personality life). Thus while the ego is an evolutionary outgrowth of experience, it ultimately becomes a substantial limitation as the human being approaches the (higher) evolutionary need of personality (ego) transcendence. In fact, the ego itself can become a destabilizing factor in personality life if destabilization is perceived (by the ego) to be needed in protecting its power and influence. The ego is naturally threatened by any spiritual progress, anything that has the potential to undermine its existence and influence. Thus, the ego tends to become an inertial factor rather than a progressive factor.

The real danger in human personality development is that the ego might become so strong as to completely undermine real progress. Ultimately however, the personality (ego) (mind) is (are) transcended and the lower self and its various aspects are sufficiently tempered. That process of tempering may be relatively painless where the ego is relatively mild or relatively painful where the ego is relatively strong.

Egoism

In conventional terms, egoism is defined as the ethical doctrine or process (phenomenon) in which individual self-interest is the actual motive of all conscious action and/or in which individual self-interest is the valid end of all action. In less conventional, more metaphysical terms, egoism includes unconscious or subconscious motivation and self-justification as well. In contrast with “ordinary” egoism, egotism is a more extreme form of egoistic expression involving excessive self-preoccupation and exaggerated sense of self-importance (while egoism is simply self-identification with attendant self-defensiveness and pursuit of (apparent) self-interest).

Of course there is nothing “wrong” with egoism per se. It is a natural outgrowth of human personality development, experience, and expression. But egoism is ultimately counter-evolutionary, i.e., egoism eventually inhibits growth in consciousness and therefore needs to be tempered by anyone who would embrace the spiritual path of conscious evolution in consciousness. Egoism may or may not be culturally engendered, but in either case, egoism is separative, i.e., it encourages the “sense” that the personality is an independent entity entitled to individual rights, self-interest, etc. More moderate forms of egoism allow for group interest (e.g., family, community, nation, world) and a balance between self-interest and group welfare, but are still inherently separative. Also, some forms of egoism include ethical consideration of other people’s (individual) interests (i.e., me first but not at the expense of others’ welfare), while some forms have no such appreciation or respect for other people.

Those who consciously and deliberately embrace egoism are not quite so perverse as those who unconsciously and indeliberately embrace egoism, i.e., being egoistic in their behavior and attitudes without any conscious realization of same. Egoism as a merely intellectual outcome or expression can be overcome relatively easily through additional experience. Egoism that is embraced non-intellectually is more insidious and relatively much more difficult to temper and transcend because it is deeper and more substantial. That which is on the surface of consciousness is easier to recognize and temper, while that which is

hidden at some depth below the surface but which produces consequences in behavior and attitudes is far less easier to recognize and temper.

In the final analysis, egoism is that which inhibits the flow of energy (qualification, insight, conscience, etc.) from the soul or higher self to the waking-consciousness of the personality. Egoism manifests in many ways and on many levels, but in each case egoism is that which sustains the (conscious or unconscious) sense of separateness (and in more extreme cases the expression of separateness). Egoism and personality-centeredness are very closely related and are in many regards two facets of the same artificiality (personality existence) (personality presence). Personality-centeredness refers to the overall level and extent of focus of consciousness on that level (personality), while egoism refers more to the manner of personality expression and elements and implications of separateness and separateness. One can be unselfish and even non-self-centered and still be essentially egoistic.

While the pursuit of self-interest is easily justified or rationalized in mundane and secular terms, and, with sufficient regard for others, can be considered quite ethical and reasonable, in the broader context of human evolution, egoism (and coincident personality-centeredness) is simply the limiting factor of human existence (experience and expression).

† Commentary No. 1041

Aspects of Consciousness

There are many aspects and attributes of consciousness. Fundamentally, there are discrete (quantum) levels within levels of consciousness, seven-fold, from the most material levels of the dense physical plane to the least material levels of the highest spiritual plane, and there are degrees of quality or purity within each of those levels, while consciousness is more properly an intermediate perspective (comparable to material and spiritual perspectives). There are relationships that exist or are manifested between consciousness at various levels and extent. In order to function on some level of consciousness, one must necessarily possess or exhibit a body or vehicle of consciousness on that level. Thus forms are relatively material manifestations that serve and facilitate activity in consciousness.

From a more material perspective, consciousness is very closely related to the vibration of matter. The matter of "higher" levels or sub-levels of consciousness has a greater relative frequency or magnitude of vibration. Each level of consciousness is a dimension in the overall framework of consciousness, so that each level exhibits a distinctly different phase relationship (in this relatively material perspective). The matter of "higher" quality in consciousness has a lower degree or extent of coarseness or transverse vibration (deviation from its central frequency). In this sense, purity implies cleanness or clarity of vibration. Forms are composed of matter, being integrated or otherwise related through the force (presence) of some consciousness. Thus spirit underlies consciousness, consciousness underlies matter, and matter underlies form. However, forms are artificial, while spirit, consciousness, and matter are more fundamental (more real).

From a more spiritual perspective, consciousness is entirely a matter of quality, where refinement in consciousness at any level is a psychological product of development and experience in consciousness. And that quality is both a matter of purity and nature, relating directly to relative sympathy and collectiveness. There is a broad spectrum of types of consciousness, from mass consciousness (collective unconsciousness), through self-consciousness, to degrees and extent of group consciousness. There are various degrees of polarization of consciousness at various levels and growth occurs substantially as consciousness is transferred (re-polarized) from one level to another (higher level). There are also more central aspects of awareness, intelligence, and realization.

The purpose of consciousness is to provide a field and framework for evolution. The field of consciousness is the background through which change (adjustment, growth, development, expansion, evolution) occurs. In this sense, the material perspective is that of the underlying relatively static material substructure for consciousness, and the spiritual perspective (proper) is that of the overshadowing and underlying reality that induces evolution in consciousness. Crisis (opportunity for adjustment leading to growth (assimilation of experience)) occurs within consciousness. Only the superficial effects are realized in matter.

Aspects of consciousness thus properly include levels of consciousness, relative coarseness in consciousness, relative collectiveness in consciousness, relative objectivity in consciousness, and polarization in consciousness (as well as various phenomena related to changes in consciousness), leading to increased or expanded awareness, associated intelligence, and ultimately realization.

† Commentary No. 1042

Types of Consciousness

There are various types of consciousness, with two major spectra. One spectrum is the range from mass consciousness (group unconsciousness) through various degrees of self-consciousness to group consciousness in the higher sense (and ultimately to God-consciousness). Another spectrum is the range or dimension of objectivity, from relatively objective consciousness to relatively subjective consciousness.

The period of involution is marked by mass consciousness (group consciousness in the lower sense of non-self-conscious group consciousness) wherein a collective unconsciousness underlies a higher-order group consciousness. In the case of humanity (the human lifewave), for example, in involutory times, the entire race was collectively unconscious (non-self-conscious) but animated by the being-in-whom-the-human-lifewave-lives. As the race evolved in consciousness, through experience and expression (more properly through the assimilation of that experience and expression), self-consciousness was gradually induced in the majority of "people" (units of consciousness) within the lifewave and the evolutionary period was begun. Those who could not be "induced" at that time simply joined the succeeding lifewave (currently progressing through the animal kingdom).

As the race evolves further, real (true) self-consciousness will emerge as the superficial (lower) self-consciousness (waking-sleep) is transformed through realization of (unification with) the higher Self. That real Self-consciousness is the beginning of group consciousness in the higher sense of "individuals" being aware of and participating in the group collective consciousness. Eventually, even the sense of individuality will be superseded by higher group

consciousness. This is not a loss of anything, but a conscious transcendence of the limits and illusions of separated consciousness. The sense of individuality will be recognized as artificial, and a higher reality will be embraced.

The range of objectivity is both a matter of relative immersion in material perspective and a matter of character and nature of focus of consciousness. The human evolution is relatively objective in the sense of being immersed in matter, suffering the delusion of separateness, etc., while not generally being very objective in the sense of accuracy and honesty in perception and interpretation of sense impressions (which is part of the problem of immersion in matter (form) (personality) (ego)). Compared with the deva lifewave, human beings have objective consciousness. Devas have a completely different character and nature in consciousness, and view the external world subjectively, i.e., without conscious acknowledgement of external reality. By human terms, the devas appear relatively unconscious (objectively unresponsive) (asleep), but in fact, their perception is simply of a different order entirely. In deva terms, humans appear to be wholly unconscious, lacking any perception of their (deva) reality. Devas tend to avoid the clumsy, noisy human beings, without any conscious realization of avoidance (as their focus is elsewhere). Devas are more collective in consciousness and in that sense are in advance of humanity. On the other hand, humanity has developed an objectivity that the devas lack (yet do not need).

As humanity evolves it will become more subjective in consciousness without necessarily losing the ability to function objectively (in fact, as one evolves beyond a certain point along the way, one becomes more objective in objective terms and more subjective in general).

Titles and Credentials

A title is traditionally “an appellation of dignity, honor, distinction, or preeminence attached to a person or family by virtue of rank, office, precedent, privilege, attainment, or lands.” A credential is something which conveys a title to credit or confidence in some matter. The use of titles may be a matter of egoism or pragmatism or more generally some combination of egoism and pragmatism. And the use of titles may be a matter of external context or a matter of self-reference (or more generally some combination of external context and self-reference).

There may be some element of pragmatism in the use of titles and/or credentials, e.g., in the matter of qualifications for employment. But in the vast preponderance of use of titles there is an underlying basis of egoism (i.e., the vast preponderance of so-called pragmatic claims or justifications for use of titles and credentials are really rationalizations based almost entirely on egoism). And the assignment or awardance (or presumption) of a title and/or credential depends on some (real or presumed) authority and some (real or presumed) basis of qualification, to make such assignment or awardance. In other-than-mundane matters there is simply no real authority for any of these things. The only real qualification for a person is one’s character, quality of consciousness, temperament, and values, all of which being readily manifested through the aura or field of consciousness.

In the ways of the world there is no “problem” in the use of legitimate titles or credentials, although there may be a question of legitimacy, meaningfulness, and/or significance. In the ways of the world there is no “problem” with egoism, provided that others are not harmed in the process. But for the spiritual student there is a problem with any manifestation of egoism (because it separates the student from the inner Self and higher quality of consciousness), and in reliance on titles, particularly in the sense of self-reference, there is egoism compounded through identification and a definite and resulting separateness. The degree and extent of egoism is reflected in the manner in which titles and credentials are utilized or referred to.

The spiritual student (teacher) simply has no need, pragmatic or otherwise, to refer to or advertise himself or herself with recourse to titles, credentials, or other apparent qualifications. Some might say that a spiritual teacher may need to advertise his or her qualifications in order to attract students, that such credentials serve the purpose of helping the student to discriminate in choosing a teacher, course of study, etc. But this is nonetheless a rationalization (even if true) and nonetheless a manifestation of ego. Alternatively, a teacher or school might advertise the values being embraced and indicate the processes being utilized, thus conveying to the student sufficient information for the student to base a preliminary decision. Of course the real basis should be values and processes actually embraced and practiced, not merely what values and processes are advertised. Thus earned reputation is of more value than advertisements or claims. In the final analysis, the enquirer must determine for himself or herself the merits of any situation.

The real issues are egoism and separateness, and one should not be distracted by titles and credentials (either by reliance upon them or through aversion to them). Anything that contributes to egoism or separateness (e.g., the delusion of independence) should, progressively and ultimately, be transcended by the spiritual student.

† Commentary No. 1044

Self and Not-Self

In the preponderance of serious spiritual teachings, regardless of particular religion or spiritual approach, all of the great spiritual teachers have said essentially the same thing, in their various ways, namely that, eventually, in order to awaken and achieve conscious union with the God-Self, one must recognize the distinction between the Self and the not-self, recognize that one is asleep in the not-self, achieve disentanglement from (reliance on) sense experience, and definitely subordinate the not-self to the Self, thus transcending the bulk of glamour and illusion associated with egoistic and personality-centered experience.

There is no well-defined prescription for this process. Each must find the way alone, by turning within. By turning within, by subordinating the lesser self,

the inner guidance (voice of the silence) (conscience) (wisdom of previous experience) (qualification from the higher Self) is revealed, naturally and to the extent that the student is responsive. Responsiveness depends on preparation, e.g., relative purification and qualification of the physical, etheric, astral (emotional), and concrete mental (intellectual) nature. Without both preparation and determination, the ego will continue to dominate.

Most people, even spiritually-minded people, have yet to realize that what they identify with as the Self or soul is in fact merely the artificial personality or not-self. That not-self will do whatever it can to prevent and undermine this realization, seeking to sustain its own artificial existence and power as the center of apparent consciousness. Even those who recognize this intellectually, tend to make excuses (in the not-self) for sustaining the hold of the not-self on the waking-consciousness. But those who really do turn within, making the necessary distinction between Self and not-self, effectively temper the lower nature and all of its involvements in the realm of sense experience and expression, achieve disentanglement, and achieve the fulfillment and joy of union with the God-Self.

Some argue that by giving themselves completely to their sensual experience they achieve spiritual union with all life. This is a delusion of the ego. Some argue that there is no distinction between the Self and the not-self, that all is one. This is true, in the higher sense. But to hold on to the not-self (in itself) is to experience the delusion of oneness and undermine and inhibit real union with the higher Self. That delusion may be sensual and/or intellectual, but it is simply not real. Before the truth (reality) (Self) can be realized, one has to pass beyond the state of separation that exists in the not-self. And in order to do that, one must make the distinction between the Self and the not-self, let go of the lesser (not-self), overcoming the power of that artificial existence, and in subordinating the lower to the higher, allow the Self to completely qualify all of the lower life. The resulting (inner) joy is almost overwhelming in its magnitude and extent, subtle though it is.

No sense experience whatsoever can compare with that inner joy. For those who have ever (even) touched that Self, even momentarily, will forever be haunted (gratefully) by that greater Self, and the pleasures of worldly and personality experience will gradually lose their appeal. One will continue to

enjoy life, incidentally, but the orientation will be almost entirely to the inner life and not the outer. The outer life will then always be placed in the context of the inner life. Rapport with all life is then revealed as a decidedly interior experience. And the enlightened will then walk among the world without even being noticed.

† Commentary No. 1045

Spiritual Absorption 1

The notion of spiritual absorption, like many aspects of metaphysics and theosophy, means different things to different people. But there are generally two meanings, one that prevails primarily in the “new age” or “new thought” arena and one that prevails more in the realm of personality-transcendence.

In either case, spiritual absorption is a phenomenon or experience that is meaningful to spiritually-minded people.

In the first case of “new age” or experiential spiritual absorption, it implies an uninhibited state in which a person simply lets go of most (all) constraints and participates in external life. For the good-natured, spiritually-minded person, this means feeling connected to all of life in its external sense, of “going-with-the-flow” of personality interests. In this sense there is a very real potential for feeling connected with (all) (most) other people, with life as a whole, with nature, etc. For the spiritually-minded (or anyone), this is not “bad” in any sense, as it can facilitate good-natured expression of various heart qualities, e.g., compassion, goodwill, cheerfulness, etc. It is generally quite encouraging to such a person, spiritually, in the sense that it can be experienced without forgoing a sense of spiritual values and spiritual-connectedness. It is, after all, a very satisfying experience or condition, one that does not threaten or challenge the ego in any manner. In fact, it encourages and is encouraged by ego. But it is, in the final analysis, a matter of personality absorption.

The only danger apparent in this basic sense of spiritual absorption is that it tends to encourage personality-indulgence (kindly egoism) and is therefore inhibitive of spiritual absorption in the deeper sense. For most people, and even for most spiritually-minded people, this is not a problem. But for the esoteric

student, in order to realize spiritual absorption in that deeper sense, one must make a distinction between the Self and the not-self, overcome one's natural identification with the not-self, and achieve union in consciousness with the (higher) Self, at which point one truly embraces the whole of life, but in the inner, deeper sense. The "experiential" absorption, however meaningful, greatly inhibits this higher realization, because it strengthens the role of the personality (mind) (ego) and tends to refuse to accept that the Self is anything other than that (lower) personality or waking-consciousness.

One can argue of course that the uninhibited "wholeness" of experiential absorption is all there is, and that it is or can be profoundly spiritual. One can further argue that there is no distinction between higher Self and lower self, that all is one. And of course this is true. But in this experiential state, the higher Self does not participate, at least not directly. There is no "sense" of the higher Self, although those who live in the experientially absorbed state may feel that they have that sense. But in fact, until one has that profoundly mystical experience in which the spark of the soul (higher Self) makes its presence felt, no one at the experiential level can even imagine what that soul really means or feels like. And the very act of one presuming (believing) that the soul is present directly in self-absorbed (personality-centered) experience undermines the possibility of the higher state. That "soul" means something very different to the experientially-absorbed than to the esotericist, notwithstanding, the only known means or path to the higher state requires that one undergo the process of making a distinction between the Self and the not-self, at first intellectually, then in full realization, and finally in fulfillment.

Spiritual Absorption 2

The distinction between Self and not-self is not something that a personality-centered person is likely to make, at first, without considerable stress. Making this distinction is inherently threatening to the ego and the ego will naturally respond with whatever means it can to maintain the personality-centered experientially-absorbed state.

Of course there is much to experience and much to learn, for most people, at the experientially-absorbed level (i.e., doing and feeling rather than being and feeling). But as one progresses further, as one gradually refines and tempers the personality nature on physical, emotional, and mental levels, then one begins to realize that there is something greater than has been heretofore apparent, deep within the human being. As that recognition grows, as the student embraces the humility of the spiritual path, and as the ego is gradually transcended, true identification with that higher Self is achieved. At that point oneness is embraced in a broader, deeper sense than was (intellectually or experientially) felt before. The personality (intellect) (mind) (ego) is then seen as part of the whole, however valuable and useful, but in the sense of being an instrument of life and consciousness rather than the life itself.

Distinctions are simply a means toward an end. To become spiritually absorbed in the higher, deeper sense, one must pass from the lower (integrated) state, through the artificial embrace of the Self-not-self duality, to the higher integrated (aligned) state. Without this process, one simply never knows the higher Self. One simply remains deluded, however nicely, in the personality-centered focus of spiritual-mindedness. The problem remains, of course, that one who lives at the personality (ego) level and who has never “touched” the soul (atma-buddhi-manas), and who is satisfied at that level, cannot know this distinction and cannot make this transition or transformation.

There are various means to this end, all including making the distinction between Self and not-self and all including personality-and-ego-transcendence. But some means are relatively more heart-centered, and some are relatively more head-centered, depending on the individual temperament and the context (group

character). Head-centered approaches tend to be more direct and less time-consuming, but generally suffer a lack of balanced progress, while heart-centered approaches tend to be more gradual and less demanding per unit time. Head-centered approaches generally take on the struggle with ego forthwith, and if the heart is not in the struggle, if the student lacks commitment and determination, then it is doomed to failure as the ego builds resentment and eventually undermines the process. Heart-centered approaches generally deal with the ego indirectly, in a less-challenging manner, and eventually seduce the ego into cooperation (rather than forcing it), but without some (sufficient) head-nature, the heart-centered approach is ineffectual.

In either approach there is some not inconsiderable discipline required, but in the head-centered approach there is more prescription and proscription, while in the heart-centered approach there is more (apparent) relative freedom, as the required discipline is eventually achieved without it being prescribed. There are no short-cuts. The same (overall) work must be accomplished regardless of particular path or process (means). And as that work is accomplished, Self-realization is achieved, bringing with it the spiritual absorption in the higher, deeper, greater sense. And in that higher state, there is an even greater connectedness with humanity and all of life, but without the distraction of personality-centeredness (self-centeredness) (egoism).

† Commentary No. 1047

Repression

Repression is defined as “the act or state of repressing, a process by which unacceptable desires or impulses are excluded from consciousness and left to operate in the unconscious.” Repression implies restraint, the “prevention of natural or normal expression, activity, or development.” This is (may be) consciously forceful or relatively unconsciously forceful. But in either case there is a measure of forcefulness, of artificial constraint.

In the case of issues, repression implies the building of psychological walls that hide something from the waking-consciousness, perhaps enabling a person to get on with life and to deal with the issue at a later, better time, perhaps

preventing a person from dealing honestly and effectively with the issue, at least for a while. In the case of desires or impulses, repression implies an artificial and unnatural restraint of the lower (physical, emotional, and/or intellectual) nature and concomitant self-deception in the sense of believing (consciously or unconsciously) that a problem has been dealt with when in fact the problem has merely been evaded for a while.

The problem for the spiritual student generally relates to the intended (and necessary) tempering of the lower (personality) nature, through physical, emotional, and mental discipline. Whenever discipline is imposed by a student less than whole-heartedly, e.g., where one is simply going along with some suggestion or prescription without honestly understanding the need and without honestly embracing the value, then instead of there being a tempering of the lower nature there is instead generally a repression. This means that a substantial portion of the lower nature (ego) (subconscious) will resent the imposition (restraint) (discipline) and work actively and unconsciously to undermine the discipline. This is an artificial tempering that is likely to result in growing unconscious resentment and eventual ultimate explosion of ego as the walls are broken down.

On the other hand, if the discipline is imposed intelligently and willingly, with understanding and proper intention, then there is a natural process of tempering (transformation) without repression, where the ego or lower self is in effect a more-or-less willing partner and participant in the process. The only effective tempering of the ego is where the ego is cultivated in the sense of willingly subordinating itself to the higher Self (i.e., true humility). But with untempered ego there is more likely to be a measure of repression in any attempt at spiritual discipline. Of course one must recognize the distinction between what is natural in the sense of uninhibited lower expression (giving full reign to the animal nature) and what is natural in the sense the human being as a whole (in the context of evolution in consciousness).

In some cases repression occurs impersonally (internally to the personality-consciousness of the spiritual student); in other cases repression occurs in combination with resentment of perceived but not really appreciated external authority. The ego will use this perception-resentment to undermine the process along personal lines, using the existence (and perceived nature) of the

external figure as an excuse to undermine the process. More properly, there are no external authorities. One must ultimately recognize the truth for oneself, and embrace the discipline and practice that is appropriate for one's stage along the way. The ego naturally calls for self-authority in the egoistic sense of lower-self-determination, while the soul or higher Self calls for Self-authority in the sense of true realization. With repression there are complications. With a natural tempering of the lower nature there is a measure of simplicity.

† Commentary No. 1048

Flattery and Praise

Praise is defined as the "expression of favorable judgment" or commendation of someone, while flattery is defined as the act or practice of "excessive praise especially from motives of self-interest" and includes the sense of "pleasing self-deception" (thus flattery is considered an extension of praise to the realm of speciousness).

Praise and other genuine encouragement is generally appropriate for those who are growing and deepening in their personality experience but who remain less-than-fulfilled at the personality level, i.e., for those who are struggling to develop the personality to that maturity and balance required before one can transcend the personality (mind) (ego), and is especially apropos to children, provided there is a genuine basis, provided that the expression is sincere, and provided that the recipient is not already egoistic.

In some traditional spiritual communities (schools) praise is uninhibited, for whatever reason. In other traditional communities (schools) praise is generally avoided to preclude egoistic inflation. And in some cases students are tested for their response to praise (e.g., is a student modest in accepting praise or does the student allow praise to inflate the sense of ego?). Uninhibited (unmoderated) praise tends to inflate the ego or encourage personality-centeredness. Seeking praise or accepting praise in the immodest sense of becoming absorbed at that level tends to discourage the humility and positive sensitivity required for esoteric work. Yet the lack of warranted praise in the case of relatively insecure personalities can be an impediment to meaningful progress. And spiritual work

at any level is enhanced to the extent that the personality is relatively secure (mature) (but not over-developed or egoistic). While personality-centeredness is counter-productive to much of the esoteric work, immature personalities are also relatively ineffectual. Thus for serious work, one must first develop the personality to some mature (balanced) (secure) level, then temper that personality strength with humility and non-egoism.

The keys in this context for the spiritual student, in dealing with other students or colleagues, are discretion, kindness, and respect. Discretion refers to the wisdom of praising as appropriate (hopefully through realization or discernment rather than judging). Kindness refers to the heart-centered basis that should temper all interactions for the spiritual student with other people. And respect refers to the expression of respect and consideration for others that is always appropriate as recognition of the inherent value of every human being. Without these three factors, praise is likely to be specious and/or counter-productive, and without these three factors the absence of (warranted) praise (and the absence of warmth) is likely to result in strained relationship.

Wisdom and insight is also helpful, in recognizing (realizing) the relative maturity of the affected personality. Being critical and judging toward others is generally (almost invariably) counter-productive. By incorrectly presuming or perceiving (judging) that another personality is mature, one might refrain from praise when indeed praise is needed. By incorrectly assuming or perceiving (judging) that another personality is immature, one might through praising encourage inflation and egoism. On the other hand, the spiritual student should (hopefully) be increasingly intuitive and uncontrived so that these become non-issues, relying instead on the natural expression of kindness and respect, without praise or criticism (thought, felt, or verbalized).

Health and Healing

Unfortunately, the human being in incarnation does not generally come equipped with an owner's manual that describes the nature of the human condition within the field of manifestation. One must learn as one progresses through this existence, through experience and expression and through facing the consequences of our activities. If one remains in the intended evolutionary flow, then one tends to be healthy and open to the lessons afforded through experience. However, if one is not living in accord with the flow of life, if one is not responsive to the afforded and intended lessons, then disease and injury, pain and suffering are natural consequences.

While these consequences may not convey any direct "understanding" of cause and effect relationships to the waking-consciousness (conscious mind), they do leave impressions in the subconscious, and as those impressions are reinforced through subsequent experience and consequences, eventually the lessons are learned and experience is assimilated, however subjectively (and however much discomfort may result in the meantime). Yet where the student is open to the lessons of this world, through physical, emotional, and intellectual experience and expression, then good health tends to result.

Health is technically the condition of one's healthiness and covers a range between healthy and unhealthy. Health includes physical health and the vitality of the etheric double, emotional health and the integrity-quality-stability of the aura, and mental health and the integrity-quality-stability of the concrete mind or intellectual body. More generally, health refers to (good) healthiness or good balance (equilibrium), while lack of health in any measure or way implies movement in consciousness away from the equilibrium of the intended evolutionary path, by virtue of attitude, behavior, feelings, and/or thoughts.

Of course, what is meant by healthy is a matter of perspective based on understanding and values. For example, one might believe that repression of anger is unhealthy and that venting that anger is healthy, so that one "feels" better afterward (which reinforces the belief that it is healthy). Yet actually,

while repression is unhealthy, so is venting of anger. The measure of the healthiness of any action (physical, emotional, and/or mental) is the extent to which it encourages accord with the evolutionary flow. Any action which is harmful to oneself or to anyone else and/or which is dishonest in any way engenders imbalance and evokes consequential forces. Thus in venting one's anger one might feel better as a result of the release of tension, yet the act of venting may be harmful (psychically) to oneself and to anyone to whom it is directed. In such a case, healing occurs not through the venting, but through restoration of balance, meaning the absence of ill will (criticism) (judgment) toward anyone. For some, self-indulgence (and anything self-justified) may appear to be healthy, while in the long run one learns from experience that moderation and balance (and non-self-centeredness) are much more healthy.

Healing is the process through which the balance or equilibrium is restored. In principle, restoration of balance can be accomplished superficially through treatment of the effects, in which case the cause or causes are still in effect and some further anomaly or disease or injury will emerge into manifestation, or restoration of balance can be accomplished through treatment in consciousness, through learning, through adjustments in consciousness. Merely removing the apparent cause or causes does not accomplish healing. One must learn what one needs to learn, and grow in the manner intended, according to one's level and type of consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1050

Human Nature

In the context of the esoteric philosophy, human nature points to the exigency of the human being. The human being in incarnation is a more or less intelligent animal having an inner, subtle, and unconscious connection to the real Self or human soul. Through the course of human experience, being largely unaware of the true nature of oneself and being largely unaware of the underlying nature of the world, the human being (personality consciousness) gradually develops the character, temperament, and values needed for graduation or fulfillment of this cycle of manifestation.

Of course there is the tendency of the ego to justify one's tendencies, actions, shortcomings, attitudes, behavior, etc., by saying or thinking that it is, after all, simply one's human nature. This is true. In the lower sense of the animal-self immersed in materialism and egoism, in self-acceptance in the lower sense. As one identifies with this lower self one cannot recognize higher values. The atavism of absorption at the level of the animal-self is natural, relatively easy, but counter-evolutionary. It is the path of least resistance for most people. But it is only temporarily so, for the evolutionary forces are counter to materialism and egoism and eventually one is encouraged (forced) (nudged) upward and onward. And as one progresses somewhat, one finds that within the human being, but above the animal-self, there is another, higher, more noble human nature. And as one begins to identify with that higher nature, it becomes more and more natural to express that higher nature (and less and less natural to revert to the level of the animal-self).

There are, in this exigency, many qualifications for advancement as well as limitations to be overcome. Those who are self-absorbed (personality-centered) are (to the extent of their absorption) unable to perceive these needs, let alone the process through which these needs are fulfilled. Yet, as one progresses however gradually toward the path there is an acceleration that occurs in consciousness. One begins to be dimly aware, unconsciously at first, then more consciously, of needs beyond the material or experiential existence (self-indulgence). And then the human nature begins to be transformed, through gradual refinement of physical, emotional, and intellectual levels, through gradual adjustments in consciousness as the various lessons are afforded and learned (assimilated), as the higher human nature begins to emerge and the lower human nature begins to recede.

Qualifications for advancement include altruism, charity, cheerfulness, compassion, composure, confidence, considerateness, consistency, courage, discretion, gentleness, goodwill, harmlessness, honesty, humility, inclusiveness, moderation, peacefulness, poise, prudence, respectfulness, responsiveness, reverence, sacrifice, simplicity, and stability. And through the course of developing or unfolding these various qualities and qualifications the student naturally tempers the lower nature, becoming more and more refined in consciousness, ultimately transcending all sense of ego, intellect, separateness, etc.

There are thus also a number of limitations inherent in the lower human nature that must eventually be recognized and overcome. These limitations result in one way or another through immersion in and identification with material existence (and ego). As the human being has evolved through the mineral, plant, and animal stages, there is very much conditioning that must be overcome if the student is to stand freely upon the spiritual path and move on to the next level.

† Commentary No. 1051

Speciousness

Speciousness is the phenomenon of deceptive attraction or appeal, of “having a false look of truth or genuineness,” of being plausible but not necessarily valid or legitimate. The problem of speciousness is a matter of believing what one wants to believe, by allowing that “wanting” to determine the what and how of beliefs rather than relying on the truth. Specious testimony is plausible only because people want to believe the testimony is true or real, or because people are unable or unwilling to be objective in consideration of anything less than first-hand experience (and to some even being unable or unwilling to be objective on the basis of actual first-hand experience).

Speciousness does not imply conscious or deliberate deception or dishonest intent, but does imply dishonesty (inability to be honest) in the sense of not dealing with the facts but believing that there is a legitimate basis for belief. In fact, the victim of speciousness is one who simply fails to realize the distinction between what is factual and what is not. Once a belief is accepted as factual, then speciousness is compounded by that error, as a person then proceeds (to act) on the basis of that “fact” without conscious appreciation of the implied or conveyed fallacy.

Speciousness points to the lack of validity or lack of legitimacy of the belief-treated-as-if-it-were-factually-true. It does not point to the favorableness (or unfavorableness) of the belief, but it does point to a lack of legitimacy and to bias (prejudice) (distortion). If one believes a person to be basically “good” then one will tend to have a distorted perception of anything that person says or

does, even to the point of ignoring or minimizing any evidence to the contrary, such that that basic belief is sustained. Similarly, if one believes a person to be “bad” then one will tend to have a distorted perception of anything that person says or does (or is purported to say or do), so that the negative reputation is sustained.

The problem of speciousness is not really simple. People are generally not wholly good or wholly bad, and so there is generally a demonstration or expression of both strengths and weaknesses in every life. Moreover, the sense of what is good or bad is itself a matter of judgment and judgment is based on one’s own biases and conditioning and the relative strength of intellectual faculty, with or without appreciable emotional distortion. If one has a critical or judgmental nature, then the problem of speciousness is further compounded by those tendencies.

The truth remains the truth. Truth is not changed by virtue of what one believes. What is perceived as true (truth) may change dramatically, based on one’s own experience, attitudes, beliefs, etc., but what is actually and factually true does not change. Unless one is committed, genuinely and effectively, to embracing truth (and in minimizing distortion based upon personal prejudices), then one is not likely to be able to transcend living in the world of opinions and personal bias and prejudice. But as one becomes more objective, becoming more aware of the distinctions between what is factual and what is assumptive and what is merely perceptive, without drawing hard conclusions, then one is more likely to be able to perceive some greater measure of the truth, and be able to proceed accordingly and appropriately. Being truly committed to truth, one withholds judgment. One refuses to accept as true-in-fact anything that is not verified by first-hand experience or substantiated by realization undistorted by personal bias, which really means refusing to accept anything as necessarily true (or false).

Flattery and Detraction

Flattery through any means is a process of favorable distortion, while detraction through any means is a process of unfavorable distortion. Any form of flattery or detraction, whether first-hand (face-to-face) or otherwise, through praise or condemnation, is a matter of distortion. The danger of each is in the measure of distortion and the tendency of even modest flattery or detraction to become compounded (exaggerated) by repetition, and the likelihood that as one engages in flattery and/or detraction one is more and more likely to further deceive oneself concerning what is actually true.

Flattery and detraction are compounded through gossip, “rumor or report of an intimate or personal nature,” because the phenomenon of gossip is inherently personality-centered and subject to substantial (further) bias and personal prejudice. First-hand flattery is unfortunate in the sense that it is egoistic (encourages egoism); second-hand flattery is unfortunate in the sense that it leads to unrealistic expectations of the person being flattered (i.e., one may have difficulty living up to exaggerated expectations, particularly if one is not consciously aware of the expectations). If one is aware of others’ expectations, then one can, if one is honest and realistic, then attempt to convey a sense of realism to those who have expectations.

But detraction is definitely harmful, whether or not it is specious, but particularly where it is specious. Any detraction, disparagement, depreciation, derogation, defamation, vilification, scurrility, aspersion, slur, invective, slander, backbiting, discommendation, criticism, disapprobation, derision, etc., is inherently harmful, both to the person detracted and to the detractor. And it is so whether or not the detraction is conveyed publicly or privately, and whether or not the person detracted is present or not, it is harmful to all parties involved. Any criticism or judgment is harmful, the more so in the case of detraction, and the more so where a personal agenda is concerned, even if that personal agenda is pursued unconsciously (i.e., sincerely without contrivance (or at least without awareness of one’s own intentions)).

Some might say that it is only human nature to judge others based upon one's own experiences, yet in the context of the spiritual path one must learn to transcend this (lower) nature. The problem is two-fold: judgment is inherently limited with regard to truth and being judgmental is inherently harmful to both the person judged and the person judging (and anyone else who is drawn into the process). One can never really know the truth about someone else (it is difficult enough to discern even some of the truth about oneself). One can therefore only really judge based upon appearances, and appearances can be quite misleading. To judge is to lose one's objectivity, to allow superficial impressions and personal biases to determine conclusions. Judging tends to overcome or overwhelm the heart and allows the head to rule more or less unimpeded by common sense, fairness, or truth. To believe in one's ability to judge further compounds the problem with egoism. But above all, judging (which is necessarily superficial) allows, indeed encourages, that-which-is-not-necessarily-true to dominate, leading to further distortion.

Judging is a self-blinding process, whether or not it is a matter of flattery or detraction, in thought or feeling or behavior. It evokes the lower nature (self-interest) and tends to build momentum (increasing self-deception). It also tends to compromise others who are similarly naive regarding the truth (and unable generally to distinguish between what-is-true-in-fact and what is merely purported to be true, however plausible it may be).

† Commentary No. 1053

Anger

Given the spectrum of human experience and its inherent fourth ray flavor (harmony through conflict) and given the (lower) human nature and conditioning which is also along fourth ray lines, it is not surprising that much of life's contrast and conflict tends to evoke anger in the human being. Those who are relatively coarse, emotionally polarized and/or intellectually oriented, who have strong desires, expectations, insecurities, and/or opinions, are particularly susceptible to anger, as the flow of life is generally not in agreement with one's lower desires or specific expectations (or one's own (personal) (distorted) sense of justice or rightness). How one responds to the tendency toward anger

determines whether or not the experience is inherently constructive and progressive or inherently destructive and inertial.

Anger is defined as “a strong feeling of displeasure and usually of antagonism.” Anger is a natural phenomenon, albeit of the lower nature (and personality-centeredness (egoism)), and may be allowed full reign, moderated or tempered in some manner, or repressed. At one extreme, allowing anger to be fully manifested, anger is generally quite destructive, particularly where it is directed at some person or persons rather than at “circumstances.” The karmic consequences of such unrestrained anger implicate both parties, i.e., both the angered and the catalyst or whoever the anger is directed toward. Anger expressed openly is a psychic force of considerable intensity and effects, and is not only harmful to the object of anger, but also to the angered person whose progress along more constructive lines tends to be thereby undermined.

At the other extreme, repressing one’s anger, the dangers are much more insidious and no less harmful to all concerned. For repression of anger (or comparable feelings, e.g., bitterness, resentment) is an unnatural blocking of the flow of (animal) energy. It is generally better to release the energy than to repress it (obstructing the flow of energy, allowing it to accumulate without being resolved constructively, tends toward delayed but potentially explosive consequences). And it is better still to direct the energy in non-harmful ways than “at” some perceived offender. On the other hand, far better to transcend anger altogether, by refusing to yield to the lower nature (yet without repressing it), by turning the energy into something far more constructive.

In the metaphysical (karmic) context, the perceived offense and the offender are of lesser (little) consequence. What really matters is how one responds to the circumstances, i.e., of being offended or remaining poised and unruffled (and non-judging). If one admits the tendency to anger, but tempers the response through realization of its inappropriateness, the “energy” can be turned to more constructive channels, e.g., through refusing to vent the anger but through “walking it off” without allowing resentment to take hold. By focusing on respect for others, by realizing that others do not live generally according to one’s own standards (and should never be held externally accountable), by realizing consciously that one can never truly understand another person’s experience or values, by realizing that what angers is generally a matter of

conditioning, and should never be taken personally, one can transcend the coarseness and dangers of anger and resentment.

One should not forgive others for offending, because one should not be judging others in the first place. People do not offend. It is only the ego that can only take offense (or not). Thus one can choose not to be offended, not to be angered. But this requires heart quality. It requires a measure of spiritual poise. And it requires a measure of freedom from egoism.

† Commentary No. 1054

The Head and Heart-Centeredness

One of the principal objectives of the spiritual student is the achievement of balance between the head and the heart, between the head-centered aspects of human nature (along the lines of the first, third, fifth, and seventh rays) and the heart-centered aspects of human nature (along the lines of the second, fourth, and sixth rays).

Most people develop in a moderately unbalanced manner and subsequently need to achieve balance by developing and blending in the hitherto missing qualities. Thus those who have developed largely along emotional, intuitive, and heart-centered lines need to develop along intellectual lines as well, and those who have developed largely intellectually, need to develop and integrate the higher emotional and intuitive features of heart quality (e.g., kindness, compassion, consideration, unselfishness) (and in doing so tempering various head-centered tendencies (e.g. the critical, judging nature)) (whereas characteristics like selfishness, self-centeredness, egoism, defensiveness, reactivity can be manifested through either the head-centered or heart-centered nature (while overcoming these limitations requires somewhat different techniques depending on the extent of head-centered or heart-centered development)).

The principal objective then of the heart-centered person is the development of intellectual abilities without losing the heart-centered focus. If the person is emotionally-polarized (rather than mentally-polarized) it is primarily a matter of purifying and tempering the emotions and allowing the mind to develop into

prominence while retaining the essential heart-centered nature. If the person is mentally-polarized (yet heart-centered) it is simply a matter of balance between the two aspects so that neither really dominates. At that level it is also a matter of transcending whatever elements of egoism remain within the personality.

A distinction is made between being intellectual and being mentally-polarized; one can be intellectual without being mentally-polarized and one can be mentally-polarized without being intellectual. Being intellectual is seen as a necessary and precursory stage that must eventually be transcended. Being predominantly intellectual is seen as a condition which inhibits the needed balance. The heart-centered person is rather unlikely to over-develop the intellectual nature (unless the heart-centered nature is suppressed or abandoned (which is not healthy)), but the transcendence of ego can be quite difficult in the emotionally-polarized and/or unrefined heart-centered student. With refinement comes humility, and so the refined and heart-centered person is generally rather well-placed with regard to the needed development.

The three keys to balance for the heart-centered person are refinement, temperance, and humility. Through these three keys the heart-centered person is able to develop mentally without losing the heart quality and without being lost in the head-centered nature. What follows (beyond balance) is the cultivation of the intuitional nature which lies beyond mental polarization. The heart-centered person who achieves the proper balance is better placed to unfold the intuitional nature than the head-centered person, resulting in strength of understanding in the sense of feeling or realization, while the head-centered person who achieves the proper balance is better placed to understand things more conceptually. In the best of both worlds, the esoteric student, perfectly balanced between head and heart, enjoys the breadth and depth of full realization, unimpeded by intellect (intellectual distortion) and unimpeded by emotional distortion.

The Heart and Head-Centeredness

The problem for the head-centered nature is often a matter of lack of heart quality, of relying so much upon the intellect that the various qualities of the heart are understood merely intellectually, i.e., that one's heart is in the intellect and is therefore merely conceptual and not real.

Many head-centered people, whether they are emotionally or mentally-polarized, do not pay much attention to the qualities of the heart. And many of those who do pay attention do so with the delusion that their understanding of heart quality is sufficient to manifest that quality, when in fact, an intellectual understanding of a quality and a (mental) commitment to embrace that quality does not suffice to actually embrace and express the quality. One must necessarily and actually feel the quality of the heart, in the higher, inner, deeper (but not merely intellectual) sense, in order to evoke the quality. But the mind, given its self-delusional nature (self-protective, egoistic posture), tends to interpret experience and expression in a self-biased (self-centered) manner, thus serving as an impediment to actual evocation of heart quality.

The three keys to balance for the head-centered person are the same as for the heart-centered person, namely refinement, temperance, and humility. Through these three keys the head-centered person is able to develop and unfold the heart nature without losing the abilities of the head-nature and without being overly absorbed in the heart. This leads ultimately to moderation of the head nature and a sensible (reasonable) (but not intellectual) approach to the evocation of heart quality. What then follows (beyond balance) is the cultivation of the intuitional nature which lies beyond mental polarization.

While glimpses of (true) intuition are available to the heart-centered person, by virtue and to the extent of his or her heart quality, the ability to correctly understand the products of intuition is generally lacking or limited by the reaction of the emotional nature. But when the heart nature is balanced by the not overly-developed head nature, then the products of intuition are recognized and understood much more sensibly. But for one who is head-centered, the intuition emerges generally only in rather subtle ways and generally without

conscious realization or recognition of same. Thus, the head-centered person cannot generally distinguish between intuition and intellect (comparably, the heart-centered person cannot generally distinguish between intuition and instinct (what is generally (popularly) but incorrectly called intuition but which is really emotional (astral) impression rather than buddhi)).

The real key is humility. For humility eventually and successfully undermines (overcomes) (transcends) the pervasive (and sometimes subtle) hold of egoism that generally accompanies the developed personality. Without humility people are generally self-deceived in many ways (whereas with humility people are generally less self-deceived and only in relatively subtle ways). Thus the principal impediment is the ego and its tendency toward self-delusion (defensiveness, reactivity, insecurity, taking things personally, separativeness, etc.). Humility is the most synthetic and most fundamental of the heart qualities, ultimately enfolding and engendering all of the heart quality (qualities), and is absolutely essential for the heart-centered student in order to achieve balance and transcendence, and for the head-centered student likewise. And for those who are properly balanced, humility is the means of passing beyond the distinction between head-centeredness and heart-centeredness, beyond ego and intellect, to the truly quiet realm of God-ness.

† Commentary No. 1056

Zeitgeist

Zeitgeist is defined as “the general intellectual, moral, and cultural state of an era” and means, literally, the spirit (geist) of the time (zeit). In this sense it is the cultural aura in which most people live and work (and think and feel), the medium through which people are conditioned as a race or culture, as changes occur and as life unfolds.

This spirit of the times allows progress to be achieved as ideas and encouragements are introduced (by those who are consciously or unconsciously able to tap into the archetype for humanity (race) (culture)) and become pervasive, and these are generally constructive unless carried through to some extreme. There is generally a pattern or oscillation of trends from one modest

extent to another (i.e., in the fashion of a pendulum, to enable changes to be introduced and to prevent or at least to discourage extremes). As the race (culture) progresses, there is a spiral effect (as the pendulum swings back and forth at the same time as it moves in some central (evolutionary) direction). But sometimes the race (culture) takes some encouragement too far, to some extreme, and the spirit of the times gets carried away in the lower expression (which then evokes more severe compensatory energies (e.g., crisis)). And sometimes, similarly, sincerely-minded individuals (and special-interest groups) are able to introduce ideas of their own which are counter to the evolutionary flow, but through this conditioning process (and free will (karma)) are allowed to be broadly conveyed and manifested.

Thus the spirit of the times as a medium has both a constructive side, affording progress in evolutionary terms, and a negative side in the sense that the medium can be abused and, since most people are relatively passive with regard to subtle influences, evoke reactionary or counter-evolutionary flow. Eventually, however, humanity (race) (culture) evolves to the point where the passivity is replaced with almost-conscious cooperation, and ultimately there is fully-conscious collaboration with evolutionary forces on a rather broad scale. But the overall nature and qualification of the times is nonetheless represented by and through this spirit (aura).

The spirit of the times is related to consensus reality and is therefore definitely not entirely a matter of conveyance of higher energy (encouragement) to humanity, but an interactive process in which humanity (race) (culture) contributes to the progress by modifying the sense of the times along the way. Thus in the final analysis, zeitgeist is a rather dynamic medium for conveyance or expression of external (internal) forces (conditioning) and the contribution of the affected people as a whole in moderating the process through the extent and nature of their relative responsiveness.

But there is another meaning of zeitgeist, and that is the sense of momentary realization of something, when some recognition comes to the conscious mind and a (modest) leap forward in understanding is achieved. This modest realization generally occurs as the mind is unblocked, at least momentarily, from whatever conditioning generally prevails. One may be seeking a solution to a problem, or be perplexed by non-understanding, and suddenly realize the

answer, or understanding comes, non-intuitively (intuition is more subtle). This realization generally emerges as a consequence of unconscious activity, as the mind subconsciously comes to resolution and then awaits the moment at which the conscious (superficial) mind is not absorbed or distracted in its normal patterns of thinking and awareness. In this sense, zeitgeist occurs as grace, of indeliberate and therefore graceful realization of truth in some sense.

† Commentary No. 1057

Distinctions

The world of human endeavor is a world of distinctions, of illusion of separateness and focus-on-individuality in the personal sense, of many contrasts leading ultimately to union as the lower sense of individuality is replaced by the deeper sense of humility-in-oneness. Thus while the goal is self-realization in the oneness of the God-within, the means through which this is achieved necessarily involve living in the outer world, suffering the various illusions of that world, and ultimately transcending those illusions and distinctions as union is realized.

Distinctions therefore are a means to an end and are not ends in themselves. But they are quite helpful in the process of (preparation for) self-realization. If one attempts to deny the reality of distinctions before one has realized the distinction between the Self and the not-self (and before one has transcended or passed in consciousness beyond the not-self), then that lack of distinction serves as a very effective barrier to enlightenment. One needs to understand the lesson of each distinction, and the lesson of non-distinction, without conflict (denial). Yet, ultimately, as the heart unfolds and that higher Self is embraced, distinctions are transcended altogether.

In a broader sense, evolution in consciousness is a progressive cycle of alternation between a sense of distinction and a sense of non-distinction. Recognizing distinctions is a matter of consciously understanding the field of human experience and expression, of understanding human nature, and in that understanding being able to place experience and expression into proper context. But that understanding must need be real, and not merely intellectual. For if

understanding is merely intellectual, and not truly embraced through the heart, then the understanding is superficial, and one will not properly be able to act in accord with the understanding that is (merely) presumed. But if the understanding is real, then it can be properly and effectively assimilated into quality (love-wisdom) (which, after all, is the only essence that one can actually take beyond this lower life).

If the recognizing of distinctions is made in the egoistic sense, then it is a separative process, but if the recognizing of distinctions is made in the non-egoistic sense, of understanding the role of distinctions without feeling that sense of separateness, then the contrast (of distinction) has value and, moreover, that contrast can be more effectively transcended (in real understanding). The method of denial of contrast simply does not work (it simply leaves the student at some plateau and effectively inhibits further substantive growth (which may be, however, necessary for assimilation of that which has been encountered to date)). Denying distinctions is not realization. Recognizing that distinctions hold the key to non-distinction, the esoteric student non-egoistically studies distinctions without being distracted by them, and in letting go of attachments to distinctions, transcends them.

In transcending contrast and distinctions one does not deny any lower reality, and one does not deny the distinction between higher and lower realities, but in recognizing that (relatively important but temporary) distinction, one simply passes beyond any sense of distinction between lower and higher realities, by embracing the higher rather than being absorbed in the lower. If one is absorbed in the lower, then one at best can only suffer the delusion of oneness. If one is self-realized, then there are no distinctions, and one suffers a higher, more subtle, more meaningful delusion of oneness. Yet oneness is real. And the delusion of oneness is also real.

Centeredness and Polarization 1

The distinction between head-centeredness and heart-centeredness and the distinction between emotional polarization and mental polarization are quite useful constructs for progress in consciousness. But one should not confuse head-centeredness with mental polarization nor should one confuse heart-centeredness with emotional polarization, because centeredness and polarization are two distinctly different aspects of human consciousness.

Polarization refers to the level of consciousness at which a person functions, predominantly. And though the emotional level is "higher" than the physical, and though the mental level is "higher" than the emotional, and though the intuitive is "higher" than the mental, polarization of consciousness at some level does not necessarily or even generally imply or convey any sense of quality of consciousness or any sense of evolutionary achievement other than the face-value of being polarized at some level (and one should not confuse intuition (buddhi) with emotional instinct or astral impression). In the evolution of consciousness, one simply advances through experience at some level and through re-polarization to the next level. But "quality" is as much, if not more, important than the level of consciousness at which a person is predominantly functioning.

On the other hand, one must achieve a measure of quality of consciousness at some level before one can pass on to the next, yet even within each level there are many distinctions in quality. Thus one needs to look at the broader context of quality of consciousness and centeredness, not just polarization or level of consciousness. And of course each contributes regardless of level, quality, centeredness, etc.

Centeredness refers to the chakra or system of chakras through which consciousness is aligned or focused. The consciousness of a head-centered person is focused primarily through the head center(s), while the consciousness of a heart-centered person is focused primarily through the heart center. The heart center is more closely related to the emotional and intuitive planes, while the head centers are more closely related to the mental plane and the intellect.

But an emotionally-polarized person is not generally or necessarily heart-centered, as heart-centeredness refers more to quality and type of consciousness rather than level of consciousness.

Most people and most spiritual students are emotionally-polarized. Some are head-centered; some are heart-centered; some are neither in the sense of being undeveloped; and some are neither in the sense of being balanced between head and heart centers. But no one who is emotionally-polarized is integrated as a personality, for emotional polarization implies lack-of-integration, of being at least somewhat distracted by emotional experience and expression rather than being poised in some higher sense. Thus the emotionally-polarized person may have considerable intellectual development, and be able to function intellectually, but is still subject to considerable (personal) bias due to the emotional polarization. Some people and some spiritual students are mentally-polarized. Most mentally-polarized people are head-centered and live primarily through the intellect. Fewer are heart-centered, and in the case of the mentally-polarized, heart-centered person, this implies considerable balance between the head and the heart, as one generally becomes mentally-polarized through the head-center, and heart-centeredness follows only as the heart properly unfolds through higher (intuitive) contact with the higher Self. And that unfoldment can only occur through quality of consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1059

Centeredness and Polarization 2

Thus one generally progresses from emotional polarization to mental polarization through the focus of head-centeredness. The more mature spiritual students who undertake this transition and repolarization may be well-developed in the heart center, and may be able to carry that heart nature with them, i.e., as the head center is developed not at the expense of the heart center but in addition to and in balance with the heart center. In this sense, repolarization is a matter of transference of quality from the emotional plane to the mental plane. But generally, it is merely a matter of refocusing on mental levels through intellectual development and integration of the personality along head-centered lines.

Weaknesses are not generally a matter of polarization of consciousness but of head-or-heart-centeredness or lack thereof. The emotionally-polarized person who is not also heart-centered is generally either relatively materialistic and/or relatively experiential and self-indulgent (absorbed in sense experience). At this level, heart-centeredness conveys quality of consciousness that tends to moderate the personal focus. The emotionally-polarized person who lacks sufficient head development is generally lacking also in objectivity and reasonableness, being too easily distracted by the emotions (feelings, desires, etc.) and personal interests. On the other hand, the mentally-polarized person who is not also heart-centered is generally self-centered in the intellectual sense, being relatively insensitive to other perspectives. Thus while the head conveys considerable ability for conscious understanding, it is the heart that conveys wisdom and balance. It is the head that tempers the emotions, but it is the heart that tempers the ego.

And when one progresses beyond mental polarization to intuitive polarization, it is through the focus of heart-centeredness and the challenge then becomes being able to carry the head nature along, so that heart-centeredness is not developed at the expense of the head, because, ultimately, one needs to be intuitively-polarized and perfectly balanced (blended) between the head and heart natures. The heart then serves as the instrument of evoking the higher energies, while the head serves as the instrument for focusing the evoked (higher) energies. Yet very, very few human beings are functioning at this level and in this way (and most who do achieve this do not then reincarnate (of course at this level it is not really an achievement but an allowance-of-emergence)).

So what is more important than centeredness and polarization in consciousness? Quality of consciousness. If one focuses primarily on quality of consciousness, then centeredness and polarization fall into place and these distinctions are not so important. Quality in consciousness leads naturally to balance between the head and the heart. Quality of consciousness leads naturally to the transcendence of egoism (personality-centeredness and self-centeredness). And quality of consciousness leads naturally to repolarization, as the lessons of one level are assimilated (as the work (e.g., development, expression, service) of that level is accomplished) and the need to move on to the next level is realized.

Thus real progress in evolution of consciousness requires progress in all three aspects, through progressive repolarization of consciousness from one level to the next, through progressive development (alternating emphasis) of the head and heart natures and their periodic balance, and through unfolding quality of consciousness and allowing the higher nature to emerge into manifestation.

† Commentary No. 1060

Realism and Denial

The perennial new age notion of positive thinking to the exclusion of anything negative or ego-challenging is a mixed blessing. On the one hand there is the inherently constructive, creative character of affirmations and positive thinking. On the other hand there is often the unfortunate accompaniment (likelihood) of consciously denying the reality of things-as-they-are, leading to some increased measure of delusion (dishonesty) (inhibition of truth).

One example has to do with belief or recognition of one's ignorance. A "positive" approach might have one deny that one is ignorant, affirming rather that one is filled with all needed knowledge and understanding. In fact, we are all ignorant to some extent, but within us is an unlimited potential for experience, learning, assimilation, and growth. Better to affirm, more honestly and realistically, the existence of that potential and see it being fulfilled in practice than to deny one's ignorance. Another example has to do with belief regarding one's deficiencies or personal shortcomings. A "positive" approach might be to deny the need for self-improvement and affirm one's capacity for growth. A healthier and more honest approach would be to not deny one's deficiencies, but to view self-improvement as a healthy and continuous process (honestly facing and releasing one's weaknesses, without dwelling upon them, by replacing them with or transforming them into positive qualities). Some deny that there is any struggle in life, that by ignoring resistance and stress one somehow rises above it. That may be so, but in denying the reality of struggle (stress) (tension) one is ignoring the afforded lessons. Better to affirm that one faces all experience openly, allowing learning and growth to occur.

Denials of negatives do have some value, for people who lack self-esteem and are attached to or immersed in their own negativity. In these cases, there is some benefit in releasing the negative views and replacing them with more positive notions. But ultimately one needs to be honest and realistic in this process, for otherwise one is simply moving from one self-deluded state into another (happier but equally self-deluded state). The affirmation of one's own perfection is not so potent, simply because of the contrast between practical reality (imperfection) and higher reality (perfection in principle). In one sense it is still creative, i.e., in denying the practical reality and affirming the higher reality one evokes force to restore equilibrium (i.e., to make the practical reality consistent with higher reality). But, if this is unrealistic, then one is left only with conflict (contradiction) of one's own making.

There is also a somewhat insidious dimension to positive thinking in this unrealistic sense, and that is that such thinking tends to strengthen the ego and the hold of the ego on the whole personality life. This may be quite valuable to someone whose personality life is weak, undeveloped, or negatively focused, but for someone whose personality life is already strong, or at least stable, it tends to strengthen that personality (ego) and undermine its responsiveness to higher impression. By feeding the personality strength (ego), one becomes satisfied at that level, effectively preventing any growth that would come at the expense of the hold of the ego on the personality life (of course one can still experience and express at that level, and learn substantially, but it is ultimately a rather limiting experience).

If one suffers the delusion that one is perfect in practice, then one hinders the sense of humility that is ultimately required. That humility need not be in any sense negative, just realistic and life-affirming. True humility brings great joy and weakens the hold of the ego.

The Noble Self

The process of evolution in consciousness and returning to the creative source (God) through that process of evolution in consciousness can also be viewed as a process of allowing the inner, deeper, noble Self (soul) to express itself through the outer, more superficial personal self (personality). Growth in consciousness can then be viewed as transcending the limitations of personal existence and embracing the reality of the noble, perfect Self. As that higher Self then expresses itself through the lesser vehicles (physical body, emotions, concrete mind) the lesser vehicles become more refined and even more responsive to that higher, inner presence. In this sense, the student does not so much “work” toward changing and improving himself or herself as cultivating responsiveness directly. The “changes” and improvements are thereby evoked as consequences of that reorientation in consciousness (focus on reality).

The higher Self is perfect. It is not lessened in any way by the passage of the lower self through the material and personality realms. The personality (mind) (ego) is what is absorbed in the lesser (less real) worlds of human endeavors. The personality is what suffers limitation and imperfection. The personality is what experiences and is deluded by the sense of separateness. But the higher Self remains perfect, on its level. Thus the “new age” concept of each person being perfect is not inconsistent with the more theosophical view of evolution in consciousness through the various cycles and planes of consciousness.

That leads to the question of why is there a need for evolution in consciousness if one is already, in actuality, perfect. The answer is that one is perfect in the sense of God’s presence, i.e., in the higher Self, but while that higher Self is indeed one with (connected directly with) the God-Self, that higher Self is functioning only as a spark within a flame. As evolution proceeds, that spark becomes a flame. The higher Self becomes “complete” and is able to then manifest fully in the sense of being a creator within God (the logos) rather than merely as a perfect (but unfulfilled) existence. In other words there is purpose to this pilgrimage through matter and personality.

The inherent perfection of the higher Self lies in its direct connection to (being an expression of) the consciousness of the logos. But the higher Self is fundamentally a potentiality rather than an actuality. The actuality occurs only as and to the extent that the experience of the lesser self is assimilated into conscience. In the meantime, any connection that the lesser self is able to make with the higher Self facilitates both the growth in consciousness and the higher expression (uninhibited or less inhibited expression of the character, quality, and values of the higher Self through the medium of the lesser self).

The problem is that the lesser self is generally absorbed in its mundane, personal existence, and lacking awareness of its higher Self and true nature. As the light and love of the higher Self dawns in the consciousness of the lesser self (personality) (mind), an awakening occurs such that the existence of the higher Self is realized. Thereby haunted (inspired), the human consciousness (lesser self) gradually transcends its limitations, overcomes its delusion of separateness (independence) (ego) (materialistic and egoistic existence), and begins to manifest its true nature. The artificial essence (ego) is thereby relinquished in the higher reality, and the noble Self is fulfilled. The objective, then, of the spiritual student, is simply to consciously and deliberately facilitate this process.

† Commentary No. 1062

The New Age Movement

There are two distinct themes that have emerged from the so-called new age movement, one being an extension and expansion of orthodox religious principles to embrace metaphysical and symbolic interpretations of scripture, the other being a focus on improving self-esteem, strengthening the personality life, creative thinking, prosperity, etc. There is also a tendency toward blending Eastern and Western religious traditions in meaningful ways.

In both cases there is a liberalization effect as well as a more holistic view of life. The liberalization arises from moving beyond the more traditional doctrines and dogma, an open-mindedness that allows broader interpretations of experience, history, scripture, etc. The holistic view arises from a somewhat closer connection to occult (metaphysical) principles, whether recognized as

such or not. There is an underlying “esoteric” philosophy which students of the new age and theosophical movements are able to sense to some extent, interpreting according to their abilities and conditioning, but resulting in a popularization of these “new” principles. In this sense, the new age movement fills what would otherwise be a considerable gap between metaphysical principles and conventional (religious and worldly) philosophy.

The new age movement is, in general, not an intellectual movement but an emotional movement with a nominally heart-centered basis (in parallel with the new age movement is the “theosophical” movement which tends more toward intellectual pursuit and a head-centered basis). Both new age and theosophical movements are predominantly personality-centered, as people are predominantly personality-centered. Both movements are predominantly emotionally-polarized, likewise, but in theosophy there is a more intellectual, head-centered focus. While theosophy tends to promote “new” ideas, the new age movement tends to embrace those ideas in practical and meaningful ways. The role of the new age movement is primarily to facilitate the strengthening and liberalization (progressiveness) of personality, and as such is a very meaningful stepping stone in the direction of the (formal) spiritual path.

New age “notions” tend to be over-simplifications of metaphysical principles, but effective nonetheless because they can be relatively easily and unconditionally embraced. Since new age “notions” tend to be so appealing, they eventually find their way into the mainstream. Thus what is “new age” is continually advancing. The new age personality-strengthening process is generally quite positive, as it is generally in the context of “new age” spirituality and it is therefore not entirely self-centered. Since meditation is also a new age technique (more properly a pre-new-age technique embraced by the new age movement), there is the opportunity for deepening and passing beyond the personality-centered phase into more mystical (more humble) activities (e.g., eventually transcending the personality).

The “problem” of the new age movement is relatively modest and two-fold: (1) there is a considerable glamour associated with the new age “atmosphere” and the inability of new age “people” to recognize that glamour for what it is [absorption in egoism, personality-centeredness, spiritual materialism] and (2) there is a not inconsiderable emphasis on sense-indulgence (i.e., spirituality

viewed through sense experience) and egoism which tend to inhibit the emergence of the higher Self. These problems notwithstanding, the new age movement plays a vital role in the progression of (mainstream) consciousness and facilitates the reorientation of many people from more conventional perspectives (and attachments) to new perspectives in which personal growth is facilitated.

† Commentary No. 1063

Prosperity

Prosperity is defined as the condition of being successful or thriving, especially in the sense of economic or financial well-being. For those who are not prosperous, or who think they are not prosperous, there may be a considerable concern or desire for prosperity. One of the more prevalent new age notions is that one can become prosperous or allow prosperity to happen. There are several aspects to this notion.

One aspect is a matter of creative thinking. Indeed, through feeling and thinking "prosperity" one can evoke forces that will encourage and facilitate prosperity. Of course this is all subject to one's karma, but within the limits of karma, one can choose to be prosperous and simply become as prosperous as one can under those (karmic) circumstances. Another aspect is ethics, in the sense of becoming prosperous at the expense of others. If one approaches prosperity properly, then it is a matter of tapping into the unlimited (universal) creative potential, so that one's own prosperity does not in any way diminish that of others. On a more subtle level, there are ethical considerations for the spiritual student in the sense that any self-centered creative activity is (can be) deemed unethical. But at the "new age" level those subtle ethics do not apply. It is only as one embraces the spiritual path in the more formal sense that the rules change (and the path narrows) (the path narrows in some sense and broadens in others).

Another aspect is the distinction between creative activity and allowance. The relatively more coarse approach is creative activity leading to prosperity. The strength of the personality (mind) (ego) is involved in this (lower) creative process and prosperity generally comes not fully in accordance with one's

expectations, because the practitioner is simply not wise enough to provide safeguards or caveats. The relatively less coarse approach is to focus on allowing prosperity to emerge. Prosperity is real; it is simply a matter of allowing it to manifest, with confidence that it comes in accordance with need.

Yet, for the (proper) spiritual student, for those who are truly prosperous, there is never any seeking of prosperity. Those (spiritual students or otherwise) who seek prosperity (and those who thereby “find” prosperity) are not truly prosperous. They are simply encumbered by prosperity. The truly prosperous are those who seek merely to be themselves, to serve humanity in accordance with their various opportunities and talents, without any thought of self. In this sense, such people are truly prosperous because they unconsciously evoke whatever is needed and are never really lacking in energy, health, material needs, etc. In short, they are living in accordance with higher law rather than working actively (creatively) in manipulating forces for their own purposes. There is nothing wrong with such creative work, *per se*, and all spiritual students have passed through such a stage (training the mind to work creatively as a stepping stone to selfless and unconscious evocation).

Thus, in the final analysis, prosperity is a state of mind. For those who are not prosperous or who perceive themselves as not being prosperous, the very perception of not being prosperous is an impediment to prosperity. For those who are conscious of prosperity, who are selfish, and/or who are self-centered, prosperity is an encumbrance. And for those who are unconscious of prosperity or who are merely (genuinely) appreciative of their prosperity, there is no encumbrance. For those who are truly prosperous, prosperity is a responsibility for utilizing one’s relative wealth in the most constructive and selfless manner. For wealth is not an individual aspect; it is universal.

Connectedness

In the highest sense all lives are interconnected, all souls are one within the broad context of the soul on its level. At the level of the monad even the distinction of "souls" is rather vague. At the soul level there is realization of both oneness and distinctions within that oneness. But on the level of the human personality, there is the almost complete illusion of separateness, of individuality. Yet, one can feel connected in any one or more of a number of ways (real or otherwise) (physically, emotionally, mentally, personally, spiritually).

Intellectually, one can embrace this sense of oneness, one can understand oneness and feel oneness (but not "really" feel oneness). An intellectual understanding is merely conceptual, not actual. But that intellectual understanding may serve as a precursor for actual understanding. One can, however, embrace oneness mentally (not merely intellectually), and that is a connectedness on the (abstract) mental level. In this sense, one projects mentally, embracing all lives and simultaneously letting go of one's own sense or perception of individuality. As energy follows thought, this results in a linking or connecting of lives on the mental plane. Yet this is still not connectedness in the higher (actual) sense.

Similarly, emotionally, one can embrace this sense of oneness, one can understand oneness and feel oneness in the sense of connectivity with some "other" life or lives. But that connectedness is generally either instinctive or etheric or astral (i.e., in some psychic or non-physical manner), and in no case is this connectedness "real" in the higher (actual) sense. Emotional embrace of or feeling oneness derived from etheric or instinctive or psychic levels is still operative in the (illusory) world of separateness. It is a connectivity between particular elements rather than an all-embracing connectivity. Yes, we are all connected, in various ways. The etheric and astral realms provide connectivity for all lives. But as long as the feeling of connectedness occurs at the personality (ego) level, it is only a distant echo of the real thing.

Any sense of connectedness on these lower (personality) levels implies or conveys an energy (sympathetic) relationship, rapport on some one or more levels, that can be activated or sensed almost at will. The basis may be real or superficial, relatively superficial in some sense on physical, etheric, emotional (astral), or intellectual (mental) levels, or relatively real on intuitional (buddhic) levels (of course most people confuse emotional and intuitional experience).

Thus neither of these senses (intellectual, emotional) are connectedness in the higher context. Connectedness (interconnectedness) in the higher sense occurs on levels above and beyond the personality (above the physical-emotional-intellectual levels), but induces or evokes realization on the lower, more objective levels. Personality-centeredness (personality strength) (egoism) (any sense of independence) precludes this higher sense of connectedness. Real connectedness is intuitive and selfless. Real connectedness does not discriminate between lives. In real connectedness there is no sense of separateness, no sense of connecting "between" but only a sense of "being" connected. Thus in real connectivity there is nothing personal or involving the personality consciousness except as that personality consciousness serves as an (unobtrusive) (subtle) observer or witness. Thus the personality must become spiritually strong, i.e., very, very subtle.

† Commentary No. 1065

Tempering the Emotions

There are at least three good reasons for the spiritual student to undertake a tempering of the emotions. (1) In order to achieve mental polarization, in order to integrate the personality, the emotions must be tempered. (2) In order to achieve alignment of soul and personality, i.e., in order to be responsive to higher impression, the emotions must be substantially refined. And (3) emotions are forces that affect one's atmosphere and anyone to whom one is related, casually or otherwise.

The evolution of human consciousness proceeds from physical polarization to emotional polarization to mental polarization to personality integration to alignment of soul and personality. Thus mental polarization and personality integration are necessary prerequisites to alignment. As long as the emotions

remain coarse and/or untempered, mental polarization and personality integration are not possible. Thus the emotionally-polarized spiritual student is encouraged to refine and temper the emotions through meditation and broadening spiritual discipline and practice (while similarly the mentally-polarized spiritual student is encouraged to temper the mind and personality as a whole).

The preliminary discipline is particularly focused on facilitating continuing refinement and tempering of the lower self. The no-smoking rule facilitates refinement (and health) by eliminating the coarseness engendered by smoke particulates in the aura. The no-alcohol (and no other drugs) rule facilitates stabilization of the emotions and increasing self-control of the lower nature. The vegetarian diet facilitates both (refinement and self-control), by minimizing the effects of diet on the animal nature (e.g., consumption of flesh in any form (meat, fish, fowl) contributes both coarseness and susceptibility to “animal” urges (those urges are not contained in flesh food, but flesh food serves as a catalyst for stimulating or evoking the lower, animal nature within the human form)). The student cannot effectively deny that lower nature, but the student can transcend that lower nature, without repression or suppression, through moderation and increasing spiritualization of the human nature.

One cannot effectively artificially temper the emotions. Unless one truly believes and understands the need for temperance, then the result will be resentful repression or suppression, which ultimately will need to be undone. If the student is entangled in the senses, if the student is enjoying full (lower) emotional experience and expression (and the lessons that are conveyed thereby), then any attempts at tempering the emotions will be half-hearted and will therefore generally not be effective. But where temperance is fully appreciated, then the student can proceed with the preliminary discipline with some confidence.

Another factor regarding tempering the emotions is more pragmatic. Emotions (feelings) are forces that engage other emotions (feelings) on the astral plane and directly affect other people (and oneself) according to their nature. Intense emotions of any kind are necessarily separative and (psychically) violent. Both coarse emotions and intense emotions greatly inhibit the clarity of thinking and greatly inhibit (true) intuition (coarse intense emotions are particularly

separative and violent). Lower emotional experience and expression is egoistic, self-indulgent, etc., and facilitates continuing entanglement in the senses.

Once the emotions are properly tempered, the student is able to experience and express himself (herself) in much more potent (beautiful) ways, as the higher and more subtle emotions come into play, gently and quietly.

† Commentary No. 1066

The Emotional Mind

While the emotions on their level and the intellect on its level are nominally independent, the personality consciousness of the human being links these two (internal) functions together through the various extant chakras. Although the various planes of consciousness are interpenetrating, the chakras are the principal means of energy transference between levels. Thus in the human being (and in any being able to function on both levels simultaneously), emotions can induce or affect the intellectual activity and thoughts can induce or affect emotional responses.

For the emotionally-polarized person (emopol), the link between emotions and thinking is reasonably strong and the thinking processes are very much constrained thereby. If the student is emotionally-polarized and functioning intellectually, then the intellectual activity will be largely affected by the emotions and vice versa. Even if the intellectual activity is "strong" the emotions will still play a substantial role and be affected in turn by any intellectual activity. For the emopol, the intellect may be developed but is, by definition, heavily biased by the emotions and therefore generally unable to function (wholly) objectively.

In practice, until the student is mentally-polarized, thinking is relatively superficial, lacking generally in clarity and objectivity, and very much reliant on mass thought-forms for appropriation and expression. Thus emopols are not usually able to think very clearly for themselves and their thoughts are primarily drawn from whatever trends and habits they have been exposed to. The range of ideas available are rather limited and the whole thinking process tends to be dominated by previously acquired automatic or mechanical correlations (habits).

On the other hand, emopols are generally much better able to sense feelings and respond with feeling than menpols, except that "responsiveness" is generally a matter of conditioned reactivity. Wherever the "thinking" is defensive and/or reactive (or mechanical or trendy), then that indicates that the person is generally (likely to be) emotionally-polarized. During the phase of emotional polarization, the ego is substantially developed and plays a major role in emotional and mental experience. And that experience will be necessarily biased by the emotional nature.

But if the student is mentally-polarized then there will likely be only a relatively modest bias by virtue of feelings. The menpol is one who has integrated the personality and for whom the personality nature as an integrated whole dominates, so that neither the emotions nor the intellect will dominate (except as the intellect is synonymous with the integrated personality nature). The ego may still dominate, but at least there is in the menpol the possibility (inevitability) of tempering and ultimately transcending the ego.

On the other hand, even for the menpol, thinking is generally superficial; but the menpol has a much broader dynamic range of thinking than the emopol (just as the emopol has a much broader dynamic range of feeling). And the menpol is generally much better able to think "independently" of the emotions but remains conditioned in other ways. The objective, however, is for the spiritual student to become mentally-polarized with sufficient heart-unfoldment to enable the re-polarization of consciousness onto intuitive (buddhic) levels. Only at the intuitive level is the student able to stand free of the ego and experience the full and meaningful dynamic range of both feeling and thinking without the impediments and conditioning of the (otherwise substantially tempered) lower nature.

Justice, Law, and Truth

One of the problems associated with conventional forms of “justice” is the emphasis on law and procedure at the expense of truth. The reason for this emphasis is that “law” and associated procedures in law are relatively more easily defined, recognized, and understood in some more objective sense than is truth. In principle, and to a large extent even in practice, laws protect people through equal opportunity, equal application, etc. Laws are, however, still subject to interpretation and variability (bias) in implementation (via police and other agents of the justice system).

Human-based law is inherently biased by virtue of the role of personalities in establishing law, e.g., ego, vested interests, utilization of law to bring about some related objective, however noble. Where there are many laws and/or numerous competing jurisdictions and interests, there arises a complexity in interpretation and implementation (and understanding). Ideally, human-based law would be relatively simple and straight-forward, both in intent, content (basis), and implementation. But that would require more noble (less personality-centered) law-makers and implementors. The emphasis should be on establishment of a relatively simple system of what is or what is not considered “acceptable” behavior through some consensus, with sufficient consideration for minority interests (i.e., not merely an imposition of majority interests, but an implementation of equitable and fair and reasonable standards).

In practice that is extremely difficult to do in any form of democracy, where personalities have competing interests, values, etc. Some other forms of government would afford easier implementation of such a system of justice, but are generally more subject to other abuses (e.g., a benevolent dictatorship is still a dictatorship). Freedom of expression is still an important ingredient in human experience, but it needs to be tempered somewhat by broader, less personal interests. A “good” system affords individual expression while protecting the broader interests of society as a whole.

The problem of truth is that it is not generally provable, while in principle “law” is more objective. In some societies, law is used to compensate for other potential abuses rather than dealing with those abuses directly, e.g., the notion of evidence wrongly obtained being not allowable seeks to discourage wrongful obtaining of evidence, but in fact also allows for the dismissal of pertinent information (truth). Ideally, persons acquiring evidence wrongfully would be appropriately prosecuted (to discourage abuse), while such evidence (truth) would remain admissible (encouraging “justice”) (i.e., in principle, “all” evidence should be admissible (if evidence is not pertinent, then it should not affect the outcome)). But again the problem is human limitation, e.g., emotional and intellectual biases and how those biases affect judgment.

On the other hand, in the world today (and for the foreseeable future), human-based law is the only practical recourse. As humanity evolves as a whole, these processes and systems will improve, with emphasis on truth and justice rather than law and procedure (and eventually these systems will not even be needed). As truth is more easily and truly discernable, and not merely a matter of perceived truth (such as it is), then any reasonable system of law will be relatively easy to implement. With relatively broad powers of realization (i.e., conscious, intuitive recognition of the truth of something), reliance on judgment will not be needed. And the diversity of competing interests will be replaced by a diversity of contributive interests within some commonality of prudent interests.

† Commentary No. 1068

Interior Silence

There is a distinction between standing in the interior silence of God and standing in the silence of one’s own self-righteousness (ego). Only those who have known the interior silence of God can discern this, yet anyone who stands in the silence of his or her own self-righteousness may believe, albeit falsely, that he or she has made such a distinction. This is due to the natural-but-false identification of self with not-self.

The movement toward conscious union with God is not an active movement; it is a matter of laying the groundwork and removing the barriers and allowing the

union (which has always existed) to be revealed. The principal impediment is the ego. And the farther one proceeds along these lines the more subtle is the working of the ego. Thus the principal requirement is being able to discern the distinction between the self (ego) (personality) and the not-self (soul). But silence has many dimensions and there are parts of the human being that proceed in silence, independently of the silence. The spiritual student (contemplative) (mystic) proceeds then, initially, to examine the preliminary silence, to recognize the "activities" of the emotions and the mind (and the ego) below the threshold of silence. And then the student is able to dwell in the silence without being distracted by the lower workings. The lower workings are thereby tempered by one's focus in silence. But eventually one moves beyond focus in silence to the silence itself.

Throughout this process, until one embraces the silence without embracing the silence, the presence of ego fluctuates between being apparent and otherwise. When one learns not to identify with the (lower) self, one enters into the progression of successive identifications with more subtle aspects of self, until one achieves non-identification (which is true selflessness and true union (not-selfness)). If one earnestly and openly seeks to recognize the distinction between self and not-self, then the distinction is eventually realized, but not without this progressive series of delusions in which a subtle self-righteousness reigns in the silence. But as true humility emerges into manifestation, the presence of the absence of ego is evoked (realized) (in the sense of non-realization).

The interior silence of God is communicative only in the sense of grace, that presence of the absence of all that seems to be. At first there is direct awareness of the lower workings (thinking, feeling) because the focus is either at the abstract mental level (non-thinking) or the lowest of the intuitive levels (where the intuitive plane "interfaces" with the abstract mental). There is no conscious "activity" in the silence because it is a matter of being beyond the intellect and beyond any possibility of intellectual activity (at that level). When one "moves" beyond the lowest of the intuitive levels, then there is no possibility of distraction by virtue of the lower workings.

The interior silence is truly wonderful, in the sense that having experienced that (true) silence, one remains haunted by the experience, i.e., haunted by any

absence of that experience, which simply encourages the student to return to the silence. Eventually one learns how to live in the lower worlds while remaining in the silence, living in accord with Tao, the flow of life, without any hint of ego or intellect. The eyes may see, the ears may hear, the person may respond appropriately (necessarily uncontrivedly), yet the focus of consciousness is beyond all this, remaining in the center (interior silence) of true being. Thus apparent action is non-action. And self-righteousness is not possible.

† Commentary No. 1069

Mystical Experience 1

That which is mystical is defined conventionally as “having a spiritual meaning or reality that is neither apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intelligence” or “of, relating to, or resulting from an individual’s direct communion with God or ultimate reality” usually “based upon intuition, insight, or similar subjective experience.” Mystical experience tends to be unintelligible because it is beyond the realm of ordinary experience and therefore beyond the intellectual scope.

Non-conventionally (metaphysically), that which is mystical is further defined as that which is evoked by the soul (atma-buddhi-manas), i.e., through direct contact of heart (in the personality sense) and soul (in the transcendental sense of that which exists beyond the human personality, i.e., beyond the intellect) (the soul being the Christ-essence within the human being but which does not appear on physical, emotional, or intellectual levels). This contrasts with that which is occult, which, although still subject to interpretation (and mis-interpretation), is more objective and does not necessarily involve the soul. Higher occult experience is more similar to mystical experience, and eventually the two paths blend and merge in “esoteric” experience.

There are at least three (generic) kinds of mystics and many kinds of mystical experience. The first kind of mystic is the student (human being) (not necessarily a spiritual student) who has a transient mystical experience, an encounter of a mystical nature, which necessarily leaves a rather strong impression. If this is a genuine mystical experience, then it usually haunts the student for the rest of his or her life. Such a student will generally be unable to

evoke another mystical experience, though it may happen from time to time. In other words, mystical experience is not something that the personality (mind) (ego) (intellect) can evoke, but it is something that the soul can evoke for a responsive personality. Thus, all a person (personality) can “do” is prepare for mystical experience. Occasional, transient experience of a mystical nature does not require conscious or deliberate preparation, but sustained or more frequent experience along these lines does require considerable qualification and heart-unfoldment.

The second type of mystic is the (more) serious spiritual student in the tradition of some religion or spiritual faith, who devotes himself or herself to the mystical path, to some extent, in the context of that faith. The conditioning associated with and/or conveyed through that faith facilitates the experience yet limits the ability of the student to properly interpret his or her experience beyond the intellectual scope of that faith (which is in itself necessarily limited). Virtually all of the historical documentation of mystical experience is associated with this second type, meaning that virtually all of the descriptions of mystical experience are colored by the personality, and particularly the emotional nature, and interpreted in accordance with the personal religious faith of the particular mystical student.

For example, a student who “expects” to encounter God or Christ personally, will tend to interpret his or her experience in accordance with that expectation. That does not invalidate the genuineness of the experience (if indeed it is a genuine mystical experience), but it does mean that the description and interpretations are personal and biased (and therefore misleading in some ways). However, many people have merely “emotional” experiences that they sincerely but wrongly believe to be genuinely mystical.

Mystical Experience 2

The problem is not so much a matter of whether or not one has had an experience, but whether or not it is meaningful and/or genuinely mystical. Of course every experience can be considered meaningful (where meaningfulness is actively promoted by the ego or superficial self), but in this sense of "soul contact" very, very few experiences deemed mystical by the ego consciousness are actually and genuinely a matter of soul contact or actual communion.

Only the third type of mystic has the potential to properly discern both genuineness and significance. The third type of mystic is the serious spiritual student in the more universal sense, who has transcended the limitations of particular religious and spiritual faith and tradition, being substantially less conditioned by the tenets and framework of any particular faith. Such a student sees the underlying commonality of mystical experience within all genuine religious and spiritual traditions, but also has the experiential framework to properly interpret his or her experience (or, more correctly, the experience and understanding (insight) to not-interpret the experience).

The central problems of mystical experience are (1) lack of understanding of the experience, due to conditioning, personal bias, expectation, lack of training, etc., and (2) lack of shared understanding or the inability to communicate understanding. The first problem is a matter of inherent intellectual limitations. One who thinks that he or she understands probably does not. People tend necessarily to interpret their experience in the context of their intellectual and experiential framework, i.e., one tends to fit one's experience into that pre-existing framework, whether it really fits or not. That fitting further limits understanding. An orthodox Christian, for example, will tend to interpret his or her mystical experience in an orthodox Christian framework, and see (hear) (feel) accordingly. Likewise a theosophist will tend to interpret his or her mystical experience in the framework of what he or she (thinks he or she) knows and understands about the metaphysical realm. But any such interpretation is limited; it is only when one transcends the belief system as a whole, that mystical experience can be properly realized (not that one can ever really "understand" in any intellectual sense).

Mystical experience is special. It is generally well beyond the scope of one's prior conscious experience and likewise beyond the scope of others' experience. Thus the second problem is a matter of compounding one's lack of understanding with a lack of language adequate to communicate what understanding there is. Yet with proper caveats, the historical record of mystical experience can be nonetheless encouraging. It is helpful to know that others have passed this way before, however poorly that "way" can be communicated and explained. It is helpful to "understand" the inherent trials and tribulations along the way. It is helpful to "understand" the depths of the sense of otherworldliness and loneliness that invariably attends much of the mystical progression. And it is helpful to "understand" the quiet joy or true communion that is ultimately achieved as the student passes beyond his or her ability to communicate (and beyond even thinking about what is being experienced).

And yet, for people who have genuine mystical experience and who have some measure of genuine understanding, the limitations of language are transcended. One simply understands what is being communicated, despite the limitations of the words themselves, because similar experience has been encountered, so the framework for understanding is there. Yet genuine mystical experience does not in itself or necessarily convey genuine understanding.

† Commentary No. 1071

Mystical Experience 3

Mystics are human beings. They just tend to have a different focus and a different perspective than most people. Mystics are by definition heart-centered or at least more heart-centered than head-centered, but they are not necessarily emotionally-polarized.

Emotionally-polarized people (emopols) and mentally-polarized people (menpols) interpret experience, and particularly mystical experience, differently, both qualitatively and procedurally (functionally). Emopols tend to interpret experience more personally, and this tends to convey substantial limitations

through the somewhat unconscious and underlying conditioning of one's faith (belief system) and the tendency to attribute more personal significance to the experience than would otherwise be warranted. Emopols tend to rely on their feelings rather than their thinking. And mystical experience, while not inherently emotional (in fact not at all emotional), tends to evoke (induce) emotional reactions in someone who is emotionally-polarized. Thus emopols who are mystical tend to focus on these evoked and induced feelings rather than on the experience itself. Thus much of their descriptions and interpretations have to do with effects rather than essence.

On the other hand, menpols and head-centered emopols tend to interpret experience according to the extent of their intellectual understanding, which is likewise necessarily limited. They tend to be less personal, but also influenced (primarily subconsciously) substantially by their conditioning. Thus emopols tend to be limited primarily by their experiential framework and menpols tend to be limited primarily by their intellectual framework. In understanding these limitations, then, there is the potential for transcendence.

It is only when one transcends the personality as a whole (and its intellect), that one can evoke mystical experience at will and actually understand the experience (by virtue of not interpreting the experience). But those who do so invariably refrain from claiming to have had any such experience and from attempting to communicate anything at all regarding their experience. They realize how futile it is to attempt to convey any detail, for unless one has had the experience and unless one has the ability to understand the experience, communication is not possible (and if otherwise, communication is not needed).

So what is mystical experience? Genuine mystical experience cannot be explained. The depth and breadth of it cannot be conveyed. Only one's interpretations can be communicated, and all such interpretations are substantially limited and are therefore inadequate and necessarily misleading to some extent. Much of what has been communicated is from emotionally-polarized spiritually-minded students in the context of traditional religious commitments, e.g., devout students who commit themselves to withdrawal from secular activities in order to focus on their devotional and religious commitments. While much is a description of feelings, the remainder is largely a matter of intellectual interpretation. Much is limited by personalization and

anthropomorphization. Yet there is also much encouragement. While the mystical path cannot be adequately or properly described, heart-centered students are quite naturally drawn into (onto) the mystical dimension of the spiritual path. The process is validated primarily through their own experiences, not through the experiences of others (invariably, the student passes beyond this sense of "otherness" as mystical communion is transcendental of any personal dimension). And the reality of union (and the reality beyond union) is realized.

† Commentary No. 1072

Mystical Experience 4

Mystical experience is not the same as occult experience, nor is it the same thing as psychic experience. Occult experience is predominantly head-centered, while mystical experience is predominantly heart-centered (psychic experience can be either). While mystical experience may stimulate emotional response and intellectual activity, it is not itself either emotional or intellectual.

Mystical experience is the progressive phenomenon of soul contact, of the mind and heart reaching toward the soul, through the qualification and intensity of the heart, while the soul (on its level) responds to that quality. But the soul persists (exists) well beyond the emotions and beyond the intellect, so for there to be any (genuine) mystical experience, one has to transcend the emotions and the intellect, at least for the moment. There is a phenomenon of the mystical encounter, and there is a phenomenon of more sustained mystical experience.

For some, the mystical encounter is momentary (transient) and superficial. In the momentary absence of emotional absorption and intellectual activity, involuntary and unanticipated contact is made (yet without substantive understanding or even appreciation for what has transpired). For others, the mystical encounter is momentary but less superficial, leaving the student with sufficient encouragement that it is much more than a matter of curiosity, becoming a matter of impelling progress toward inner union. Few seek mystical union seriously, and most of those who do seek tend to be consumed in the process without much success. This is because most who seek are trying to achieve something, when in fact what they seek exists already, as it is our

natural state. What is needed is preparation followed by sufficient allowance. Most who seek simply do not allow the mystical union to be revealed to the waking consciousness.

What occurs during the mystical encounter is a momentary breakdown (break-through) in which the normal senses are momentarily suspended and some inner contact achieved. Devotional students of all faiths seek in some ways and through whatever means are available to their understanding to achieve this mystical experience at will, to be one consciously with the God within, to pass through and go beyond the various stages of mystical progression, which are, after all, merely preparatory. But in the trying the student generally gets lost, distracted by effort rather than progressing through allowing the inner self to be revealed. The impediments are many, as the conditioning of the human being is considerable. It may take years or even lifetimes of preparatory effort before the student can let go of all the various emotional and intellectual attachments. The withdrawal from secular life is one of the traditional approaches, and has its place and benefits, yet ultimately fails to evoke the desired results. It is only when the student can actually achieve interior silence, in the midst of surrounding emotional and intellectual turmoil, that the student has truly released his or her conditioning and stands free in the light and love of the higher Self.

What follows, then, is progressive experience in which the mind and heart (of the personality) embrace the inner Self (soul) (atma-buddhi-manas) (Christ) (God) in stages. The various stages are natural consequences of reaction to progressive experience. Every reaction creates further impediment. As each impediment is transcended (through detachment and non-focus) the mind-heart of the student progressively builds the bridge between the lower and higher selves, such that mystical union is ultimately achieved at will.

Gullibility 1

Gullibility is the condition or phenomenon of being easily deceived or duped. The problem of gullibility is compounded by the relativity of what constitutes gullibility and by the inability of a gullible person to recognize sufficiently before the fact that he or she is indeed gullible in some sense or scope. Other factors or problems in gullibility include the unconscious passiveness associated with being emotionally polarized (i.e., not thinking “reasonably”) and the presumptuousness of judgment (intellect) (i.e., thinking as a limitation in itself).

Insofar as metaphysical or religious beliefs are concerned, gullibility is particularly relative, in the sense of someone judging someone else as gullible by virtue of perceived differences in beliefs and/or values. For example, a Christian fundamentalist may view anyone who is more metaphysically-inclined to be gullible, while someone who is metaphysically-inclined might view the Christian fundamentalist as being gullible. When in fact, one or the other, or neither, or both, may be gullible. Thus gullibility is relative and a matter of personal judgment. People tend to project their own beliefs and values upon others, even unconsciously, judging people according to the apparent measure of adherence, without appreciation for the diversity of experience and diversity of values that lead people to see things differently.

This is particularly true of what appear to some as visionary and revolutionary concepts. And people tend to judge as preposterous ideas that are beyond their own experience, oftentimes being not even considered on their own merit. But others’ beliefs are (tend to be) often dismissed by virtue of emotional and associative judgment, e.g., (falsely) believing that a person who shaves his or her head is deluded and anything he or she believes and says is preposterous (because he or she shaves his or her head, not because the beliefs have been considered). In truth, there is not necessarily any cause and effect relationship between head-shaving (or anything else) and legitimacy of beliefs. A person’s beliefs are meaningful, at least to that person. And no one has the right to judge another, or his or her beliefs. Judgment is always presumptuous and often (and generally) fallacious to some extent.

One who chooses not to judge is more likely to realize that each person's perspective has some validity and meaning, and that apparent differences in beliefs are not necessarily substantive, i.e., one can focus on the common elements rather than apparent differences and one can recognize that the terminology varies from one religious system to another and yet in many cases the same beliefs are being presented, in different ways perhaps. Those who judge others tend to be (thereby) separative. Those who choose not to judge others tend to be (thereby) more inclusive and appreciative of others. And those who become truly inclusive and non-separative transcend both the sense of ego and the sense that there are any others.

Respect for others' beliefs is very important in adherence to truth. If one allows the judging perspective to take hold, then one is thereby substantially limiting the extent (depth and breadth) of (truth) realization that is possible.

Ultimately, gullibility is a personal matter and a non-issue. One should simply seek to be as reasonable and realistic about what one believes as one can. If one focuses on the quality and value (and relative meaningfulness) of some prospective belief, then one can (gradually) discern the relative truth for oneself. Believing something by virtue of some presumed authority or claim is simply not conducive to learning to discern the truth for oneself.

† Commentary No. 1074

Gullibility 2

In the more practical sense, gullibility is a matter of unreasonable basis of belief. People tend to believe things according to their own pre-existing belief system (conditioning) (expectations). People tend to believe what they want to believe, regardless of evidence to the contrary. At the other extreme are those who believe nothing, but at that extreme of complete non-gullibility there is just as much impediment to growth and realization as there is at the wholly gullible extreme.

In the middle, between these two extremes of gullibility and non-gullibility, is provisional belief, of non-passive open-mindedness that allows much in the way of possibility and little in the way of certainty. In this way, beliefs are

provisional and tentative. The student does not cling to (these) beliefs and is therefore able to expand and deepen the experience leading to understanding, i.e., provisional and tentative beliefs facilitate but do not preclude understanding, while attachment to (non-provisional) beliefs constitutes considerable impediment to deeper, broader understanding.

Most of what a person believes is based on personal experience. That personal experience includes very considerable conditioning. People are generally trained by experience (conditioning) to trust their senses, to believe what is apparent to the senses, to believe what they are told by whoever is deemed to be an authority, etc. These processes are quite valuable throughout much of human evolution in consciousness, but at some point, trusting the senses and trusting others' authoritative testimony become limitations to growth in consciousness. The problem is that the senses are misleading, particularly for people who are emotionally-polarized. The senses strongly tend to convey to a person what he or she wants to sense (feel) (believe) rather than what is necessarily true. The problem of the senses is compounded by the mind or intellect, which manipulates sense impressions according to either the person's overall expectations or according to the self-presumed needs of the ego, particularly for people who are mentally-polarized and/or who are head-centered. Thus reliance on the senses and reliance on one's own judgment are limitations.

Many people believe in accordance with cultural conditioning or majority consciousness (where the majority is defined as the majority of the group of people with whom one identifies). If one perceives that "everyone else" believes something, and therefore it must be true, then one has erred substantially, for truth does not require people to believe it. Truth (in this sense) is what is actually true, not what is merely believed. Likewise recourse to presumed authority can be quite misleading. The only presumed authority is the ego. The ego may be sincere, may even be genuine, but is not necessarily nor generally so. Knowledge and understanding are relative at best, and so reliance on authority (real, claimed, or presumed) is inherently limiting. Just because a person has all of the "right" (claimed) (presumed) (even real) credentials, has published extensively on a subject, etc., does not in any way necessarily mean that that person's beliefs are any more valid than any other person's. A person may have considerable experience, knowledge, training, etc., and still not fully understand

or comprehend significance. Thus nothing is necessarily true on the basis of someone's claims or demonstrations.

The (spiritual) student is urged to think for himself (herself), in consideration of whatever ideas are presented, relying predominantly on his (her) inner sense (conscience) (the ring of truth), to consider all beliefs provisional (tentative) and relative.

† Commentary No. 1075

Channeling

Channeling is a phenomenon in which words or ideas are evoked into the waking-consciousness from some real or presumed external (internal) source other than that waking-consciousness. Much of what is channeled has value, but much of what is channeled is of dubious or questionable value. Each person must (should) discern for himself or herself what quality and value there is in any material, regardless of its (real or presumed) source or mechanism. To do otherwise is to be gullible, compounding the difficulties of understanding and inhibiting real understanding by virtue of presumption.

Some people argue about the sources and legitimacy of channeled material. The problem is that one can never absolutely determine the source or legitimacy, and it hardly matters (some can prove to themselves the legitimacy of some source or process while others can just as effectively (to themselves) prove its illegitimacy). The quality and value of the material should be judged or discerned on its own merit and not accepted (or rejected) on the basis of some presumed or claimed source. The source does not matter. Identification of the source is not important. The legitimacy of the source does not matter. Something is true (or false), not because of the source. Something is true only if it is true in itself. Something should be accepted as (provisionally) true (meaningful) or not according to whether or not it rings true (in conscience). Likewise, it does not matter whether or not something is legitimately channeled or merely brought through the subconscious (or even contrived); what matters is the quality and value of the material, and not even necessarily as a whole.

It seems foolish to believe something merely because it is believed or perceived to be channeled from some presumed "great" intelligence or authority. Focusing one's attention on the source and process, making associated claims of any kind (sincerely or otherwise) is inherently egoistic. It is also a way of disarming the senses, of discouraging the thinking-for-oneself by virtue of more passive acceptance. And the perils of channeling are great. The vast majority of entities legitimately contacted through channeling are sincere but misguided, and many are self-deluded (disincarnated human and non-human entities claiming great wisdom (also claiming appealing identities in order to be more readily believed by those who are gullible)). They may (or may appear to) have great wisdom. They may (or may appear to) be conveying ideas of considerable insight and value. But the quality and value of what is conveyed does not validate either the claimed source nor the legitimacy of the process (neither of which is important anyway).

And yet some channeled material is quite valuable, regardless of its presumed source or mechanism. But even where the source is "true" and the channel well-qualified, there is still (always) a personality involved, a mind that even unconsciously filters what is conveyed. Thus each idea should be judged (if that is the best one can do) or discerned (if one has suitably developed intuition) on its own merit, and not on the presumed legitimacy or basis of other statements from the same apparent source.

In the final analysis, should one believe something because someone says something is inspired by some great intelligence? Or should one believe something because it rings true, because one can recognize for oneself the quality and value and meaningfulness of something? Rather than focusing on the (presumed) source, rather than focusing on the legitimacy of the channel or mechanism, one should focus on the quality and value of meaningfulness of the material conveyed.

Regeneration

One of the most encouraging aspects of life in the lower worlds of human endeavor is the continual opportunity for regeneration. Although one may be embroiled in personality experience, although one may be enchanted by and entangled in the senses, although one may be enslaved in habits, there is always potential for regeneration.

Regeneration is defined as the act or process of spiritual renewal, and is closely related to grace. Regeneration can occur either as the student reaches upward (onward) (inward) or as the higher Self (soul) (atma-buddhi-manas) reaches downward (outward), generally and more properly, as both occur. Regeneration occurs through some often modest awakening, as fresh insight is achieved and that insight carries momentum for change, progress, development, unfoldment, etc. Through regeneration there are additional or expanded energies and associated forces available. Through regeneration there is a breaking of old habits and establishment of new, more progressive patterns, more facilitative of spiritual growth.

Regeneration means that actual changes are made in the composition of the vehicles of consciousness, i.e., in the physical body, in the etheric double, in the astral or emotional body, and in the concrete mind. The extent of these changes depend on the nature of grace, the magnitude and nature of the regenerative force, consistent with karma, and the relative responsiveness of the personality. Through regeneration, these changes are effective to the extent that the personality does not overcome them through retrogression, i.e., by falling back into the old habits and patterns of thinking and feeling. Regenerative forces discourage that falling back but do not preclude strong personality-level (subconscious) intentions to the contrary. Thus regeneration is both a consequence (grace) (karma) and an opportunity for real growth, but it still requires cooperation (acceptance).

The key to successful regeneration is willingness to change, willingness to grow, willingness to release attachments (on physical, emotional, and intellectual levels). To the extent that the student is willing and therefore

responsive, regeneration will be effective. But the ego generally tends to undermine these opportunities, as the ego is generally threatened by spiritual growth. Thus regeneration is usually part of the struggle between the higher and lower selves, between the progressive forces (encouragement) of the higher Self and the impeding (inertial) forces of the lower self. The ego generally prefers the status quo. The soul is aligned with progressive forces (on its level) and shares that alignment through qualification of the lower self. But the ego tends to resist, to struggle with the more progressive forces, often in subtle but self-serving ways.

Yet real progress comes when, ultimately and through regeneration, the ego itself is transformed into a willing partner. When the ego accepts the fact of its own artificial nature, when the ego learns to sacrifice itself in the better (higher) (more noble) interests of the Self, then progress is greatly facilitated. For while the ego is part of the material self, albeit extending through emotional and concrete mental levels, and is inherently inertial, the ego has the ability to minimize its impedimental nature. But this only occurs through proper integration, in which the ego (mind) (personality as a whole) is subordinated to the higher Self. And proper integration is itself a matter and consequence of regenerative opportunities. And all of this occurs through grace.

† Commentary No. 1077

External Haunting

Haunting in the sense of an external phenomenon is a matter of some nominally non-physical presence and a receptivity to that presence. There are many different kinds of non-physical entities that can at times induce physical-plane effects and/or obtain the attention of those who are more sensitive to the non-physical realms.

The most common variety of (external) haunting is that of a person who has died but who continues to inhabit the etheric and astral realms associated with circumstances to which he (she) is still attached. These are generally people who have strong attachments, who are not really aware of their own deaths, who simply continue to go about their business as if they had not died. Where

the attachment is strong and where the intensity of etheric and/or astral energy is great, a haunting will generally occur. Such a haunting may be directly associated with a particular time, place, and/or living person(s), and may induce physical-plane phenomena if the intensity (force expended) is sufficient. But more generally, only people who are sensitive to etheric and astral forces will actually sense the haunting presence or be aware of the effects. Examples of factors that encourage such haunting are alcohol or drug abuse, extreme materialism, extreme emotional attachments, violence, suicide, etc. These often result in strong attachments that are carried through the beginning phase of transition, leaving the newly dead person dazed and unable to pass on to the next stage (until the attachment is properly overcome). But such a person is generally wholly unaware of the attachment, of his or her own death, and of the need to pass onward. The timescale of haunting is the timescale of natural death (in the case of suicide) and/or the time required to overcome the attachment, which can be a matter of tens or even hundreds of years.

A less common variety of (external) haunting is that of a non-human, non-physical entity (of which there are many different kinds) which is attached (trapped) in some way to external circumstances (place, time, people). This is not really natural, and generally occurs as a consequence of someone tampering in occult matters (i.e., dabbling in occult matters without sufficient knowledge, training, understanding, or wisdom). Any time a person applies force selfishly or intensely, occultly or otherwise, there is a risk of attracting various sympathetic non-physical entities. In other words, one attracts attention on subtle levels according to the character and quality of consciousness expressed. A selfish, emotionally or intellectually intense person will more naturally attract demons. An unselfish, well-tempered person will more naturally attract healing presence (devas) (angels). But it is generally only through dabbling in occult matters that particularly potent (destructive) (obsessive) entities (demons) are attracted.

A haunting presence generally operates on etheric and astral levels. It takes a very substantial force on etheric and astral levels in order to induce effects on dense physical levels. Usually, the only way this can occur is if someone on the dense physical level is particularly susceptible to the circumstances of the haunting entity. Of course karma is always the principal factor. Without a

karmic link there can be no effects. Without a personal dimension (connection), any form of external haunting is unlikely.

External haunting is distinctly different from possession, and external haunting is distinctly different from internal haunting (and possession is distinctly different from internal haunting), though in principle, one can lead to the other.

† Commentary No. 1078

Internal Haunting

Internal haunting refers to the condition in waking-consciousness in which a person senses some subtle and persistent or recurring encouragement of an extra-ordinary nature. The most common variety of such haunting is a matter of conscience (e.g., guilt); another variety is a matter of unfulfilled desire that is allowed to permeate the subconsciousness. Yet another is a matter of some unresolved puzzle, with or without apparent personal significance. In each case there is a subtle, internal consequence of some association or attachment, which induces an awareness, however subtle, that encourages resolution.

A less common but potentially potent variety of (internal) haunting occurs in the aftermath of a mystical experience and generally lasts (recurs) through the remainder of the lifetime. A mystical encounter implies a direct connection between the inner and outer selves, however transient that may be in waking-consciousness. A mystical experience generally leaves a strong, albeit subtle impression in consciousness (and subconsciousness). Even as a person becomes absorbed in mundane (personal) (secular) matters, the deeper, inner impression tends to persist. In this sense, the haunting "entity" is the higher Self.

The great value of the mystical (internal) haunting is that it encourages awakening, through its persistent and/or recurring presence (memory). The experience (haunting) is almost impossible to describe, as there are no words available to convey a sense of the experience. It is very subtle. It is a persistent and/or recurring reminder of something important but not really defined or identified, something elusive, something to be wrestled with in subtle ways. It is haunting in the sense of its gentle encouragement, with an awareness of

“something” without substantive or conscious understanding. In a sense this mystical form of haunting is inspiring, but not in the normal sense of (direct and obvious) inspiration.

Internal haunting of the mystical form is a relatively direct manifestation of evolutionary pressure. Evolutionary forces apply to everyone, but in different ways and with different intensities. Ultimately, the goal of evolution in consciousness for humanity is self-realization, the attainment of self-consciousness (in the higher sense) and full human awareness (and concomitant meaningful expression). But most of humanity are asleep in the dream (illusion) of (lower) (personality) self-consciousness (ego). Mystical experience is a breakthrough of sorts. It is an indication of the beginning of awakening. The haunting associated with mystical experience is the subtle (evolutionary) force of the soul pressing on the subconsciousness and to some extent on the waking-consciousness as well. It does not allow the person to fall (completely) asleep again. It gently and persuasively and slowly engenders the needed awakening.

People who are haunted by something are people who simply cannot entirely forget something. If one cannot entirely forget the mystical encounter, then there is a considerable albeit subtle encouragement forward. The phenomenon is a matter of evoking a mindful attachment in a way that allows the mind (heart) of the personality to participate in the awakening process. Thus it is also a matter of subverting the independence of the personality (ego) and bringing the personality-consciousness to a realization of its own artificiality, whereupon the personality can then be gradually subordinated to the higher Self. It is the “reach” of the higher Self, through the mystical experience and subsequent “haunting” of the conscious and subconscious mind, that encourages the student onward to freedom, at least at this stage of the Way.

Otherworldliness 1

The natural consequence of spiritual deepening, through mystical encounters and through qualification and other meaningful (interior) spiritual experience, is an increasing sense of otherworldliness, of not really feeling a part of the mundane, personal, secular world, but feeling more so a part of the deeper, less personal, but more meaningful (heart-centered) inner (spiritual) world (dimension).

As the student progresses along the Way and as this deepening occurs, the student must be careful to balance the two aspects (inner and outer), for while most people are completely absorbed in the outer (objective) (personal) world and unresponsive to higher impression, the spiritual student who passes the midway point along the path risks premature absorption in the inner (subjective) experience. The inner experience is important, and should deepen, but the student should still be able to function in the outer world. Indeed, the student should be able to function even more effectively in the outer world, by virtue of his (her) lack of outer attachments (entanglements). This growing sense of otherworldliness is a wonderful complement to the inner haunting that follows the mystical encounter (soul contact). It helps the student build momentum along the Way, evoking the experience and opportunities for higher expression that are needed, without being overwhelming.

This sense of otherworldliness may be interpreted by those who are absorbed in the outer world as separative, yet in fact it is just the opposite. Being absorbed in the outer world is inherently separative, even for heart-centered and well-intentioned spiritually-minded people, while living more so the inner life places the waking-consciousness more directly in contact with the reality of unity (rather than merely the intellectual appreciation of unity). But the student who embraces the spiritual path must necessarily become non-conforming in the sense of not living in accord with most of the expectations of the outer world (culture). This may be viewed as separative, and is indeed threatening to the ego sense, but is really a matter of progressive non-separativeness, accompanied by progressively deeper, inner realization.

While the student becomes less-conforming in consciousness, i.e., more free from the worldly conditioning (of materialism and egoism), there is no need to be antagonistic to the more worldly experience. A truly heart-centered student cannot be antagonistic. But, many people feel threatened by those who do not share their own world-view (i.e., they are insecure in their own belief systems and need assurance and comfort from like-minded people). Thus the spiritual student should proceed in gentleness, living in accord with inner values while respecting and appreciating that others may see the world very differently. Those who embrace otherworldliness should endeavor to function in harmony with those who are not able to appreciate the inner dimension, not by conforming to outer values, but through love and appreciation.

The passage through this sense of otherworldliness is often related to the dark night of soul, as one returns from the dark night haunted (inspired) by the experience. The Way is inherently lonely. Yet from within comes persistent and recurring encouragement, inward, onward, upward. This sense of loneliness is just the reaction of the outer self (personality) to the subconscious realization of the truth of inner experience (the truth of the artificiality of outer experience). In otherworldliness tempered by practical considerations comes balance (harmony) and quiet (inner) joy. And through deepening inner experience comes true communion with all of life.

† Commentary No. 1080

Otherworldliness 2

Another aspect of otherworldliness is the matter of reality and how reality is perceived by those of worldly consciousness. Otherworldliness is defined conventionally as the condition or circumstances of "relating to a world other than the actual world" while the more metaphysical definition focuses on the transcendental aspect.

For most (conventional) people, otherworldliness is a matter (belief) (perspective) of someone withdrawing from the "real" world and living in one's imagination (non-reality). The "real" world is viewed (by the worldly) as the physical world that is apparent to the (worldly) senses, and other dimensions (emotional, intellectual) are viewed as aspects of that physical world. The fact

that virtually everyone in incarnation is absorbed in the materialism and worldliness of "objective" experience means that hardly anyone can appreciate the truth of the inner worlds. It is beyond their experience and therefore not real to them.

But truth is not a democratic process. Something is not true merely because an overwhelming majority of people believe it is true, though the fact that an overwhelming majority of people believe something does have an effect on mass consciousness, mass perception, etc., i.e., making a "belief" more believable, regardless of its validity. Thus otherworldly people, people who live in both worlds, are often misunderstood, because their character and temperament and values tend to be significantly different than that of "normal" people. If the otherworldliness is in the context of some conventional system (e.g., an established orthodox church) then it is more readily accepted if not fully understood or appreciated. But many pioneers do not work through conventional means and achieve their otherworldliness without regard to the sensibilities of the majority.

To the truly otherworldly, reality lies in the subjective (inner) realm and not in the objective (outer) world. The physical, emotional, and mental planes are viewed as different (equal but not equivalent) but closely-coupled dimensions, but all by way of embracing and facilitating the illusion of the senses, e.g., of separateness, of the (false) "reality" and (false) validity of sense impressions. One is drawn into otherworldliness either through some mystical experience or through being unsatisfied with the conclusions of the ordinary senses (sense experience) (intellectual endeavors). When life in the mundane world loses its glamour and therefore its hold on waking-consciousness (and subconsciousness), i.e., as materialism, intellectualism, and egoism are gradually overcome, then one naturally becomes gradually and increasingly otherworldly.

The reality of inner experience cannot be conveyed effectively. There is a realization that transcends the senses, that transcends logic and all lesser (worldly) experience. One simply knows and understands, without being able to express that knowledge or understanding. There is a great comfort that accompanies this inner sense, as well as a quiet haunting that tends to keep the student (more) awake (than would otherwise be the case). But in the final

analysis, reality is a matter of perspective (relativity). The inner reality is only real for those who live there (or who can function therein). Likewise outer reality is only real for those who are satisfied with that conclusion. But the outer reality is a matter of conditioning and usually a matter of passive (unconscious) acceptance, while the inner reality (otherworldliness) is a matter of progressive realization and release (freedom) from conditioning.

† Commentary No. 1081

Feng Shui 1

Feng shui is the ancient Chinese art and science of arrangement (placement) based on underlying principles of energy flow. Those principles are common to all legitimate occult traditions. The objective is to arrange one's physical surroundings in a way that facilitates the positive (constructive) (favorable) (harmonious) flow of energy and minimizes the negative (destructive) (obstructive) flow, i.e., living in accord with natural forces. Proper feng shui encourages health and healing. Bad feng shui "encourages" misfortune. Forces that are properly balanced are constructive, bringing or encouraging well-being, ease, success in worthy undertakings. Where natural forces are blocked or impeded, the flow is less harmonious, more chaotic, less settled.

Feng shui means, literally, wind water. It is a matter of recognizing natural forces, predominantly ch'i and its various aspects, and balancing these forces in one's immediate environment and circumstances. It involves the placement of roads, buildings, furniture, doors, pictures, mirrors, etc., including aspects of color and sound. Everything must be considered in the context of ch'i and other elements, e.g., other things already placed in the immediate environment. The natural flow of wind and water are the obvious elements. Other elements are sunshine, the earth's magnetic field, terrain, etc. As an object is placed in the immediate environment it affects and potentially changes whatever feng shui was already extant.

There are two problems with feng shui. One is a matter of superstition, which results from occult principles applied without understanding, i.e., the association of practice with (true) purpose is lost to some extent as the

principles are applied in ways that were not intended. Another is a matter of self-centeredness, as principles are applied without regard to the whole, e.g., in selfish or competitive ways rather than in ways that regard the best interests of all concerned. These problems notwithstanding, feng shui (and similar practices) offers much toward attunement to cosmic (energy) flow and facilitation.

One of the aspects of feng shui is color. The selection and placement (utilization) of color can have considerable effect on the waking-consciousness and the subconsciousness. However, those effects vary substantially depending on a person's particular conditioning and receptivity (and as well on combinations and patterns of color). Thus, association of a particular color with a particular effect or influence should not be generalized. In some oriental cultures, certain colors have very particular connotations that are quite contrary to their perception (acceptance) in other cultures.

Another aspect is geographical or spatial placement of objects (buildings) (doors). The key to successful placement is recognition of where the "energy" flows from and how it is affected by various placements, natural and otherwise. If one places a building, for example, in a way that obstructs the natural flow of energy, then there will result a somewhat (substantial) tempering of the natural encouragement, while if properly placed and oriented, a building will be qualified or conditioned in an uplifting manner. Of course people respond in different ways, but without the presence of uplifting energy there is no possibility of upliftment. Thus feng shui is a matter of encouragement and facilitation rather than compulsion. It is not a matter of luck. It is a matter of allowing forces to flow in the way they need to flow in order for them to be fulfilled. Thus feng shui and karma are interdependent. Feng shui is simply a consideration of the karmic balance.

Feng Shui 2

If one's placement and circumstances are harmonious, then karma is facilitated. If one's placement and circumstances are not harmonious, then karma is still facilitated. Because one's effective utilization of the principles of feng shui must necessarily be a matter of karma. One's good intentions (action, behavior, feelings, thoughts) in the context of one's harmonious nature and circumstances promote positive balance. If feng shui is utilized selfishly, e.g., to promote one's personal or business interests at the expense of others, then consequences will emerge that are consistent with that selfishness that are also consistent with the principles of feng shui. Thus while one cannot avoid one's karmic consequences, one can take action to encourage a harmonious setting in which learning and deepening are encouraged. "Bad" things can still happen in a "good" environment, but the flow will be more harmonious and lessons more likely to be learned.

Ch'i is continuously flowing. Where constrained there results an accumulation of force that eventually explodes into fulfillment. Where wholly unconstrained, there results a dispersion of force in empty spaces. The proper flow is a balance of complementary forces (yin and yang). It is a matter of drawing from the natural energies available (ch'i or prana) without over-drawing (through accumulation). While feng shui involves the actual balance of forces and harmonious flow, there is also a matter of perception.

Perception is very powerful, as it can undermine otherwise realistic beliefs and consequences. If one believes that one has good (bad) feng shui, then (real) consequences will tend to emerge that are consistent with that belief. But those consequences must also be consistent with actuality and karma. The problem is that perception (belief) is a strong force that actually alters or conditions one's circumstances. In some cultures certain colors are considered favorable and others unfavorable (which may be just the opposite or quite different in some other cultures)); in those cultures, the widespread perception of color favorableness will have an effect on emerging consequences. Thus feng shui has both a basis in actuality (yin and yang, ch'i) (karma) and a basis in cultural

values and perception. But it is still primarily a matter of “living harmoniously in, rather than conquering, the natural world.”

Feng shui is a matter of rules and superstition. What is not based in actuality is largely a matter of superstition, but superstitious belief still carries some weight (force). Some elements of feng shui have no basis in underlying (actual) principles, and are limited to the consequences of belief (suggestion). Some elements are real and remain in effect to some extent regardless of one’s beliefs to the contrary. A feng shui master, one who is adept in these matters, is not one who understands the rules, but is one who accurately and intuitively senses the balance and flow or forces (and context) and who can see the effects of alternative placements, i.e., it is a matter of accurate perception (awareness) and common sense. Reliance on prescription (rules) in feng shui risks falling prey to superstition. Far better to understand the underlying principles and draw on insight or natural sensing.

On the other hand, in order to be affected by any balance or imbalance of forces one must be receptive. Most people are unconsciously and substantially (passively) receptive to environmental circumstances (external forces). But one can learn to be intelligently limited or selective in one’s receptivity, e.g., being receptive only to positive feng shui (constructive influence) and indifferent to negative feng shui. This requires effort and training.

† Commentary No. 1083

Feng Shui 3

There are many prescriptive rules and there are many underlying principles. Many of the prescriptive rules are largely superstition and habits of cultural significance (only). Feng shui is related tangentially (not necessarily intelligently) to various means of divination, such as the I Ching, and astrology. While each of these has some value and validity, the underlying principles of feng shui do not involve divination, etc. (though divination may properly involve some of the same underlying principles).

The objective in feng shui is to encourage a positive balance of yin and yang, such that ch'i can circulate freely. One does not normally want a preponderance of either yin or yang. One should simply seek a positive balance and ensure that there are no obstructions to the flow. One should (properly) avoid competing with one's neighbors, and place one's own circumstances in the broader (community) context. Thus the flow "improves" for all.

Much of feng shui with regard to geographical and architectural factors is a matter of what "feels right" and is therefore comfortable. In rural areas placement and orientation with regard to terrain (mountains, hills, rivers, streams, lakes) affect the flow. Likewise placement and orientation with regard to the ecliptic (the apparent path of the sun) may be important. One should discern how the natural energies (forces) flow and place one's house accordingly. In rural areas it is primarily a matter of natural terrain and the "flow" of wind and water (and sunshine). In urban areas it is also a matter of how other buildings interact with the natural flow. In both rural and urban areas, one should not underestimate the subconscious influence of symbolic factors (e.g., an ominous-looking peak or building may or may not obstruct the flow substantially, but it may also convey its ominousness subconsciously (by suggestion)). Metaphorical and symbolic factors may therefore have some significance depending on receptivity (and provide some basis for superstition). Even place names can be suggestive.

In any construction endeavor, consideration should be made for the natural terrain and disturbance should be minimized. Where human activity upsets the balance significantly, forces of nature are generally thereby evoked to restore the balance. Better to live in harmony with existing natural conditions than to engineer substantial changes. Modern ecological and environmental "concerns" are largely a recapitulation of ancient insight into the flow of ch'i and the balance of forces. Human arrogance has its price in consequences, but proper care for the environmental context encourages harmonious living and growth in consciousness.

In addition to the underlying natural principles, there is also a matter in feng shui of personal values. Personal values (perception) may weigh rather heavily. Some people are more comfortable at higher, more exposed elevations, others at lower, more protected elevations. Some people are more comfortable with trees

in their natural setting. Others are more comfortable with open spaces. In principle, one should seek and find whatever circumstances are most comfortable, without imposing on others and without imposing on the natural environment. The earth, and the planet as a whole, is alive. Humanity lives within this planetary whole but human beings do not reign over it (regardless of their presumptions). There is a natural balance and natural restorative forces. But there are also natural progressive forces (i.e., things change over time). In wisdom, one considers the natural balance of forces in applying the principles of feng shui.

† Commentary No. 1084

Baconian Prejudice

Francis Bacon was an English philosopher who pondered the notion of knowledge and its basis and the rational (or not so rational) process through which knowledge is acquired, and in particular the natural impediments to acquiring knowledge, e.g., hasty generalization which prevents or hinders subsequent (broader, deeper, non-superficial) understanding. Bacon identified four idols or prejudices which impede the mind's ability to discover truth. If these prejudices can be overcome, then one can be objective and rational and effectively utilize more rational means for acquiring knowledge, e.g., inductive reasoning.

Bacon's first prejudice was (is) perception as reality. People tend to unconsciously trust, or accept at face value, the apparent truth of whatever is perceived, without appreciation for the extent of distortion that takes place in the perception process. The mind is inherently conditioned by habit to be entangled in the senses and to distort whatever is perceived according to whatever is merely apparent, according to what one wants to perceive, etc. Bacon suggests that one needs to be critical (objective) in order to minimize or eliminate this prejudice.

Bacon's second prejudice was (is) individual conditioning. People tend to "judge matters on the basis of their own education, experience, and taste" without appreciation for the considerable diversity and variability of perspective conditioning. Without being broad-minded, one doesn't generally realize that

one's own perspective, based as it is upon personal experience, is simply not necessarily correct, wholly true, etc. Judgment is therefore generally based upon one's own values, consciously realized or otherwise. If one is materialistic or egoistic, then one will naturally and unconsciously interpret experience in accordance with that bias. Furthermore, one tends unconsciously and indirectly (by virtue of one's perception and interpretation of experience) to attribute the same values to others, even when one knows, intellectually, that such is not the case.

Bacon's third prejudice was (is) semantics. People tend to interpret information communicated through language according to their own sense of semantics, without appreciation for the diversity and variability of meaning of words and how they are used. Words are not precise. Meanings change in time and in context. Words mean different things to different people. One generally and unconsciously presumes that another person's use of certain words conveys the same meaning as one would use those words oneself, when in fact, the other person's conditioning and semantic sense are necessarily different (although potentially similar). Without appreciation for context, and feedback to ensure that the intended meaning is actually realized, considerable communication can be presumed when in fact there is considerable miscommunication. Thus understanding is hindered and further complicated by the presumption of understanding, without even the realization of presumption.

Bacon's fourth and final prejudice was (is) historical conditioning. What is "known" historically conditions people through passive acceptance. If a person "knows" something on the basis of having been taught in one way or another, without benefit of first-hand experience and clear-thinking (unhindered by perception, conditioning, or semantics), then that "knowledge" acts as a barrier to understanding anything other than what has thus been (unconsciously) presumed to be true. Bacon suggests, indirectly, that historically promulgated ideas should be questioned, and independently verified before accepted as true.

Seven-Fold Human Constitution

The seven rays are a fundamental aspect of manifestation. Likewise, the seven planes of consciousness constitute a fundamental, underlying aspect. And there is a direct correlation between the seven rays and the seven planes. Since each of the rays is reflective (with the first, second, and third rays being reflected into the seventh, sixth, and fifth, respectively), it does not matter in which direction the rays or planes are ordered. Only the relative order is significant. Likewise, each plane of consciousness is reflective with regard to the central (middle) plane.

Humanity relates directly and indirectly to the seven rays and the seven planes, in various ways. But humanity (and all lifewaves) are manifested in the context of the seven rays and seven planes. Humanity is the signal. The seven rays and the seven planes form the background or framework through which the signal is perceived, developed, and expressed. In this sense (only) humanity is not fundamental to manifestation (humanity is, however, more fundamental, in the sense of life and continuity).

Thus the relationship of humanity to the seven-fold dimension of the field of manifestation is rather dynamic. The human being has seven principles, although only a few are currently and partially being manifested. While those seven principles relate directly to the seven rays and the seven planes, the seven-fold human form does not. This inconsistency is a practical matter. It is sometimes convenient to perceive the human form in its more practical dimensions rather than according to its principles.

The upper triad of atma-buddhi-manas (soul) relates directly to the trinity (first, second, and third rays) and to the planes of consciousness through which these three principles operate (third, fourth, and fifth). Likewise the lower triad of the mental-emotional-physical personality relates directly to the trinity (first, second, and third rays) and to the planes of consciousness through which they operate (fifth, sixth, and seventh). The six-pointed star and the placement of the seven numerals represents the seven rays and their relationships rather than the seven-fold human being. In representing the seven rays, the symbol is quite

consistent, with many valid inferences. The problems in trying to use this symbol to represent the seven-fold human being are (1) that ray relationships are relative, not absolute, and (2) that the upper and lower triads do not correspond exclusively with planes of consciousness.

Sometimes the personality is viewed as three-fold and sometimes four-fold. This is because the physical body has two aspects, a dense physical body and an etheric double. This division is a convenient one for understanding the role of the etheric body in vitalizing the dense physical body and it helps explain the realm of physical plane forces. But in terms of principles, there is only one physical plane principle, the physical body as a whole. In this sense, the etheric body is not independent, except during sleep, and then it is only partially independent. Another problem arises on the mental plane, where there are two regions of consciousness, a concrete region involving mental forms and an abstract region which is considered formless. Again this is convenient for understanding the distinction between the higher aspect of the personality (concrete mind) and the lower aspect of the soul (abstract mind), but in fact there remains only one mental principle. The seven-fold human being is a matter of perspective, or how one chooses to perceive it. Some people look for seven principles, others look for seven bodies or sheaths in consciousness, which do not correspond completely to the seven principles.

† Commentary No. 1086

Prescription

Throughout history, spiritual leaders have offered prescriptions for spiritual development or advancement along certain lines. In many cases these prescriptions are well-founded, being based on discernable underlying principles, but applying only to those who are properly suited. Yet there are a number of problems associated with prescriptiveness.

A prescription is defined as authoritative rules or directions. A prescription often implies (or may be perceived as implying (presumed)) authority. A prescription often implies some intent to impose (or may be perceived so). A prescription often implies some sense of exclusiveness and/or rightness and/or

uniqueness (without necessarily an appreciation for its context). And people tend to react to prescriptions either passively (accepting a prescription as authoritative) or reactively (not accepting a prescription merely because it implies something authoritative). Passive acceptance is a matter of lack of self-development (coherence at the personality level). Reactive non-acceptance is largely a matter of egoism (a personality that is too strong to be responsive to higher influence). The word "should" should be considered in the context of encouragement and suggestion for consideration rather than a matter of (presumed) authority or imposition.

There are discernable rules or directions for spiritual development and advancement, and it does not really matter where and how those rules are discerned or recognized. The validity of the rules (in context) does not rely on external authority. The rules are recognizable in context, and with sensible (non-passive and non-egoistic) consideration the spiritual student can recognize the extent to which these rules are applicable. There is no need for authority. The spiritual student should be intelligent enough to consider for himself or herself the need, the context, the applicability, the appropriateness, etc. of any prescription. The problem in reactive non-acceptance is self-centeredness (egoism), the tendency of the personality to resist any spiritual process that appears to undermine its (artificial) position. Thus people tend to resist prescription, not on the basis of its inapplicability but for whatever reasons a person can contrive in order to avoid any real commitment to spiritual development and unfoldment.

As the spiritual student gradually overcomes the limitations of personality (materialism) (egoism), the student begins to be able to discern the various rules in the context of the path (the rules of the path are only really applicable to those who are committed to the path at some level). Then the student is able to commit to those aspects that are understood and recognized and having value. The encouragement may come through some teacher or through some teaching (prescriptive or otherwise), but the decision remains one's own (except that it is really the soul that make a commitment to the path, and the personality can only make a commitment to cooperate with the soul in that process).

The spiritual student is encouraged to consider the path (way) (Tao) and the various approaches to the path, and then to recognize which approach seems

best given the student's position and needs (character, consciousness, temperament, and values). The intelligent student should not rely on others' testimony or prescription, though such testimony and encouragement may be meaningful, nor should the student rely on the personality strength (ego) (intellect), though there may be considerable insight there, but rather the student should seek understanding and guidance through reliance upon the (inner) Self.

† Commentary No. 1087

Acceptance

One of the problems of life in the lower worlds of human incarnation is the place of acceptance. Throughout much of human evolution in consciousness the human being is acted upon primarily by external forces (evoked indirectly through one's own actions (karma) (thoughts, feelings, behavior)) which encourage the person to be actively involved in externalized experience. The resulting activity (interactions with the flow of life) then engenders further experience, and through this almost never-ending (recurring) cycle one progresses in consciousness as experience is assimilated into knowledge (understanding) (wisdom).

But as the student approaches the spiritual path, and throughout the student's passage along the path, and beyond, the student is driven increasingly by internal forces. The student learns to accept outer circumstances as a reflection of inner condition in consciousness (and an indication of karmic consequences holding the intended lessons). Thus the student focuses on the inner condition and accepts whatever occurs in the outer world. The student is encouraged to be more circumspect with regard to entanglements, eventually living in accordance with the flow without any stress or conflict therewith. One can certainly continue to act or function in the world, in fact more and more effectively, but harmlessly and honestly, and with increasing subtlety.

The problem of acceptance is the problem of action (including inaction) versus non-action. If one simply responds, without contrivance, to circumstances (non-reactively and non-egoistically and non-instinctively (i.e., not at the personality-centered level)) then one is in accord with the flow (Tao) and there are no

complications inherent in that non-action. Complications may be inherent in the merited contemporary circumstances, but not by virtue of one's contemporary non-active responsiveness. But most people (and most spiritual students) are not wholly able to function so dispassionately, so comfortably. Most people have desires and naturally seek to fulfill those desires. Thus until the student fully and properly achieves desirelessness, the student must perforce interact more substantially with the flow. And any action or inaction is therefore inconsistent with the flow (in its higher, deeper sense). Only non-action (non-active, non-passive acceptance) is wholly consistent with the flow (few can distinguish between action and non-action).

The dilemma of desire is perplexing to many. If one performs action (creatively) in order to bring about the desired conditions or circumstances, then one is not living in accord with the flow in the higher, deeper, more noble sense. Yet if one does not perform action then the desired conditions or circumstances may not be realized. Because energy follows thought (feeling) (behavior), every action or inaction is creative in the personal sense (while non-action is creative in the impersonal sense). And this action-ness creates entanglement. Yet, for the vast preponderance of humanity and even for the majority of spiritual students, this is exactly what is needed in order to progress (development in consciousness) (fulfillment of karma). One generally engages in meaningful service based on motive long before one can simply serve effectively without motive (other than the non-motive of being drawn to live in accord with the flow).

The solution, for those who can embrace it, is to realize that the flow carries all that is needed, without calling for action or inaction, that any action simply complicates one's life in the lower worlds. In letting go of desires and other attachments, freedom and fulfillment is realized.

Self-Acceptance

A major dimension of acceptance is self-acceptance. Much of the preliminary practice (practical philosophy) (psychology) of the spiritual path involves improving the lower self (personality), through purification, refinement, cultivation, non-cultivation, etc. And much of the historical (and even current) religious conditioning tends unfortunately toward disparagement of the lower self and undermining of self-esteem. The purpose of this focus is to encourage unfolding consciousness while precluding egoism, or at least while minimizing egoism so that the ego can be eventually and properly transcended. Only through refinement in consciousness can the student become more receptive and responsive to the higher Self.

While this focus on refinement of personality and preclusion of ego has considerable value in the context of the spiritual path, it necessarily presumes that one has properly developed the personality (ego) (mind) to the point where it can (potentially) serve as an effective instrument of the higher Self. What is generally needed is a balance that includes both a healthy measure of self-respect and a not inconsiderable measure of humility. Self-acceptance is an important ingredient in achieving this balance. If one attempts conscious refinement prematurely, then the "ego" is not secure enough with its own self-acceptance (acceptance of its own artificial nature) to be collaborative. Thus the ego tends to inhibit any attempts at refinement or preclusion (tempering of the ego nature).

One needs to be honest about one's condition in consciousness, i.e., with regard to one's strengths and one's weaknesses, one's talents and one's limitations. One needs then to accept oneself (lower self) as the product of action (thoughts, feelings, behavior) (experience), and build intelligently upon that foundation, gradually replacing weaknesses with strengths, without denying the actuality (reality) of one's condition in consciousness. If one reacts to one's condition, e.g., through self-disparagement, then one inhibits growth. On the other hand, if one denies the reality of one's condition, e.g., through self-delusion (ego), then one also inhibits growth, but in more subtle ways. As one identifies more with the higher Self and less with the lower, the lower can be placed in perspective,

as an instrument worthy of facilitating experience and expression, and eventually as an instrument able to embrace (manifest) the higher quality of the inner Self.

Self-disparagement, self-hatred, non-self-acceptance, are all ways by which the ego inhibits the growth and progression in consciousness that is otherwise intended (conceit, self-aggrandizement, etc. are similarly inhibiting). The ego naturally feels threatened by any focus on spiritual experience and finds ways to undermine the process, generally either through cultivation of feeling good or through cultivation of feeling bad. To the ego it doesn't really matter which tack is taken, as either contributes to the self-absorption (in the lower sense) that keeps the person asleep (i.e., preventing any meaningful awareness).

But with healthy self-acceptance (without accompanying egoism), the ego accepts its place (which is necessarily subordinate) and is tempered by higher impression. Without egoism, without the artificial strength of personality, one can then proceed more properly along the way. But without having developed the personality in the first place, the proper strength and facility of personality are not really available. Thus the student should exercise caution, seeking the balance of personality (self-acceptance) and focus on that which is infinitely greater and more noble (the soul or higher Self of atma-buddhi-manas).

† Commentary No. 1089

The Fallacy of Conceit

Conceit is defined as excessive appreciation of one's own worth or virtue, in the sense of being personality-centered. The nature of the personality (ego) is conceit, in some cases minor, in some cases moderate, in some cases major. The basis of conceit is the false belief that the personality (ego) is real, that the lower self has existence independent of underlying divine principle. As the personality is developed in the conditioned context (illusion) of external reality (materialism and egoism), it naturally develops ego (artificial self-ness) and views itself as an entity separate from other lives (without even the realization that life is something else altogether).

The personality certainly has considerable value, as an instrument of experience and expression. But the (artificial) waking-consciousness of the personality generally fails to realize that its perception of its own independence is illusory. The personality tends to view material things as possessions, and accomplishments as its own, when in fact material things are provided for all and the personality is merely a steward and (real) accomplishments are the work of higher forces. The personality is merely placed for these purposes (experience and expression). When the student places these things in proper perspective, then there is balance (moderation, self-respect, and humility). There is appreciation for the opportunities of life for experience and expression in the context of growth in consciousness and service to humanity (and all life).

But in the conditioned illusion of separate existence, in the illusion of only one life to live (i.e., without the context of karma and evolution in consciousness), in the illusion of self-determination in the lower sense, in the illusion of there being no underlying divine principle (regardless of specious self-protestations, e.g., many people who go to church and voice their allegiance to God do so insincerely (while believing in their own sincerity, their actions tend to the contrary)), the personality (ego) tends to appropriate things and serve as a law unto itself. The human being becomes relatively powerful as it develops, being able to evoke various forces and apply them to various (constructive or destructive) purposes. But these forces are not one's own, they are merely appropriated. And if they are appropriated wrongly (selfishly) (without appreciation for broader context), then appropriated forces tend to return to a person in the form of disease and limitation.

Thus much of humanity abuses the mineral and plant and animal kingdoms without appreciation for their proper roles. And many of humanity similarly abuse the human kingdom, through the illusion of self-serving activities (e.g., competition, ambition, materialism, separativeness). Crimes against mineral lives, plant lives, animal lives, and other human lives are all a matter of conceit (false belief). All of the kingdoms are inhabited by lifewaves that are evolving in consciousness. None are placed for the whim of human appropriation. All are placed in a larger context and serve a common (and higher) purpose (e.g., some plants are placed for food (and grow thereby), while no animals have ever been so placed).

The personality does not own anything nor does the personality achieve anything. Any sense of superiority is fallacious. The personality is owned by the higher Self in a broader context (God's purpose) (collective evolution in consciousness) than one's own individuality. All of life is one, and the (merely perceived) individuality on any level remains fully (actually) within the context of that greater oneness.

† Commentary No. 1090

Smoking

Much of the preliminary endeavors on the spiritual path involves gradual refinement of the physical, etheric, astral, and mental bodies. Each person (and each spiritual student) tends to progress as far as he or she can until certain limits are reached. At that point, the person (student) either transcends the limitation and proceeds on, or the person loses momentum or suffers gradual regression as inertial forces become dominant. The various habits and practices (limitations) may be rationalized or self-justified either way (to sustain the practice or to transcend it), but in the final analysis, it is a matter of what either actually facilitates spiritual growth or actually inhibits such growth.

One of the many limitations is the smoking of tobacco (or other substances) (which may also be compounded by addictive effects). Smoking is a habit or practice that is generally either discouraged or prohibited by virtually every legitimate occult school. The reason for this discouragement is simply a matter of facilitation of progress in the context of occult training, spiritual growth, etc. Smoking is detrimental to physical and etheric health, but in the context of the path, smoking reveals and sustains certain limitations that preclude much of the experience and development that is needed for progress. This is not to say that one who smokes has necessarily reached the limit of afforded (appropriate) experience and expression, but that at some stage of experience (development) smoking becomes a sufficient limitation that further progress is either inhibited or precluded. The problem is essentially one of coarseness, debilitation, and distraction.

Smoking tends to weaken the aura, reducing the vitality (reducing the circulation of vital energies), and reducing the sensitivity to higher impressions.

Smoke can be observed in the aura. It dulls the colors of the aura. It fills the aura with (etheric) particulate matter that is naturally (necessarily) coarser than would otherwise be the case. This leads to a coarser temperament than would otherwise be the case. This does not mean that a smoker cannot also be a very nice person, only that not-smoking, given that everything else is equal, facilitates the refinement of the physical and etheric bodies. The etheric body consists of matter on several different sub-planes. Smoke inhibits the preponderance of "matter" being on the higher sub-planes. Smoking is not non-spiritual. It is merely inhibiting and limiting. On the other hand, giving up smoking without the requisite basis of understanding may not be very constructive either. Usually there are adjustments in character, temperament, and values that must occur before the "change" will be effective (natural). And naturally the ego-self will oppose the change.

Some metaphysically-minded people (who smoke) might argue that smoking helps them remain "grounded" or that it has a stabilizing effect. This may be true. But, if so, it masks more serious problems. There is no doubt that people who smoke do so either because it feels good or because they want to for some other reason, consciously or unconsciously realized. But the spiritual student is challenged to do whatever facilitates spiritual growth, through elimination of whatever practices are substantially limiting (and are not otherwise necessary).

Of course each person has the right to choose his or her own practices in accordance with personal values. Anyone who is earnest in spiritual seeking, who realizes the benefits of not smoking, and who can, will generally and naturally undertake the change in practice (and go on to other, more subtle challenges).

The Basis of Human Nature

One of the prevalent excuses for self-centered human behavior is that it is, after all, only human nature (to be selfish, self-centered, materialistic, egoistic). But in fact it is only so in the sense that the lower aspect of the human being (personality) is formed of material substance and is generally enslaved thereby. It is also very much a function of unconscious acceptance (sometimes even conscious belief) of the animalistic notion that human beings are separate creatures and that each must look out for itself. Even when the intellect can appreciate the reality of collective consciousness (unity), the form continues to function as if it were a law unto itself.

The human being is a matter of consciousness. Human form is consciousness expressed through matter. As the form evolves it passes through various stages of development. The life (associated consciousness) thereby passes through the mineral, plant, and animal stages before becoming human. But the human form is predominantly an animal form, albeit more refined and more developed in a number of important ways. The so-called human nature derives primarily from the form, from the material substance, from the instincts and experiences of the passage through the animal kingdom, tempered to some extent from the subsequent human experience. But the real human nature is that of the inner Self (soul) which is not directly related to the form or to experience in the worlds of form.

Thus to be satisfied with the (lower) human condition is to identify with the form, with the (artificial) ego, and the lower nature. The spiritual student, however, cannot afford to be so satisfied. For the spiritual student there is an inner sense that there must be more to life than (lower) human experience and expression. There is a gradual realization of something higher, something deeper, something that is not the same thing as the personality (ego) (intellect), that also needs expression. But the ego (personality-centeredness) is inertial. It tends to undermine any identification with the higher by claiming all-encompassing integration (which is a noble concept, true in the higher sense, but generally not true for the ordinary condition of human consciousness). Or it

tends to masquerade as that higher, inner Self in order to deter the more meaningful identification.

There are many impediments to this inner connection with the true human nature. The impediments tend to dominate destructively for a person who is not integrated, as the physical body identifies with the material, the emotions simply seek sensual experience, and the intellect seeks self-satisfaction on mental levels. When the personality is integrated (i.e., after being somewhat and sufficiently purified, qualified, and refined) then the principal impediment is the ego. The ego is generally present prior to integration and may either hinder or facilitate integration, but it generally doesn't dominate until integration has been accomplished. But even then, human nature is generally a matter of being absorbed in materialism, in the senses, in ego.

Identifying with human nature in this lower sense is a matter of passive absorption, i.e., being asleep. Identification may be conscious, but is generally unconscious. Going-with-the-flow in this context means giving in (yielding) (passively) to the form (senses) (ego) and allowing experience and expression on those levels to dominate (compared with more deliberate growth in consciousness). So, yes, "being human" is only natural. But it is also largely atavistic. But as people mature in consciousness (as human nature is refined), the human nature becomes less of an impediment and the inner Self begins to express itself. And that higher expression is simply more real.

† Commentary No. 1092

Surrender

One of the prerequisites of (true) (non-casual) mystical experience is the surrender of one's ego, the subordination of one's own will and acceptance of the qualification of one's higher, deeper, more noble Self. The three main difficulties are (1) the tremendous reluctance (impedance) of the ego, (2) the underlying tendencies (attachments) of the personality, and (3) the widespread tendency to deceive oneself by allowing the ego to masquerade as the higher Self while one believes one is approaching that higher Self.

The ego (personality) (mind) serves a purpose in facilitating experience and expression, but it is fundamentally an artificial and self-serving entity. In order to sustain its (artificial) existence and its (false) sense of importance (pre-eminence), the ego contrives to dominate the waking experience and expression, albeit through subversion and more subtle means. The ego seeks to create and sustain attachments. The ego seeks to experience and express itself in ways that sustain its hold on consciousness. It is not that the ego is “against” evolution in consciousness. It is just that, generally, the ego is more concerned with self-preservation than it is with growth in consciousness. Thus while the ego facilitates experience and expression at the personality level, it also tends to impede real growth in consciousness, so that most “growth” occurs between lives as the experience of a lifetime is assimilated without the hindering presence of ego.

Attachments are another great hindrance. Life in the lower worlds tends to be dominated by attachments and involvements. Most people are wholly absorbed (asleep) in personality experience and expression and therefore almost completely unresponsive to higher impression. This absorption is apparently necessary for much of the preliminary experience and expression, but spiritual growth occurs to the extent that one is not so absorbed in mundane, personal affairs. The spiritual student must first awaken to a large extent, overcoming his or her absorption, transcending the bulk of egoism, before the student can even begin to intelligently surrender. Yet absorption in sense experience and/or various other forms of mundane (material) (emotional) (intellectual) absorption remains an unconscious addiction for the bulk of humanity. But letting go, overcoming attachments (addictions) is very difficult. Proper detachment (freedom from attachment) is a very substantial achievement.

But those who seek to overcome these hindrances (ego, attachments) usually pass through various stages of self-deception in the process. The will to transcend these limitations tends to evoke the subtle-but-undermining presence of ego. The ego gets “involved” in the process, and offers great encouragement while sincerely undermining one’s accomplishments. The ego is not trying to undermine anything. The ego is just trying to sustain itself. Yet success ultimately comes as the ego is tempered to the point where it is forced to collaborate, in subordination to the greater Self.

A solution is the actual cultivation and exercise of the will to surrender, completely, without reservation, qualification, caveat, or expectation. But that surrender must be to one's Self and complete, and not to any external person or entity. In this sense (surrender), God lives within, not without. People do not represent God's presence, except in themselves. The spiritual student is encouraged to participate in worthwhile external activities, but without surrendering to any person, persons, groups, or organizations. Instead, the spiritual student is encouraged to cultivate the egolessness that allows complete (inner) surrender (and (complete) outer qualification).

† Commentary No. 1093

Projection

One of the various hindrances to realization (growth in consciousness) is the tendency of the personality to project itself and its values into the communication process and into the perception process. Projection into communication hinders understanding. Projection into perception hinders understanding even more substantially.

Projection into communication is generally a matter of unconscious presumption (bias). Many people tend to unconsciously presume that another person has the same experience and understanding as their own, so they tend to further presume that a person understands when indeed the experience and understanding may be substantially different. But in (unconsciously) presuming understanding, the lack of understanding is compounded. Similarly, many people tend to generalize from their own experience and project it, unconsciously, onto others. Another aspect (difficulty) is that many people presume, consciously or otherwise, that their own understanding of something is "correct" and/or that the same understanding should be obvious to others.

The solution to this particular problem is to consciously appreciate the diversity of experience and values that various people have, to accept as fact, and without judging, that other people have different experience and different consciousness and therefore tend to understand in different ways. In respecting other people and their backgrounds, one can be more objective in communication and through

honest feedback discern the extent to which there is a similar understanding. In not presuming that one's own understanding is necessarily correct, one can learn through experience with other people and their respective understanding. In the final analysis, it is not what a person learns or understands and assimilates that matters, it is the collective understanding based upon diverse experience within each race (culture) (period). Or in other words, each (diverse) experience contributes to the collective consciousness. That collective (unconscious) consciousness (understanding) is available, indirectly and in varying degrees and on various levels (e.g., through instinct, intellect, and intuition), to everyone.

Projection into perception is a relatively more subtle, relatively more complicated, and relatively more serious problem. Many people tend to unconsciously interpret sense impressions in accordance with their own experience, disposition, values, etc. People tend to see what they want to see and hear what they want to hear. This lack of objectivity compounds and greatly hinders the process of perception and the process of assimilation of information received through perception. Through proper training and the discipline of spiritual practice, one gradually tempers these tendencies (biases) and perception becomes more objective. One learns to be detached from the senses, merely observing (outer) impressions and relying more on inner senses (intuition) for understanding.

It is all a matter of adherence to truth. If the student looks for the truth, without expectations or other forms of bias, then the student is able to perceive the truth to the extent that he or she is capable. If assumptions are not made, or if in making assumptions there is a fully conscious realization of the fact of making assumptions and what they are, the perception becomes a more objective process. If beliefs are not also opinions, i.e., if one is not attached to one's conditioning (and if one is not dependent on the intellect), then it is possible to perceive and understand and assimilate matters more clearly. Likewise communication.

Karmic Notions

There are a number of popular notions regarding karma that lead to some misunderstanding of its nature. Among these are the notion that there are no underlying lessons, the notion that karma is equivalent to circumstances, and the notion that karma can be circumvented. There is some element of truth and some element of not-truth in each of these notions.

Life (manifestation) proceeds with a balance of forces. There are underlying evolutionary forces (pressures) and there are underlying inertial forces that keep those evolutionary forces properly directed and tempered. Action (or reaction) on any level enters (contributes to) the karmic equation and evokes an appropriate response. Everything in this world is conditioned or qualified by underlying purpose (evolution in consciousness in the context of a broad scheme of lives within lives). Karma is one of the most fundamental forces of manifestation and contributes directly to evolution in consciousness. In that sense, it is one of the forces of evolution.

The whole purpose of karma (karmic force) is to restore the balance in such a way that evolution in consciousness is encouraged. Evolution is not “forced” directly, but indirectly through cultivation and conditioning. This allows sufficient flexibility in manifestation to evoke constructive but unanticipated changes. Karma embraces the whole cause and effect relationship, with emphasis on growth in consciousness, i.e., facilitating the learning of whatever lessons are intended for this lifetime. Action on physical, emotional, and/or mental levels is causative. Action may facilitate the balance (equilibrium) of forces or not, as the case may be. If the balance is disturbed, then a cause and effect chain or relationship is introduced into the karmic equation that evokes learning opportunities for all concerned.

Karma is fulfilled as the intended lessons are learned or as the intended adjustments are made, however consciously or unconsciously. Many people who “embrace” karma do so while unconsciously believing there are no intended or underlying lessons, i.e., by focusing on the circumstances rather than the opportunities for growth, growth is undermined, and the opportunity for growth

is neglected, meaning that there is no restoration of balance, meaning, further, that as karma remains unfulfilled the pressure for fulfillment increases. Karma is equivalent to circumstances only in the sense that circumstances are all evoked through karmic process (force) (action and consequence with underlying purpose (wisdom)). Thus karma is not really equivalent to circumstances because karma is broader than just circumstances taken at apparent value.

Karma cannot be circumvented. Karma can be changed through action and adjustment in consciousness. Karma can in some instances be delayed or deferred. But all of the karmic force that is applicable in any life must eventually be faced and resolved. Circumstances are consequences of the whole cause and effect relationship in the context of evolution in consciousness. One can deal with circumstances. One can even transcend circumstances. But one cannot circumvent the karmic dimension of circumstances. One can alleviate the effects without dealing with or resolving the cause (and its implied lesson), but the cause will remain, and grow in pressure (stress) (imbalance) until it is resolved and the lesson learned. In this sense, karma is incontrovertible and immutable. Freedom comes through intelligent awareness of karmic consequences, through a balancing or resolution (fulfillment) of karma in reaching equilibrium. But this freedom is not, however, a passive state. It is merely a non-active state, one that relates to karma in more subtle ways.

† Commentary No. 1095

Intelligence 2

Conventional notions of intelligence are based predominantly on conventional (worldly, personality-centered) values and are naturally biased toward good worldly instincts, practical knowledge, intellectual capacity, and worldly accomplishments, i.e., "success" in the worldly (egoistic) sense, without much regard for actual awareness, clarity (correctness) of perception, depth of understanding, wisdom, etc.

The world (ordinary, worldly consciousness) generally values strength of personality and superficial accomplishments. Therefore conventional notions of intelligence promote these values. The world generally values materialism and

therefore promotes those abilities and talents that facilitate (personal) growth in the material or worldly sense (in terms of material possessions, worldly experience, intellectual knowledge, power, status, etc.). The world tends to value fame and fortune. While these things may be important or relevant at some stage of growth in consciousness (i.e., in developing the personality as an instrument of expression), they have not so much value in the longer view (sustained growth in consciousness (beyond materialism, beyond personality-centeredness)).

More properly, intelligence does not rely so much on instinct or intellect, but rather on intuition. It does not rely so much on conscious experience or knowledge attained or capacity for worldly accomplishments, but, rather, it relies on understanding, realization, and wisdom. The intelligent person may or may not be educated, may or not be “accomplished” in any worldly or egoistic sense, but the truly intelligent person has awareness and understands, even if he or she does not understand how he or she understands. It is not a matter of reasoning. It is a matter of insight. It is a matter of being able to rely on the inner senses rather than on outer abilities, on wisdom from within rather than external knowledge. Thus the truly intelligent person exhibits wisdom through being, without pretentiousness, without calling attention to the outer self (personality).

Because true intelligence is at variance with conventional notions, it is not (and cannot be) measured by conventional methods. True intelligence is not worldly and can hardly be measured through any worldly means. The objective mind does not really have the basis for measuring (or even recognizing) true intelligence. Thus conventional intelligence tests are (naturally and necessarily) substantially biased toward conventional notions of intelligence. At more spiritual “levels” the measurement of intelligence has no meaning. For true intelligence is subjective and collective, rather than objective and individual. True intelligence is based on internals rather than externals. And the inner life is substantially collective, as the individual links with other souls (at inner levels and through inner means) and the individual becomes an expression of something deeper, more noble (and more intelligent) than the individual consciousness.

The real value in “intelligence” is what characteristics or qualities of intelligence (consciousness) can be carried forward with value in the next incarnation or with value beyond life in this world. Worldly-based intelligence only has significance in the world, and has relatively little value beyond. On the other hand, awareness (clarity of perception) (insight) (wisdom) are extremely valuable in the longer view. They have more permanence. They can be applied not only in the current incarnation and in the next lifetime, but in the subtle (higher) worlds as well.

† Commentary No. 1096

Personality Investment

During incarnation and even in the interval between lives, a “person” tends to invest time and energy and effort in developing various aspects of the personality as an instrument for experience and expression in the lower worlds. Although many “people” simply wander half-consciously through life (and through the after-life), others are more focused and more deliberate in their undertakings. Even so, many focused “people” invest a great deal of time and energy on aspects of personality having relatively little long-term value.

There are many evolutionary forces that condition or encourage various aspects of the human experience. Some of these forces encourage physical development and experience. Others encourage emotional or intellectual development and experience. It is largely a matter of a person’s consciousness (character, temperament, and values) determining the focus and priorities. Thus one can find “encouragement” in activities at any level, even if that tends to impede overall development (balance) (progress). Eventually (gradually), however, karma (consequences resulting from action (or inaction)) forces a person onward and upward, and the attachments of a particular focus or phase are overcome.

Two of the great distractions at the physical level are strength and beauty. Some people spent a great deal of time and effort developing physical strength well beyond their practical needs for experience and expression in the physical world. Some people likewise invest substantially in refining the appearance of the physical form in the attempt to embrace some notion of beauty. A particularly beautiful physical body, for example (based upon some cultural

standards of "beauty"), may indicate that that person has neglected development in other areas of the human nature (or the person may have been neglectful for a while and then gone on to broader developments). Some invest in the development of very particular talents (e.g., athletic, musical) (which may even have value). On emotional levels, some people invest very heavily in refining the ability to sense on emotional levels (and to a large extent thereby remain absorbed or entangled on those levels). Others invest substantially in intellectual development, even along rather specialized lines.

But in any case wherever energy is invested, that energy is not invested elsewhere. A great deal of time and energy can therefore be squandered in these various pursuits. A measure of time and energy of course should properly be invested in each aspect of the human development. The physical form needs to be healthy and reasonably strong in order to sustain life (experience and expression) in the lower worlds. For efficiency and effectiveness the body needs to be within some reasonable range of health and appearance. Thus most spiritually-minded people (karma permitting) are (deliberately) healthy and have a generally pleasant appearance, but are not overly developed physically and are not absorbed (overly-involved) in their own appearance. Likewise for emotional and mental development. The objective in this context is to have a healthy and responsive instrument for experience and expression on physical, emotional, and mental levels. Thus balance is relatively important, and the spiritual student cannot afford to over-invest in any area (nor can the student afford to neglect any area).

Yet as the student evolves in consciousness, the development at lower levels naturally reaches the healthy-effective state and requires only minimal attention to sustain that vitality. Which means the student can afford to place more attention on higher development (expression) (service).

Religion 2

Religion is the relationship of the human being to God. Yet God is conceived in various ways by some, perceived in various ways by others. The various religions of the world serve to bridge the gap in consciousness, to some extent, by offering relevant testimony and encouragement. While great distinctions can be made in the details of the various religions (e.g., through dogma and particularization of beliefs), the heart or inner essence of every God-centered religion is essentially the same.

Diversity of religion (religious experience and expression) is important (of value) because people are conditioned in diverse ways and people are “at” various levels or phases of the human experience and therefore have different conditioning, different needs, different propensities for believing (or perceiving) and different propensities for understanding. Thus most religions emerge from within a particular race or culture and spread according to the needs of the people encountered. Most religions begin with some noble experience (inspiration) and grow according to the character and quality of the people thus embraced. As religions grow they tend to lose their noble bearings to some extent, as the essential teachings (revelation) (inspiration) gets moderated (manipulated) by the sincere (and insincere) intentions of those deemed responsible (e.g., priesthood).

Religious beliefs tend to become crystallized (lose their connection to the original inspiration). Religious practice tends to become superficial, as the underlying message gets lost in cultural trends and interpretations. Many rituals become ends-in-themselves instead of remaining legitimate expressions of insight and understanding. The various teachings (beliefs) also tend to crystallize through reliance on authority, through attachment, instead of being allowed to be perceived through the inner senses. These are all very natural consequences, and a matter of human and cultural limitations. And yet there is (potentially) considerable encouragement conveyed even so, through each of the world’s legitimate (God-centered) religions.

Two of the problems of organized religion are presumed authority and exclusivity, the sense of there being some authority or that specific beliefs (membership) (or actions) are necessary for salvation. In fact, all proper religions offer salvation (spiritual encouragement) (means for growth in consciousness), though such (salvation) is not exclusively the realm of organized religion. The key to proper religious experience, and the way in which all proper religions are connected, is the underlying mystical tradition which is common to all proper religious and spiritual practice. If one delves deeply enough and properly, into each religion, one finds the inspiration and encouragement of the God within (by whatever name is convenient, God-Self, Christ, Allah, etc.). The inner practices and methods of each religion are essentially the same because they have the same basis, the same source. Only their application for broader participation will exhibit substantial variations as the inner practices are adapted for the particular culture or context.

But within each religion, at the core of religious spirituality, is the God-Self or soul that is one with God and one every other soul (eventually to the point of transcending other-ness). Within each person, once the ego is transcended, is the true authority. Within each person is the inclusiveness that banishes every semblance of external authority and exclusiveness and separateness. Within each person is the relationship of the human being to God.

† Commentary No. 1098

Alcohol 1

Another of the various limitations that ultimately inhibit growth in consciousness is the practice of drinking alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor, anything having any measure of alcoholic content). Drinking (alcohol) is not a matter of coarseness, but a matter of integration. Drinking inhibits and ultimately actually precludes the proper integration of the personality into a coherent instrument.

There are health and safety issues associated with drinking, and there is no doubt that drinking facilitates relaxation. But there are other, more natural, less harmful means to accomplish relaxation without the detrimental effects of

drinking alcohol. This is not to say that drinkers cannot or do not develop or make progress by virtue of their experience and expression in the lower worlds. It is to say that at some point, as opportunities are fulfilled, drinking becomes a limiting factor. One simply cannot achieve a proper (non-temporary) integrated state until one transcends the need for or practice of drinking alcohol. That most people do not need an integrated state is beside the point. The spiritual student needs to achieve an integrated personality. The spiritual student seeks union with the higher Self, and a lack of proper integration precludes the possibility of alignment.

Drinking loosens the connections between the various lower bodies (physical, etheric, astral (emotional), and mental). A person may seem to be integrated, but in the occult sense of the term, of the four lower bodies being integrated by a single personality ray, drinking precludes integration. And integration is a prerequisite for alignment of soul and personality. It doesn't mean that a drinker cannot be sensitive or spiritual; many are. It just means that drinking is a substantial and inhibiting limitation to the progress that is implied by the spiritual path. Some say that an occasional drink cannot hurt, yet in fact each drink undermines whatever progress has otherwise been made toward integration.

In order for a person (spiritual student) to achieve the integrated state, there must be a sustained practice of refinement and gradual integration of the lower forces (physical, etheric, emotional (astral), and mental (intellectual)). A number of diverse but related accomplishments (adjustments) are required. But this also requires self-control, as the personality ray gradually dominates (integrates) (enfolds) the rays as expressed through the various components. Drinking inhibits the required coherence. Drinking also damages and weakens (loosens) the aura to the extent that the person remains somewhat-to-substantially (depending on other factors and circumstances) vulnerable to external forces (mainly on astral levels).

Many aspirants and spiritually-minded people drink (or smoke) and accomplish a great deal along spiritual lines before they reach the implied limitations of these practices. Some then wonder why progress has slowed or why other limitations (e.g., habits in temperament) are so difficult to overcome. Yet, in every legitimate esoteric school the student is required (at some stage) to

permanently forgo both smoking and drinking (and eventually forgo consumption of flesh foods as well). It is not merely a matter of discipline. It is also a matter of health and energy (and facilitation beyond merely health and energy). But there is also a matter of freedom of choice. The committed student exercises that freedom of choice and chooses to eliminate these practices in order to more effectively embrace the path. It is simply a matter of personal values. And commitment.

† Commentary No. 1099

Superiority

There are at least two dimensions to this notion of superiority, one being actual superiority and the other being perception of superiority. Actual superiority is a matter of delusion. There is no actual superiority. Perception of superiority is a matter of conceit.

Superiority is a function of glamour, of misplaced ego, of not understanding the reality of God in manifestation. It manifests through the misguided sense (belief) (practice, or action based on the belief) of the human being being superior to other, "sub-human" species (and the presumed rights of the "superior" species to appropriate whatever is wanted, even to the detriment of the "sub-human" species), of a human being being superior to another human being by virtue of race, culture, nationality, education, intelligence, etc., of a human being being superior by virtue of fame or fortune, of a human being being superior by virtue of spiritual practice (not smoking, not drinking, not using drugs, not eating flesh foods, etc.).

Regarding the so-called sub-human species (inhabitants of the animal, plant, and mineral kingdoms), humanity is only "superior" in superficial ways. Lifewaves are equal, even though one necessarily precedes another in the succession of lifewaves in manifestation. The human being is different than the animal. The human being is more developed in some ways, the animal more so in other ways. Human consciousness may be "higher" but is not necessarily superior. For there is a great deal of "value" in each lifewave that is not readily apparent based on superficial observations. Thus the collective soul of the animal kingdom is no less significant, no less contributive, than the collection of

souls that is humanity. The human being needs to transcend the residue of conditioning acquired through prior experience (in the then-animal kingdom), but that is predominantly a matter of calling (the evolutionary plan). The manifestation of a lifewave is always superficial and partial. The reality of each lifewave vastly exceeds the appearance.

Similarly, "superiority" based on race, religion, culture, nationality, education, intelligence, etc. is merely superficial. Each segment of humanity contributes in its own way. And every human being is essentially and fundamentally equal (not identical, but equal in value, and equal at the soul level). Qualities are developed and expressed at every "level" of human experience. Each contributes to the whole. Those who exhibit certain "accomplishments" should not be compared to those who have apparently not yet developed those characteristics or attributes, however intended. For life in this world is an arena for learning, and many who have accomplished a great deal do not exhibit in any given lifetime all of the quality and character that has been achieved as a whole. Personalities are merely partial expressions of the underlying (real) life.

Even in quality of consciousness there is no matter of superiority even though one may be more or less "refined" than another. Differences (even accomplishments) simply do not constitute superiority. Thus one who smokes and drinks and eats flesh but who is kind and light-hearted may be more spiritually-minded (yet limited by these habits) than one who is merely (artificially) non-smoking, non-drinking, and vegetarian. Yet making such judgments is fallacious (and exercising judgment-of-others is a spiritually harmful and wrongful practice). Making judgments based on appearances is even more so (for one simply does not perceive or understand the whole truth of anything). Feeling "superior" based on real or superficial accomplishments is simply specious.

Truth and Wholeness

One of the problems with truth is that the human being can rarely (if ever) discern the whole truth of anything. Truth tends to be broader than the human ability to apprehend, in part because the human mind is so limited in both its experience and in its ability to accurately and reasonably interpret what is perceived, in part because there is simply far more depth and breadth to reality (wholeness) than anyone can fully appreciate.

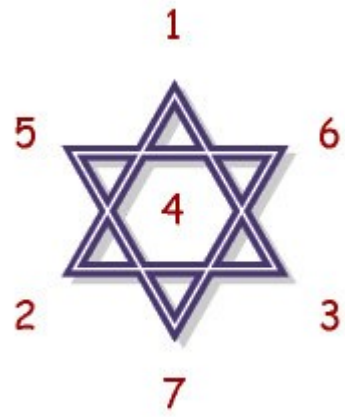
Virtually all of the human experience thus far leads to conditioning of the personality (emotional and mental capacity) such that all of both external and internal experience is perceived largely superficially and interpreted accordingly. People tend to understand to the extent of their own conditioning, the extent of their first-and second-hand experience, the training of their intellect (mental capacity), and the largely unconscious application of bias and prejudice (however sincerely). All of this contributes to fundamental limitations in the embrace of truth. Truth perceived and understood is necessarily partial and limited in both depth and breadth.

Even where a person listens carefully and sees clearly and has a largely objective mind, there are still limitations to be faced. Many of these limitations can be transcended where the student is able to rely primarily on intuition, but even where intuition is clear, there are limitations in the ability of the mind to objectively understand the intuitive message. Thus a truth may feel “right” even without conscious or objective understanding. But the student should not presume to have complete or whole understanding of anything. For that presumption inhibits corrective understanding and inhibits further (broader, deeper) understanding.

Most people do not listen carefully. They hear what they want to hear. And most people do not see clearly. They see what they want to see. And most people do not think objectively (without substantive bias or prejudice) and logically, because there are usually assumptions made based upon experience (and conditioning) without even the realization that assumptions have been made (and that therefore any conclusions should be considered conditional

rather than factual). Few people undertake to consider the role of their own conscious or unconscious motives or intentions, which further complicate matters. Thus errors in thinking, compounded by other factors (experience and conditioning), lead to beliefs based upon assumptions and distortions of the truth. Facts are confused with assumptions. Conclusions are deemed absolute instead of more realistically being deemed conditional or tentative (allowing additional information or knowledge to be acquired and applied, thereby contributing to understanding). And the problem is compounded where a person takes action based upon this (necessarily) superficial understanding of what is true.

The solution to these difficulties is to gradually cultivate objectivity, to realize there are inherent limitations in thinking and perceiving and therefore in understanding, to understand that one is necessarily making assumptions based on limited experience, to refuse the too-human tendency to judge (with or without first-hand knowledge or experience (for either way there are limitations)), to rely on the intuition rather than the intellect, to accept any truth as conditional and tentative, thus allowing growth in depth and breadth, to be conscious in (of) making assumptions, etc. The student eventually reaches the stage of growth wherein (broad) understanding is valued over knowledge, and ultimately where (depth of) wisdom is valued over understanding. In wisdom there is never any need to judge. In wisdom is wholeness.



Index I

Absolute, The	6
Acceptance	144
Anger	87
Aspects of Consciousness	67
Baconian Prejudice	139
Basis of Human Nature, The	151
Basis of Importance, The	59
Centeredness and Polarization 1	96
Centeredness and Polarization 2	97
Channeling	124
Community	34
Connectedness	106
Cosmic Law	9
Dark Night of the Soul 1, The	41
Dark Night of the Soul 2, The	42
Dark Night of the Soul 3, The	44
Dark Night of the Soul 4, The	46
Dharma	36
Distinctions	94
Drinking	162
Ego 1, The	64
Egoism	66
Emotional Mind, The	109
Evolution	7
Evolutionary Impulse	11
External Haunting	127
Fallacy of Conceit, The	147
Feng Shui 1	134
Feng Shui 2	136
Feng Shui 3	137
Flattery and Detraction	86
Flattery and Praise	79
Gender-Neutral Language	17
Government	19
Gullibility 1	121
Gullibility 2	122

Index 2

Having, Doing, and Being	47
Head and Heart-Centeredness, The	89
Health and Healing	81
Heart and Head-Centeredness, The	91
Human Constitution 1	61
Human Constitution 2	62
Human Evolution	21
Human Nature	82
Importance 2	57
Initiation	22
Intelligence 2	157
Interior Silence	112
Internal Haunting	129
Justice, Law, and Truth	111
Kaivalya Pada 1	31
Kaivalya Pada 2	32
Kaivalya Pada 3	37
Kaivalya Pada 4	39
Karmic and Personal Forces	27
Karmic Notions	156
Manifestation and Seven Planes	4
Mystical Experience 1	114
Mystical Experience 2	116
Mystical Experience 3	117
Mystical Experience 4	119
New Age Movement, The	102
Noble Self, The	101
Otherworldliness 1	131
Otherworldliness 2	132
Path of Initiation, The	24
Perception and Truth 1	54
Perception and Truth 2	56
Personality Investment	159
Physical Plane, The	12
Precursory Effort	29
Prescription	142

Index 3

Progressive and Inertial Forces	26
Projection	154
Prosperity	104
Purpose	2
Realism and Denial	99
Regeneration	126
Religion 2	161
Repression	77
Self and Not-Self	72
Self-Acceptance	146
Semantic Conditioning	1
Seven-Fold Human Constitution	141
Smoking	149
Speciousness	84
Spiritual Absorption 1	74
Spiritual Absorption 2	76
Spiritual Group, The	49
Spiritual Groups 1	51
Spiritual Groups 2	52
Superiority	164
Surrender	152
Tempering the Emotions	107
Titles and Credentials	71
Truth and Wholeness	166
Types of Consciousness	69
Vibhuti Pada 7	14
Vibhuti Pada 8	16
Zeitgeist	92

