

The Upper Triad Material

Commentaries XII

Edited by Peter Hamilton

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The Upper Triad Material

Commentaries XII

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

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The Full List of Upper Triad Books:

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 XII was written by Upper Triad staff members.

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

Additional Caveat

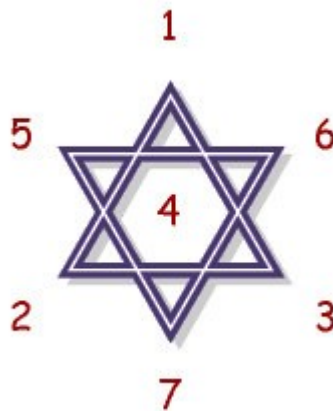
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There is a place, deep within the heart, where we touch God, and where God touches us, where human hearts achieve communion, with God, and with one another, there being no difference, no space between us.

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

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



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The Ego 2

Much of the course of human experience and expression has been accomplished through preliminary, almost unconscious development on physical and emotional (instinctual) levels. As one passes beyond the instinctive levels into the realm of the human ego, the human being becomes more conscious of his or her experience, and the ego naturally emerges as a factor in consciousness. Yet the ego remains rooted in the material aspect of the physical, etheric, astral (emotional), and mental (intellectual) realms.

The first phase of the ego is marked by development as the ego emerges into activity. Although necessary, the ego is an artificial entity, unconsciously created within the personality in response to the illusion of separateness and the unfolding of the waking-consciousness (focus of lower (personality) consciousness). A person naturally identifies with the personality, with the waking-consciousness, and with the ego, without making distinctions between these three things, and without realizing that the true human being is something else altogether (merely utilizing these lower means as instruments for experience and expression).

Ego development is important in the sense that it marks and facilitates the beginning of the active phase of learning through experience. Experience on instinctive levels is largely unconscious and passive. With the emergence of ego the pace and breadth of learning increases substantially. It is the ego that makes the personality instrument coherent and able to function in the lower worlds (although conscious, from the higher (soul) perspective, a person developing and functioning at the ego level is wholly asleep). Thus ego development is largely mechanical, active yet governed largely by external forces and associated opportunities. As the ego develops there comes a need for self-confidence, for self-esteem, for coherence as a personality. These are all preliminary to actual personality integration. But this development, overcoming insecurities, increasing the strength of personality through ego development, are essential, at this phase.

The second phase of the ego is marked more by expression than by development, though development continues. Through experience and expression, the person is able to grow substantially (more so by virtue of there being a coherent personality). And eventually the personality becomes fully integrated and a coherent whole. But at first, ego expression is characterized by selfish, (necessarily) self-centered expression, through ambition, through achievements, through accomplishments. Later on ego expression becomes less selfish, but remains predominantly self-centered, but with a more humanitarian (and eventually spiritual) focus.

The third phase of the ego is marked by ego transcendence, as the needed experience and expression at the ego level is fulfilled (satisfied) and the inner forces (energies) begin to manifest. During this last phase, the ego is recognized for the artificial entity that it is, the focus of consciousness turns inward toward the soul (higher Self), a distinction is realized between these two levels, and the person (waking-consciousness) begins to identify more with the higher (inner) (real) aspect than the lower (outer) (superficial) (artificial). Through this course, the ego is necessarily tempered and transcended, but not destroyed. The ego becomes responsive and subservient to the higher Self (although through inertia the resistance of the ego becomes more subtle). But the shift in identification is substantial. And with the transcendence of the ego, it becomes possible to reach (true) wholeness.

† Commentary No. 1102

Sensitivity and the Ego

Though the ego necessarily dominates experience and expression during the period of preparatory work, once the student has embarked upon the spiritual path, the ego must necessarily be tempered and eventually transcended. As this occurs, the natural, inner sensitivity unfolds and the student is able then to be more aware, from a higher, deeper, nobler place in consciousness, and express energies of a more subtle (meaningful) nature.

In the meantime, the ego tends to substantially mask that sensitivity, not through contrivance (which is another problem entirely), but by virtue of its presence. This is not the sensitivity of the (reactive) (insecure) personality but

the sensitivity of the (non-reactive) (secure) higher Self expressed through a refined and responsive personality. This (higher) sensitivity brings a gradually deepening awareness of the underlying principles (forces) (energies) (relationships) and insight that is far beyond the ability of the personality (ego) (intellect). But that higher sensitivity and associated awareness and insight and expression is not apparent to the extent of the presence of ego (what seems to be).

The presence of ego, though quite necessary during the precursory stages of human evolution in consciousness, during the latter stages constitutes “noise” that masks the higher impressions, preventing them from registering in the waking-consciousness (conscious awareness) of the student. Whenever the ego is present (whenever the mind is “active”) the inner (higher) sensitivity is precluded. Yet that higher sensitivity is essential to ego-transcendence, so the student learns gradually to manage the activeness of the ego, first by distinguishing ego (not-self) from Self, then by actively listening to the Self (not listening to the voice (presence) of the ego) through meditation (and true (non-thinking) contemplation). When the mind (personality) (ego) (intellect) is quiescent, the inner voice (higher perception) (sensitivity) (awareness) (insight) is allowed to manifest unimpeded.

In meditation this is not so difficult (in principle), though it requires considerable patience (persistence) (effort) over a period of time (several lifetimes). Outside of meditation proper this is not so easy. Thus one of the objectives is to gradually and naturally extend the meditative state, or at least much of the character and temperament associated with the meditative state as possible, to the normal activities of life in the lower worlds. Thus the student aspires to function in the lower worlds while retaining the inner connection and associated sensitivity. This is exceedingly difficult, but not ultimately impossible (indeed, it is ultimately necessary). What generally happens is that the person (personality) (waking-consciousness) becomes absorbed in outer experience (the senses) (thinking) (personality-centeredness) and the inner connection is lost (in effect). Thus the focus of attention becomes the achievement of the non-absorbed state, remaining awake in the sense of self-remembering, while all the natural forces of the world, including the ego, conspire to draw the student (further) into absorption.

The ego is an artificial entity (aspect of consciousness), but quite powerful. For the spiritual student the presence of ego is not shunned, but politely not engaged. Through cultivated (active) indifference to the presence of ego (and all that the ego represents), the power and potency of the ego as an independent (artificial) aspect of consciousness is reduced and eventually eliminated (transcended). In the words of Wei Wu Wei, "And I am the presence of the absence of all that seems to be."

† Commentary No. 1103

Exuberance

Exuberance is defined as the state of being joyously unrestrained and enthusiastic, of being extremely inflated or profuse. Profusion implies extravagance, while exuberance implies marked vitality or vigor. However positive it may be, exuberance is a decidedly personality-centered experience and indicative of a strong personality.

There is of course nothing wrong with being exuberant (nor is there anything wrong with being personality-centered or having a strong personality). For those who live predominantly in the mundane world, a strong personality is essential. But for those who live predominantly in the real (inner) world, a strong (independently active) personality is a distinct liability (as also a "weak" or passive personality would be a distinct liability). Exuberance tends to be a positive quality, indicative of etheric and emotional vitality, of enthusiasm for life in the lower worlds. But for the spiritual student there are different factors and considerations than are more generally applicable. For the spiritual student, exuberance implies (symptomatically) emotional polarization and a lack of an integrated personality. The spiritual student seeks to become mentally or intuitively polarized, and in transcending the emotional polarization it becomes possible to integrate the personality. Exuberance would tend to undermine that effort.

Exuberance indicates that the emotional body is functioning more or less independently of the personality as a whole (which of course does not really exist in the case of a non-integrated person (in such case the "personality" is a loose collection of physical, etheric, emotional, and intellectual components)).

In the non-integrated personality, the emotions may be reactive to physical or mental experience (stimuli), but are not generally responsive to the tempering influence of the personality as an integrated whole nor to the more subtle influence of the higher Self. That more subtle influence cannot even be manifested directly until the personality is properly and fully integrated and that integrated personality becomes responsive to the qualification (presence) of the higher Self.

Exuberance also implies that a person is absorbed in the senses (sense perception), in sense experience and expression, which of course is the case for the vast majority of humanity, who need to be so absorbed in order to experience and express themselves appropriately. But the spiritual student needs to learn not to rely on the senses, not to be distracted by nor absorbed in the senses, but to eventually transcend them altogether (as higher senses begin to manifest, the lower senses cease to serve any real purpose). Enthusiasm for life in the lower worlds is wonderful, yet the spiritual student naturally embraces another form altogether, that being the quiet joy of interior experience, quiet enthusiasm (not excitement) for the experience and expression of the path, of living in accord with the way (higher consciousness) rather than being immersed in the senses.

For the spiritual student the emotions are not properly restrained. Restraint implies unnatural force. The spiritual student naturally prefers to temper the emotions through higher focus, by not engaging the lower emotions, but by cultivating the more refined emotions (e.g., aspiration, compassion, quiet joy). For the spiritual student the emotions are neither restrained nor do they function independently of the whole. Thus for the spiritual student exuberance does not really apply. The quiet joy of the higher (inner) (deeper) Self supersedes any need for exuberance.

The Lower Flow

There is a not uncommon phenomenon that occurs in the lower worlds of (the perception of) “things falling-into-place” or (the perception of) “being led” to some particular and meaningful experience under somewhat magical circumstances (which may be (wrongly) considered unrealistic in terms of conventional materialism).

These phenomena are entirely consequential in nature. Through personal creativity (actions, behaviors, desires, feelings, thoughts, words, etc.) a person is continually contributing to the lower flow (karmic consequences). Yet all things (actions) are inter-related. And all things exist within a broad context of underlying wisdom (God’s grace) such that things (events) (consequences) happen according to need and responsiveness. That circumstances should appear contrived by external forces should be not be surprising. Some unconsciously evoked forces (circumstances) manifest in rather subtle ways, others manifest more dramatically (e.g., in the feeling that one is being drawn to a place or particular circumstances). People accustomed to being responsive to this flow are rarely surprised by circumstances or their manner of occurrence. Things just happen naturally. God’s grace is certainly a factor in these phenomena, but “God” is not personally involved nor is there any “great” significance to whatever happens.

All is governed by karmic law, yet each person functions with some degree of freedom within the karmic (consequential) field. If a person is responsive to afforded circumstances, then some lesson (assimilation of experience) (expression) is accomplished (some balance of forces is achieved). If a person is not responsive, and yet the force is compelling, then circumstances will be more forceful. And if a person is not responsive while the forces are not compelling, then that non-responsiveness will naturally contribute creatively to further circumstances (but not necessarily consistently with a sense of linear time). “Amazing” things happen all the time, yet most people are simply not aware of what is happening. And those who focus on “amazing” things tend to perceive things as “amazing” that are not generally or really so. It is as much a

hindrance to learning to perceive non-significant occurrences as significant as it is to perceive significant occurrences as non-significant.

Circumstances are rarely, if ever, a matter of isolated consciousness. The flow is all-inclusive. Thus a person may attract circumstances in which he or she is afforded substantial learning (growing) (deepening) opportunity, or those circumstances may be primarily a matter of providing an opportunity for someone else, in which case a person may play a needed role (service) (with associated karma). Generally, there are lessons and roles for every participant in every circumstance. But that does not mean that every circumstance has great significance. In fact, most circumstances are not particularly meaningful. What really matters is the condition (perspective) in consciousness that a person brings to every situation.

The whole notion of things-falling-into-place is somewhat misleading, as "things" are always in place. The real balance is never substantially disturbed. What varies, substantially, are awareness and realization of the underlying forces (that are expressed within the balance). There is, however, a sense of a balance with the balance. Karma is a restorative force, a force that restores (minor) equilibrium within some broader ever-existing (major) balance. Growth occurs through contrast. Assimilation restores the balance, but the overall circumstance is always in balance.

† Commentary No. 1105

Obstruction 1

Obstruction is the state of being (appearing to be) obstructed, constricted, interfered with, delayed, and/or hindered in a substantial way. Obstruction is potentially a very powerful experience for learning and adaptation. This may take the form of a specific and relatively brief phenomenon with "release" as soon as the lesson is learned or adjustment made, or it may take the form of a more general and longer-lasting phenomenon (e.g., transit by Saturn) with major opportunities, or it may take the form of very long-term denial of apparent freedom (e.g., incarceration).

Obstruction is a consequence. It really does not matter how it comes to be manifested. What matters is how a person responds to the obstruction (opportunity). What matters is that a person should take responsibility for the consequences (acknowledging that one has created one's own circumstances) and be open to learning whatever lesson or lessons are conveyed through the experience. Although every person is creative, through actions, behavior, feelings, thoughts, words, etc., and although every person has inherent power to change one's circumstances, there is no complete control of one's life. There are always constraints or limitations of one form or another. And there is, generally, a not inconsiderable amount of conditioning that further constrains one's apparent freedom. So what matters is how a person deals with all of this.

One approach is action, e.g., either believing that one has complete control of one's circumstances (which is never entirely true) or believing that by taking action one can creatively manage or change one's circumstances (which is generally true, but not necessarily the best approach). In other words, one can confront one's circumstances, forcefully and creatively. The problem with this approach is that one tends thereby to not learn whatever the lesson is that is inherent to the circumstances, which leads to further and generally more difficult circumstances. One can, if one will, forcefully overcome one's difficulties, but unless the implied lesson is that exercise of force, then one misses the point. Furthermore, if one believes that one knows the implied lesson, then one is generally thereby impeded from learning whatever the real lesson is. Thus it would seem to be better to remain open-minded and not rely on confrontation (which is based on assumption) but rely on openness (intuition).

Another approach is passivity. One can surrender entirely to the process and allow whatever the circumstances are to dominate. This, too, is not necessarily the best approach. With passivity one tends to suffer throughout the process, by remaining vulnerable to all of the forces and conditions of the obstruction. This may indeed leave a very substantial impression (e.g., through pain) but will not generally result in conscious understanding of the implied lessons. One can assimilate unconsciously, however, but that process tends to be much more gradual (and non-dynamic) than other methods.

Another approach, the middle ground, is non-action. In non-action one remains intelligently observant, but without confrontation, without assumption, and generally without giving in to any associated pain or suffering (which is, after all, always self-induced (how one chooses to respond to circumstances)). In non-action one is open to learning, without being overly clouded by one's own biases and without being dominated by the external (obstructing) forces. Where obstruction is associated in some way with one's desires or intentions, then one can release (defer, subject to further realization and adjustment) those desires or intentions, allowing whatever lessons are needed to emerge into consciousness. Non-action is generally the more effective approach.

† Commentary No. 1106

Obstruction 2

Another way of looking at obstruction is to look at where one is intending to go (or what one is intending to do), and attempt to see what more reasonable alternatives there are. Sometimes the lesson is to overcome the obstruction. But more generally the lesson is to find the alternative, the more reasonable path. And sometimes the lesson is simply non-attachment, for one to not make the intended results (destination) (process) so important, thus allowing deeper, broader experience (expression) (understanding) to emerge. One's approach to the process is generally more important than the specific lessons and results to be achieved.

Sometimes obstruction has a broader context than the individual. It may be a collective process, in which one person (sincerely and/or unconsciously) plays an obstructive role that must simply be played, for reasons that may not be apparent (or meaningful) to others. One should not assume that the intended result is particularly important, nor that the obstruction itself is meaningful. But it may be. Some people are naturally obstructive. It is their nature. They unconsciously identify with the resistive force of matter (ego) and naturally resist any change (progress). This may or may not be "helpful" but it is generally rather secondary. One needs to be patient and understanding (and one generally needs to (gently) transcend the limitations implied or conveyed through obstructive people).

Another aspect of obstruction is the cyclic nature of manifestation at all levels. There are cycles (days) of activity (experience, expression, progress) and cycles (nights) of quiescence and assimilation of experience. The dark night of the soul is an example of a more personal cycle of discouragement, apparent obstruction, and painful assimilation and adjustment followed by (and facilitating) renewed (inner and outer) encouragement and growth. Obstruction is a form of tension, preventing or impeding untoward progress. But there are great lessons in tension (contrast) (conflict) (obstruction). The fourth ray (harmony through conflict) generally qualifies all such experience. And all of life in this world is such an opportunity (this is a fourth ray "world"). Progress is achieved through assimilation of contrast.

Some think that an unobstructed life is indicative of spiritual maturity, of things falling-into-place indicative of attunement. That this should be so in most respects is not uncommon among spiritual students, but without contrast, without some challenges in life, there is no real growth, no opportunity to transcend one's limitations. If a person is entirely comfortable with one's beliefs, being confident of their validity, then that constitutes a barrier to deeper truth. Thus challenge is pertinent. And obstruction serves a very useful purpose. The spiritual path is a path of continual deepening, of continual awakening. Being aware of obstruction and being intelligently responsive to implied or inferred possibilities for adjustment indicate some measure of spiritual maturity. To flow with life, drawing insight from every apparent difficulty, is the mark of one who is learning, growing, deepening.

Sometimes there are plateaus, for less deliberate assimilation of experience and for gradual preparation for the next cycle of activity. And sometimes there are peaks and valleys of experience, to be encountered, considered, and worked through. Obstruction is (potentially) a great opportunity for adjustment and progress. Yet the spiritual student should not be obstructive. The role of the spiritual student is to facilitate learning, growing, deepening, without imposing, without obstructing.

Importance 3

So. What is important? Dharma. Devotion to the spiritual path and its principles, to whatever extent one understands them. Learning, growing, deepening, serving. Awareness, sensitivity, truth. The heart. Embracing the qualities of the path. Living Tao. Everything else is secondary.

For most people what is important is their own experience and expression, having and doing, family, friends, work. But for the spiritual student, who is no longer enamoured by or immersed in experience, who is more concerned about conscious assimilation of experience and living (being) in accord with dharma, experience and expression as ends in themselves are simply not important. There is family. There are friends. There is work. None are neglected. The student continues to experience. The student continues to express himself or herself in meaningful ways (with spiritual poise), but the focus and emphasis are simply not on experience and expression. Having and doing may have value, but the focus and emphasis for the spiritual student are on being.

Happiness is not an objective for the spiritual student. Yet the spiritual student embraces happiness. There is an inner joyful awareness that permeates the aura. There is happiness. Sensual experience is not an objective (nor even a direct means) of the spiritual student. Yet the spiritual student continues to sense, but without immersion in the outer senses, without being entangled in (outer) sense experience, preferring to watch quietly (in joyful awareness) rather than being absorbed in worldly affairs, preferring to rely predominantly on the inner senses (awareness, intuition, being). The student enjoys life in many ways and through many facets of life, but enjoying life is not the objective. It just happens. Likewise, achievement is not an objective of the spiritual student. Yet the spiritual student achieves (whatever needs to be achieved) without achievement, without striving, without ambition, without ego. Things are simply achieved. Objective reality is not important; it is simply a field for experience and expression, a means to an end, and instrument of what is real. The spiritual student properly respects objective reality and its place in the scheme of things, but does not make it important. It merely has value. Individuality is likewise not important. Individuality is merely a means to an

end. It merely has value. Even karma is not really important. It merely has value and provides a context.

So. What else is important? Life. Love. Light. Which are (collectively) simply another way of looking at dharma. Reality. Truth. The spiritual student learns to discern between the real and the unreal, between underlying truth and appearance (that which is merely apparent to the senses), between the personality (mind) (ego) and the soul (inner, higher, transcendental (immanent) Self (that which is immanent and that which is transcendent are one and the same thing (the reality of one's being rather than the apparent reality of the outer self or personality expression))). Life is more real than it appears to be. Love is more real than it appears to be. Light is more real than it appears to be. And there is no real difference between life and love and light. Between the One and the Three (and the Seven and the Twelve).

Yet. When all of these things are properly considered, one returns naturally to what is truly important. Dharma. Devotion to the spiritual path and its principles, to whatever extent one understands them. Learning, growing, deepening, serving. Awareness, sensitivity, truth. The heart. Embracing the qualities of the path. Living Tao. Everything else is secondary. And it remains so.

† Commentary No. 1108

Teachings and Context

Every teaching has a context. Depending on the particular circumstances of the student (human being), the student will be naturally drawn to the teachings that are pertinent for his or her current circumstances (abilities, needs, responsiveness, conditioning, context).

What this implies is that no teaching is really complete or perfect for everyone. No teaching is the highest, deepest, etc., for everyone (or in any absolute sense). Every teaching has some context, some purpose, some role, and is eventually transcended (completely in some cases or more generally to some extent) as the student grows and deepens (and achieves the understanding or wisdom that a teaching can convey), and eventually finds something more meaningful to his or

her new circumstances. Attachment to teachings thus becomes an impediment to further growth and deepening (and yet, to achieve at some level the student must take the teachings at that "level" seriously enough to accomplish the attended results).

The field of metaphysics is replete with examples of teachings and context. The various metaphysical churches, for example, generally provide considerable encouragement regarding personality development, self-esteem, heart-centeredness, diversity, etc. But eventually, the student must begin to transcend the ego and in order to accomplish this must go beyond conventional or mainstream metaphysics to something more subtle. Going "beyond" does not necessarily imply that the "new" teachings encountered are higher, deeper, or better overall, only that they are more pertinent to the student who needs them. The same is true for the focus on mindfulness encountered in various Buddhist traditions. Mindfulness training is very important and quite valuable (necessary), at some stage of unfoldment, but eventually becomes a limitation, and the student must then go beyond mindfulness.

Even the Upper Triad material has its context and limitations. It is not really appropriate or meaningful for most people, nor for most spiritual students of various paths and traditions. While the underlying principles are sound (at this level), the student may properly need to focus in other ways, that are more meaningful to his or her context (circumstances). So the student should always be amenable to discerning the needs of the particular incarnation or phase of life, assessing one's circumstances and recognizing the needs and appropriate methods. The student should not be attached to any of the teachings, but embrace them to whatever extent they are understood and remain pertinent.

In this process there are a number of "teachings" that seem to remain pertinent but are not necessarily dominant. The preliminary discipline, for example (not smoking, not drinking, not eating flesh foods, meditating, etc.). Once a student has embraced these disciplines, they fall below the threshold of focus, remaining true and meaningful (valuable) (i.e., the student continues to live in accordance with these practices) while the student is more properly focused on deeper and more pertinent issues. Thus most of the teachings remain relevant (in context), but as the student grows and deepens, the focus naturally shifts to more subtle levels. In this sense even mindfulness remains valuable, even as the student

passes beyond mindfulness. It is, after all, a means rather than an end in itself. The path is naturally structured, with various phases, stages, and dimensions. The wise student honestly and effectively discerns his or her context, and lives the spiritual life that is meaningful at that "level" to whatever extent the student can.

† Commentary No. 1109

Process

At the level of human interest, including both experience and expression, there sometimes arises anxiety over results. The ancient occult adage "Trust in the process" is ever applicable. But in order to trust in the process, one must properly accept that the process may not be entirely what one thinks it is, and the results may not be entirely (if at all) what they are imagined or even desired to be.

The problem is that at the human level there is incomplete awareness and incomplete understanding of both the process and the intended results of experience in this world. The human tendency is, based on experience, to presume both the process and the intended results. But what the human being desires or intends may not (always) be what is actually needed or intended in some higher (non-egoistic) sense. Yet the human being is creative. The human being has considerable capacity to create circumstances (and results) by virtue of thoughts, feelings, and (other) actions. Often, one need only imagine the outcome and dedicate sufficient energy to the creative process, and the outcome will be created. But as the student progresses along the way, there is increasing wisdom (accompanied by deepening humility), and the appreciation that the student may not understand what is best for all concerned, even where there is insight into the karmic balance and the evolutionary context.

Thus trusting in the process means accepting that there is an evolutionary flow (of intended experience and resolution (meaningful results)) and that the forces of evolution are always in effect and will naturally bring about whatever is actually needed, in accordance with the relative ability of the people involved to be responsive. One can still be creative, but it is much more effective to be creative within the context of non-egoism than to be (individualistically and/or

presumptively) willfully creative. This requires not inconsiderable humility. This requires patience and trust. And this (properly) requires acceptance of responsibility for all of one's circumstances.

Yet the ego would rather control those circumstances more deliberately (and take credit for the results). The involvement of ego (willfulness) (personal desire) (selfishness) (self-centeredness) (sincerely so or otherwise) tends to complicate the process (through additional karmic constraints) and undermine the timeliness of results (even though timeliness is something that the student generally cannot comprehend because of its multidimensional nature). And the (creative) direction of the ego is generally not (quite) in the direction of evolution. By trusting in the process (and dampening the involvement of ego), better and more timely results are achieved.

On the other hand, the spiritual student is not properly concerned with particular results (or with any results, per se), but with the process itself (more correctly, with adherence to the path (way) (Tao)). The tendency of looking for results also tends to undermine the process. Yet in the broader perspective, the process is all-inclusive, and all of the "human" tendencies are accounted for (in which case the process is always satisfied). But the spiritual student should, nonetheless, seek to live in accord with the (evolutionary) process, collaborating creatively through responsiveness, and in so doing transcending much of the lower nature (ego) (intellect) (desire) (lower will), etc. With acceptance of the way, and trusting in the process, there need be no anxiety at all (anxiety is merely the murmurings of ego). Without anxiety, one is simply free to allow things to happen as they need to (not passively, but intelligently).

Respect 2

Respect is a matter of consideration and considerateness, for oneself (self-respect) and for others. In the worldly sense, respect is based upon cultural conditioning, but more properly on the (mutual) equality of (all) human beings, regardless of respective circumstances, regardless of attitude, behavior, consciousness, cultural conditioning, personality, position, role, etc. Thus respect is not (properly) a matter of deference or non-deference, but a matter of expression (acknowledgement) of that underlying equality. It is a matter of appreciation of the lack of (real) distinction between the various cultures, races, sexes, etc.

In the more metaphysical (mystical) sense, respect goes well beyond the worldly sense and is based upon the reality of the unity of all life. In this sense, it is the God within one, expressed through the personality, that appreciates and respects the God within all other lives, and acknowledges that each life is a divine manifestation, however imperfect that expression may seem to be at the personality level. To respect another human being is to respect oneself. To respect another lifeform (mineral, vegetable, animal, deva) is likewise to respect oneself. Ultimately, all sense of separation or separateness is transcended, and one lives through all lives.

It is not (properly) ever a matter of demanding respect from others, for only the ego (false self) can demand anything. It is not (properly) a matter of expecting others to conform to our sense of propriety (e.g., respecting us), for any form of expectation of others, or imposition upon others, is an expression of lack of respect. Thus respect is a matter of how one treats others (not how others treat us or how others treat themselves or even how others treat others). It is not a matter of judgment. It is a matter of reality and truth.

Respect also includes the sense of not interfering with or imposing upon others, i.e., respecting others' rights to self-determination. This means accepting people as they are, allowing people to be themselves and to express themselves as they care to or need to. This does not mean, necessarily, allowing others to impose upon oneself (depending on the circumstances, one may or may not have

any choice in the matter). And this does not preclude being responsible for our children or others who are placed in our care. But it does mean treating everyone with respect, with consideration for their humanity, with appreciation for their divinity, with acknowledgement that God lives equally through all lives.

Respect is also not merely a matter of human relationships. There is also (properly) respect (consideration) (considerateness) with regard to other lifewaves. Humanity is not the primary lifewave nor the "highest" lifeform on this planet. There is no unqualified "right" to appropriation of resources from the other kingdoms (mineral, vegetable, animal). Thus one needs to respect that each lifewave is self-determined (within the context of the evolutionary plan) and that each contributes to the overall balance of this world. One needs to respect the evolutionary plan for life and consciousness as much as possible within the sense of one's understanding (e.g., respect for mineral resources and the health of the planet as a whole, respect for the role of vegetable matter (including food), respect for the role of animals (which role does not include provision of flesh food for human consumption)). Thus one should utilize "resources" of other lifewaves respectfully, gently, considerately, appropriately (not according to rationalization or appropriation) (but according to the flow of consciousness that places all lives in concert (context)).

† Commentary No. 1111

Wholeness 1

The human being is simultaneously one-fold, three-fold, seven-fold, and a manifold. The human being is one-fold in the sense of there being a whole, whether or not there is any conscious or direct integration of the various aspects and levels (bodies). The human being is three-fold in the sense of there being three aspects, (1) a personality having physical, emotional, and intellectual dimensions, (2) a soul of atma-buddhi-manas, both transcendental and immanent, transcendental (on its level) with regard to the personality, yet underlying the personality with its immanence, and (3) a monad that remains on its level, virtually indistinguishable from the godhead or logos.

The monad is the highest, deepest, most noble aspect of the human being, yet remains largely uninvolved and unresponsive to the human being in its other (lower) (two) aspects. Similarly, the soul is for the most part, and for most people, largely uninvolved and unresponsive to the personality. The monad reflects itself into the soul which in turn reflects itself into the personality. Thus the soul is an artificial entity with regard to the monad, yet it is more real than the personality.

Each personality lives only for a single lifetime. Each successive personality is created by the soul and is generally improved over the previous personality, based on assimilation of experience. A personality matrix or archetype exists within the soul and it is that matrix that is developed through the experience and expression through the instrument of personality. The soul is sexless. But the personality matrix (archetype) is bi-sexual, though in each incarnation the personality is expressed sometimes as male, sometimes as female, so that the qualities of each may be developed and assimilated. The human being embodies both the masculine and feminine principles.

Thus the personality is the vehicle of experience and expression in the lower worlds. It is the personality that experiences the illusion of separateness and ego. The soul merely assimilates the experience of the personality, indirectly, through the overall consciousness, and primarily through sleep and through the interval between lives. The personality deals with knowledge and understanding. The soul deals, indirectly, with understanding and wisdom. The understanding and wisdom of the soul is available to the personality only to the extent that the personality (mind) (heart) is responsive. That responsiveness requires very substantial cultivation and occurs primarily through the process of the spiritual path and its various practices.

The human being is seven-fold in the sense of having seven bodies or vehicles of consciousness, corresponding loosely to the seven planes of consciousness. There is a dense physical body and its etheric (vital) (energy) double. There is an emotional (astral) body. There is a concrete mind that is part of the personality and an abstract mind that is part of the soul. These are loosely related but become more closely related as the bridge of consciousness (antahkarana) between the personality and the soul is built. In addition to the abstract mind of the soul there is a buddhic sheath and an atmic sheath, not

properly bodies. There is a causal body which is the vehicle proper of the soul in its three aspects (atma-buddhi-manas). This causal body is the storehouse of understanding, wisdom, conscience, quality, etc., gleaned from the experience and expression of the various personalities over various (many) lifetimes. And there is a monadic vehicle of some sort, well beyond the ken of the mortal mind.

† Commentary No. 1112

Wholeness 2

The relatively undeveloped and unrefined human personality is also manifold, in the sense that the physical, emotional, and intellectual components are not (generally) integrated and therefore in the sense that there are many centers of consciousness that compete for attention. Yet once the personality vehicles are refined and properly integrated (into a single, coherent personality energy), then it becomes possible to build the bridge (proper link) with the soul. Until then the qualification of the personality by the soul is minimal and indirect. After alignment, that qualification is substantial and more direct (although the soul on its level remains transpersonal). Integration occurs only after many lifetimes of experience and alignment of soul and personality occurs only after a number of lifetimes of dedicated "work" in the context of the spiritual path.

While the human being is a whole, a single entity, it is necessary to treat the person in its various aspects in order to achieve self-realization. This is because the waking-consciousness (ego) (intellect) (feelings) that most people identify with is not the whole self and is not even capable of embracing the whole self. The personality (ego) (intellect) is artificial and limited in consciousness and in expression. In order to achieve proper integration and alignment (of the whole self) one must be able to focus within the highest aspect of the Self. The personality cannot do this. The ego cannot do this. The intellect cannot do this. But the personality (ego) (intellect) often (but necessarily falsely) believes that it can (that it is the whole self).

In fact, resolution (realization) can only occur when the waking-consciousness (focus of objective awareness) can discern the distinction between the lower two aspects (personality-ego-intellect and the soul (atma-buddhi-manas)), between

the lower self (not-self) and the higher Self. Once that realization has occurred (properly, not merely intellectually), then the lower consciousness is sublimated in the higher and the higher manifests holistically (because the lower self is no longer functioning in its sense of (false) independence and separateness). Of course this (sense of) wholeness does not include the monad (which remains on its level), but it is the best that a person can do while in incarnation under current circumstances (stage in evolution). Indeed, the monad is so far “beyond” the waking-consciousness that it can only barely be sensed even at the soul level.

Thus wholeness is progressive. It begins with a person (personality) integrating the various elements of the lower self (physical body, etheric double or vital body, astral or emotional body, and the concrete mind). Then it progresses to transcending the artificial self (ego) (intellect) in alignment of that lower self with the higher Self of atma-buddhi-manas (the practical union of soul immanent with soul transcendent). To do so, the manifold nature of personality becomes integrated as the three-fold nature of the whole person becomes resolved into (as) a single, coherent energy (which it is in actuality).

Wholeness is also progressive in the sense that identification becomes broader and broader as evolution proceeds. A person begins with (lower) self-identification. As self-identification broadens internally, it also tends to broaden externally, as a person progressively transcends identification with his or her sex, race, country, culture, etc., to be more and more inclusive (all of humanity, all of life). Eventually one realizes this wholeness and inclusiveness not merely intellectually, but actually, as one feels (senses) through all lives and all levels, simultaneously, as one participates (more and more) consciously in the one life.

Three Stages of Yoga

The spiritual path of more deliberate evolution in consciousness may be viewed in a number of different but complementary ways. One perspective focuses on the three formal stages (probationary path, path of discipleship, and path of initiation); another focuses on successive mastery of the various levels of consciousness (dense physical, etheric, emotional or astral, lower (concrete) mental (intellectual)). Yet another (practical) perspective (that of yoga) involves the three stages of physical, psychological, and spiritual development (mastery).

These are, in effect, the three stages of yoga, where yoga is perceived in the broader context (union and the process through which union is achieved). The first stage is the preliminary stage of physical discipline and purification (which also facilitates emotional refinement and self-control at that level). The second stage is the intermediate stage of psychological growth and refinement. And the third or highest stage is that of spiritual deepening leading to self-realization. One must necessarily have mastered the preliminaries (physical and emotional discipline and purification) before one can effectively progress through the intermediate stage, and likewise, one must necessarily have mastered the intermediate (tempering of the ego and the intellect) before one can effectively progress through the higher stage. To embark upon the "higher" work without the necessary prerequisites inevitably leads either to failure or delusion (through self-appeasement). One tends to quickly reach a plateau and be artificially contented, unless one has actually done the necessary work and is prepared (and determined) to go forward.

Many who perceive or embark upon the physical discipline of yoga fail to realize that it is just the first step along the way, that it is merely preliminary and necessary to further work. Until the physical body is conquered (mastered) (disciplined) it is virtually impossible to make progress on the next level (emotional). Yoga as a physical discipline is one of the various techniques for effectively mastering the physical body. In this sense, preliminary yoga involves both carefully structured exercise and properly cultivated diet, resulting in greater (optimal) physical health and (etheric) vitality. But this is not (properly) an end in itself, but simply facilitates emotional growth (tempering

and refining the emotions) so that the student can progress to the intermediate stage.

The real challenge would seem to be at the intermediate levels, where the mind (intellect) (ego) (the personality as a whole) must be conquered and transcended. This is where yoga (and other (proper) techniques which are merely alternative forms of yoga by some other name) is (are) fully exercised. The human personality in its various aspects is (in practice, not so much in principle) rather complicated. The personality naturally resists any attempts at discipline, refinement, transcendence, etc., because it feels threatened (of losing itself in the process). But as yoga practice is applied properly (intelligently), the diverse elements (forces) of personality are progressively understood, tempered, and transcended.

Not all spiritual students must devote a great deal of time and attention to (physical) yoga practice in the current life. If one has previously made such an investment of time and energy, and has successfully mastered the physical and emotional domains, then it is relatively easy for such a student to recapitulate and move on to the next stage. But the work (physical-emotional-preliminary and psychological-intermediate) must be done at some point.

† Commentary No. 1114

Three Gunas and Ego

The ego is an artificial entity produced by immersion of the human being in the material worlds, compounded by delusion of the senses and identification of manifesting consciousness with the (merely apparent) separateness of the human personality. It can function only at the personality levels (physical-emotional-mental) and is incapable of transcending the limitations implied by manifestation in these lower worlds. It serves a purpose, facilitating experience and expression for the relatively undeveloped, but for the student to pass successfully from the psychological stage to the spiritual stage, the ego must be progressively tempered and eventually dissolved.

But the nature of ego varies considerably according to the evolutionary circumstances (progress in consciousness) of the student. Being of the material worlds, the ego is subject to the three gunas, being comprised of these three elements, in varying degrees, and reflecting (embracing) (exhibiting) the quality of consciousness thus far achieved. All three gunas are therefore present, but one or another of the gunas may actually dominate the conditioning (ego) of the personality. Thus egos may be distinctly sattvic, rajasic, or tamasic (or less distinctly so in some cases).

Tamas is a matter of inertia, of illusion, ignorance, the lower passions, indolence, delusion, malice, selfishness, coarseness, etc. Tamasic ego is predominantly selfish and self-centered, unable (or unwilling) to appreciate the needs or interests of other people. The independence of the tamasic ego is profound (delusion). The tamasic ego is substantially separative, yet lacking the awareness of its own nature. Tamasic egoism is based in the material nature (predominantly physical and emotional). While tamasic egoism is coarse and strong, it is not "intelligent" enough to actively resist the inexorable force of evolution. Thus one progresses from tamas to rajas very gradually but largely uneventfully (unconsciously).

Rajas is a matter of activity, of earthly and sensual pursuits, of mundane knowledge, arrogance, attachment, ambition, competition, likes and dislikes, etc. Rajasic ego may or may not be selfish, but it tends to be self-centered. Most of the personality and psychological development occurs through rajas. The independence (delusion) of the rajasic ego is considerable but less substantial than tamas. Rajasic ego is moderately self-absorbed but more aware and more able to deal with concepts of life and consciousness. Rajasic egoism is based also in the material nature, but is predominantly emotional and mental (intellectual). Rajasic egoism is not as coarse as tamasic egoism, but it is potentially much stronger, and more potent by virtue of its "intelligence" (all of what is commonly referred to as intelligence is artificial). Thus rajasic egoism can (and generally does) actively undermine the progress in consciousness in order to preserve itself and its position of influence.

Sattva is a matter of harmony, of radiance, of higher and more noble pursuits, illumination, insight, peace, dispassion, growth in the sense of deepening, understanding, goodness, humility, love, truthfulness, moderation, etc. Sattvic

ego is substantially less self-centered than the others, but still clinging, in its subtle ways, to a sense of its own existence. Yet the sattvic ego is able to begin to consider the possibility of its own artificial nature, and therefore, eventually, the sattvic ego is able to cooperate in its own moderation and dissolution. Sattvic egoism is based in the more refined material nature and is predominantly intellectual (but potentially somewhat responsive to the intuitive (higher, transpersonal) nature).

† Commentary No. 1115

Philosophical Basis 1

In the sense that philosophy is a broad realm that includes art, science, psychology, religion, etc., there are, fundamentally, two different kinds of philosophical basis, (1) that which is based on testimony or has a theoretical basis and is confirmed to some extent on the further basis of (outer) experience and/or sensibility, including scientific (or not-so-scientific) observations and interpretations), all of which constitutes an artificial basis, and (2) that which is based on inner experience and confirmed through underlying consistency, which constitutes a natural basis.

Revealed religions fall into to first category, based on (presumed) inspiration and testimony. Academic approaches to psychology and philosophy generally fall into the first category as well, being based, generally, on rationalization (with experience and interpretation providing a basis for rationalization, but with the psychological or philosophical system (theory) deriving from the rationalization). Any approach that relies on testimony, interpretation, and/or rationalization has an artificial basis. That does not mean that it lacks truth, but it generally means that the truth revealed or expressed through such a system is limited in its depth and breadth, limited in its general validity, and limited in its further applicability.

Revealed religions tend to address specific cultural and temporal needs. Academic approaches tend to lack the inspiration (intuition) of recognition-of-reality, being misled by appearances (and the fitting of (presumed) facts to the theory is inherently less than a wholly objective process). Most psychological systems are really theories based on observation, evaluation, and systemic

contrivance (contriving a theory that fits all of the apparent observations and interpretations). That such a theory may have some validity or applicability does not mean that it has a more natural basis or that it is applicable in some broader (e.g., metaphysical) context. Yet artificial systems (psychological, philosophical) can be quite useful.

But natural systems are a different matter altogether. And all natural systems are both self-consistent and consistent (or complementary) to each other (depending only on perspective). Within each of the various and diverse religions of the world (revealed and otherwise) there exists a core of metaphysical (mystical) teaching that is based on the underlying natural system (the esoteric philosophy, ageless wisdom, etc.). And likewise in each of the artificial psychological and philosophical systems there is generally some underlying truth. But the spiritual student (of whatever faith or path) is able, eventually, to recognize for himself or herself the underlying truth of anything that is studied or considered. And what the student finds, necessarily, is that there is a common underlying natural truth to the esoteric philosophy that touches in some way virtually every meaningful religious, philosophical, and psychological system.

Armed with the keys (conscience) (intuition) based on previous experience and training, the student can discern the depth and breadth of value of any legitimate system (and recognize its limitations and its applicability), even without knowing the particular language or semantics of the system, because each teaching can be "seen" in the context of that deeper, nameless, ageless wisdom that transcends both language and culture. And yet, given a choice, the student would naturally study or embrace a natural system (or the natural elements of an artificial system) than an artificial one. It is simply more effective (except that each system contributes something to the whole).

Philosophical Basis 2

So, what are the elements of a natural system? Firstly, a natural system needs to be consistent with observable reality, particularly with clear metaphysical perception of the world as it is (as it seems to be), including the underlying basis in consciousness (seven planes), energy (seven rays), and life (seven kingdoms and seven lifewaves). The particular systemic perspective may be different and the terminology may be different, but the correlations should be obvious. Secondly, a natural system needs to be consistent with experience and verifiable through the inner senses (intuition). This is not a democratic process, but a matter of realization (recognition of actualization). And thirdly, a natural system needs to be wholly uncontrived (absent any rationalization or intellectual embellishment) and not reliant on interpretation.

Natural systems are themselves subject to interpretation, though the wise rely on the intuition for insight rather than the intellect for interpretation (which may or may not be consistent with insight). Astrology, for example, is a natural system, albeit subject to great misunderstanding and misinterpretation. But the underlying philosophical basis is natural. There are astrological forces. But astrology without appreciation of the (deeper, less apparent) underlying principles is somewhat misleading. Likewise the mystical traditions of each of the world religions are based on the underlying esoteric philosophy. The western esoteric tradition (Judaic-Christian-Islamic mysticism) (and western occultism) is remarkably consistent with the eastern esoteric tradition (Hindu-Buddhist-Taoist mysticism) (and eastern occultism). Theosophy, despite its intellectual excesses, is also generally consistent with the underlying ageless wisdom.

Whenever there are interpretations, there is diffusion and undermining of the quality and consistency and validity of the teaching. Thus one should not rely on any (presumed or self-proclaimed) external authorities, but one should, in going within, find the assurance (revelation) (insight) of the inner teacher. Of course, in order for the student to be able to do this effectively, the student must have tempered the lower self to a large extent and must have transcended the ego (intellect) (personality) likewise. In the meantime, the student should

embrace or incorporate whatever teachings “feel” right but consider what feels “right” to be provisionally valid. A distinction needs to be made between what is actually true (unknowably so) and what is presumed to be true. Facts may be observables (at best) but these are also (really) presumptions based upon interpretation of observables.

If one is broad-minded and intuitive (if one is properly prepared (trained)), then the correlations and consistencies of the various natural systems will be apparent as will the extent of validity of elements of artificial systems. Thus the spiritual student need not re-learn all of the knowledge and understanding acquired in previous incarnations but simply utilize the intuitive keys to the mysteries (wisdom) in tapping into the knowledge and understanding that is there, inherently, that the student is able to embrace based on earlier work. The same keys work for the Qabalah that work for the Tao. The same keys that work for astrology work also for the seven ray perspective. And likewise for every legitimate system (perspective) (path).

The real underlying philosophical basis is simply truth and reality. Thus the quest is simply becoming more and more able to discern the truth, being more and more aware of reality, more and more able to serve effectively.

† Commentary No. 1117

The Polarian Root Race

The first of the seven great root races of the current round on this globe (Earth) is called the Polarian root race. In the Polarian epoch what is now humanity had only a dense physical (ethereal) body and no (manifestation or indication of) higher principles. While this was a “human” epoch, it was also a recapitulation (as is each turn of the evolutionary spiral) of the passage of what is now humanity through the mineral stage, and particularly in recapitulation of the development undertaken during the first round. Thus humanity was not mineral but was mineral-like during the Polarian epoch.

During the Polarian epoch “humanity” was largely ethereal (gaseous), as the planet was not yet fully solidified. The opportunities for humanity (in

manifestation (incarnation)) were therefore quite limited compared to the present state. The human body, then being gaseous, was large and loosely defined. There was a sense organ, capable of sensing relative heat (or its relative absence). That organ was localized, while eventually (now) the ability to sense heat and cold is generalized (extending over the entire body). But during the Polarian epoch experience was rather primitive.

Propagation during the Polarian epoch was also rather primitive, in which a body could divide into two similar but necessarily smaller pieces. Since there was no vital or etheric body, there was no means of growth. There was of course an etheric region (in the field of consciousness), but humanity without an etheric body had no means of functioning on etheric levels and was therefore confined to the dense physical or chemical region of the physical plane. This served the needs of (unconscious) humanity at the time and (as always, according to law) was in accordance with the ability of humanity to function. And of course it set the stage for the next (second, Hyperborean) epoch as planetary conditions developed further.

The consciousness associated with humanity during the Polarian epoch was also analogous to the mineral stage (trance state). Although there was a sense organ, the functioning of the body and its sense organ was entirely (passively) unconscious. The consciousness associated with a human being can only function to the extent that suitable vehicles are available. Much of the time of the early root races was devoted to (unconsciously) becoming accustomed to "working" on the lower levels (physical and emotional planes). The early root races covered vast periods of time because consciousness was so limited and therefore developed so slowly and because the planetary conditions take a long time to develop to the point where the planet can sustain the higher-order experience. In fact, much of the "time" for every lifewave is spent in pralaya, waiting for suitable conditions for experience and expression.

Details of life during the Polarian epoch are difficult to discern, in part due to the vagueness of human existence during that time. There were no sub-races or branch-races. There was no real culture. Humanity was not individualized; the race (soul of humanity) lived collectively through the various dense physical (gaseous) vehicles and collectively experienced what this epoch had to offer (which was, generally (simply), familiarity with physical existence). The

difficulty (discernment of details) is compounded by the similarities between the Polarian epoch (which was the earliest root race or epoch of the current round on this globe) and the experience of what is now humanity during earlier rounds and other globes. When one focuses on a particular epoch one is also necessarily in touch with all of the correspondences (correlations with past and future) of the time.

† Commentary No. 1118

The Hyperborean Root Race

The second of the seven great root races of the current round on this globe is called the Hyperborean root race. In the Hyperborean epoch what is now humanity developed the vital or etheric body. While this was a "human" epoch, it was also a recapitulation of the passage of what is now humanity through the plant stage, and particularly in recapitulation of the development undertaken during the second round. Thus humanity was not plant but was plant-like during the Hyperborean epoch. During the Hyperborean epoch the planet (Earth) gradually crystallized. As the material conditions stabilized, so did the human form of the time become relatively more stable and more well-defined (less gaseous), yet rather soft and without bones.

With the development of the etheric (vital) body the human form was able to grow and propagate more easily, providing thereby a larger number of forms for collective experience and expression. Humanity was still not individualized, but during the Hyperborean epoch there was increasing diversity of form and experience, though still no (discernible) sub-races or branch-races. While the human form was much more advanced in the Hyperborean epoch than in the Polarian epoch, the form was still relatively unorganized compared with its present (more mature) state. Sense organs were developed during this epoch and "people" learned how to utilize them more and more effectively.

The consciousness associated with humanity during the Hyperborean epoch was also analogous to the plant stage (dreamless sleep). Although there were sense organs, the functioning of the body and its sense organs was entirely (passively) unconscious. The Hyperborean epoch lasted a long time, and afforded the developing forms the opportunity to develop etheric capacities (not

so much in terms of specialized organs but in terms of energy relationships) in addition to the dense physical. Thus sense experience was primarily on etheric levels (and necessarily devoid of emotions as there was no emotional or astral body at that time).

Even with the apparent separation of the Earth from the sun, the planet and all of the associated lifewaves of a planet still evolve within the framework of the solar system (consciousness of the solar logos). Each of the various planets (globes) provides conditions suitable for the development, experience, and expression of associated lifewaves (lifeforms). Even while (outer) conditions vary tremendously, the basis of life and consciousness remains the same. Thus humanity during the Hyperborean epoch utilized forms (bodies) that would not be recognizable today as human, yet satisfied the needs of the race at that time.

Since humanity during the first two root races lacked any sense of self-consciousness, the whole process of "human" development and experience was guided by other (superhuman) lives. Each root race has an associated Manu who is responsible for the race and its evolution for that epoch. And each Manu is assisted by a host of workers who encourage the development of the human form and facilitate the experience of human consciousness. As the human being individualizes and becomes more and more self-conscious, the role of the "guides" becomes less and less obvious (becomes more subtle, more encouraging, less directing). Thus during the Polarian and Hyperborean epochs the human experience was cultivated predominantly through external impression (as the various guides played their various roles, directly stimulating the developing organization of the human form, and directly facilitating the utilization of those forms).

The Lemurian Root Race

The third of the seven great root races of the current round on this globe (Earth) is called the Lemurian root race. While this was a “human” epoch, it was also a recapitulation of the passage of what is now humanity through the animal stage. Thus humanity was not animal but was animal-like during the Lemurian epoch.

In the Lemurian epoch, the human physical form was further developed, including the etheric double. Due to the stabilization of the planet during this epoch, the Lemurian epoch was the first time in the history of the present planet (globe) in which traces (physical evidence) of human existence have survived, though that evidence is generally and substantially misinterpreted by modern science. To properly understand and interpret these remains one needs to place them in the context of metaphysical reality, whereby the outer “form” crystallizes upon “death” and does not therefore, necessarily, reflect the nature of its existence prior to death. Understanding is further inhibited by assumptions made regarding the emergence of life on Earth and the evolutionary (developmental) nature of the early human beings and the distinction between form and consciousness. Forms (bodies) for humanity are developed over a long period of time, utilized for as long as they are of value, and then allowed to degenerate as they are no longer useful for supporting the needed experience of the life that they are designed for. As they degenerate, lower lifeforms (animal lives) may appropriate these (for them higher) forms for a while. Thus it is relatively easy to confuse human and animal forms from this epoch and draw incorrect conclusions based on physical evidence. This misunderstanding will continue until there is sufficient realization of the distinction between form and consciousness, and the coincident development and utilization of forms by consciousness.

During the Lemurian epoch the Earth was still cooling and solidifying, yet there was sufficient “land” to support the emerging (human) race. The atmosphere was rather dense, often referred to as a fire-fog. Physical forms (human and animal) were quite plastic, yet definitely “dense” rather than predominantly etheric (ethereal). The human (physical) form developed a skeleton (bone

structure) and there were senses of hearing and feeling (but not seeing). There was awareness of other forms (people) (animals) but no strong sense of one's own form (being) (existence). The human consciousness of this epoch, prior to individualization, was characterized by (clear) dreaming.

In the Lemurian epoch what is now humanity also formatively developed the astral or emotional body. This was the essential work of the epoch. Human life during this epoch was largely dominated by the emergence of desire and learning to function (yet unconsciously) on emotional levels. During this epoch the bulk of humanity remained physically-polarized but began to be able to experience and express through the emotional or astral body. It was also during this epoch that much of humanity individualized (became self-conscious in the primitive sense of one being consciously aware of one's superficial self (body) (personality) as a separate entity from others and in the sense of then being able to direct one's own affairs somewhat separately from the collective consciousness that prevailed prior to this individualization).

The human experience during the Lemurian epoch might be considered rather brutal or barbaric, as this was a recapitulation of the animal stage and as the consciousness was rather dim and required tremendous physical stimulation in order to induce awareness of physical surroundings.

† Commentary No. 1120

The Atlantean Root Race

The fourth of the seven great root races of the current round on this globe is called the Atlantean root race. This was essentially the first nominally "human" epoch in the current round on this globe. This fourth epoch was particularly potent due to the correlation of four-ness (it was the fourth root race in the fourth round and upon the fourth globe of the current planetary chain (and the lifewave that is now human is currently passing through the fourth (human) kingdom)). Thus the fourth ray (harmony through conflict) was very much in evidence. In the Atlantean epoch what is now humanity more properly developed the astral (desire) (emotional) body and formatively developed the mind, or at least the beginnings of the concrete mental body. During the

Atlantean epoch, the bulk of humanity “moved” from being physically-polarized to being emotionally-polarized (even while some were beginning to be able to function substantially on mental levels).

The Atlantean physical atmosphere was denser than it is today but was less dense than during the Lemurian epoch. The Atlantean conditions and culture are more recognizably “human” than was the case during Lemuria. The Atlantean physical form was primitive but not terribly dissimilar from the present form (and the development from one to the other more readily apparent). Various distinctive sub-races and branch-races emerged, each contributing to the diversity of human (collective) experience. Various countries emerged, likewise. During this epoch humanity began to take “control” of its own development, and the various guiding (superhuman) races began to withdraw, being no longer needed on physical levels (yet continuing to encourage humanity on more subtle levels).

The principal feature in consciousness during the Atlantean epoch was the coalescence of the formative (concrete) mind with the desire nature (emotional or astral body), producing the phenomenon of kama-manas (desire mind). This occurred naturally due to the strength of the emotions (astral body) and the relative weakness of mind as a separate vehicle of consciousness (and of course the emotional nature was closely coupled to the “feeling” in the physical body). Thus the Atlantean experience was predominantly self-centered and much of the present self-centeredness can be attributed to that experience and that epoch.

The real work of the Atlantean root race was the development of the emotional nature. Atlanteans were generally much more open (and passive) with regard to the astral plane than is the present humanity, and the Atlantean experience often included the abuse of these psychic faculties (and consequences thereof). In fact, virtually all of modern (Aryan or fifth root race) psychics developed their abilities during the Atlantean epoch, and now draw upon those abilities atavistically (involuntarily) (unnaturally) (even if sincerely). But those who developed more mentally during the Atlantean epoch, in advance of the bulk of humanity, were able to temper their involuntary psychic nature (refining their personalities), and learned the self-control that is necessary for voluntary (sensible, non-egoistic) psychic unfoldment.

Many of the current ills-of-society are products of the Atlantean experience, being the natural (karmic) consequences of that epoch. Yet each (ill) is an opportunity for resolution and advancement in consciousness. In understanding where much of the present circumstances have come from, and in understanding where the current race is going (intended), the student can more effectively collaborate with evolutionary forces (rather than become the victim of that more prevailing inertia (materialism and egoism)).

† Commentary No. 1121

The Fifth Root Race

The fifth of the seven great root races of the current round on this globe (Earth) is called the Aryan root race, without prejudice. In the current, Aryan epoch, the task before humanity is two-fold, to develop the concrete mind (fifth ray) and to begin sensing the presence of the higher Self. While the Atlantean epoch was nominally human, the Aryan epoch marks the first real work of the current round.

The "Aryan" label suits the historical basis of the emergence of the fifth root race, but during this epoch (thus far) there has been so much intermingling between the various races that virtually everyone (at the level of the physical body) has some "Aryan" blood. Thus while understanding the distinctions between races has some value in perspective, the actual distinctions between the races are not really important. Each contributes (equally) to the whole, but the real work and the real measure lies in consciousness (and consciousness does not require a particular racial form, though some racial forms offer particular needed attributes (people incarnate in the racial form that best suits their need for experience and expression, consistent with karma)). Significant diversity of experience and expression is important to the whole. Thus no racial form is considered superior. The wise person does not identify with his or her racial form (or sex) (or country) (or culture) as much as with humanity and life as a whole.

Thus it is better to perceive things in terms of Atlantean consciousness and Aryan consciousness (emotional-polarization and mental-polarization,

respectively) (distinctions in consciousness have value in understanding how to progress from one to the other, but ultimately, one transcends the need for such distinctions). The bulk of humanity remains Atlantean in consciousness, even while inhabiting predominantly Aryan bodies. Thus the work of this fifth epoch is to pass successfully through the crisis of transformation of polarization of consciousness from the emotional to the mental. The fifth root race is the place where the mind is developed and refined, where the mind comes to dominate the emotions, where the ego is developed to maturity (false entity that it is notwithstanding). While the fourth root race employed the fourth ray in its development, the fifth root race employs the fifth ray. Thus in order for humanity to become Aryan in consciousness (as it needs to) humanity must draw upon the fifth ray (its energy and methods).

The (current) Aryan epoch is properly characterized by emotional refinement and tempering, coincident with concrete mental development and a growing head-centered flavor. The momentum (consequences) of the Atlantean epoch are still present and must be dealt with (resolved), but there is a growing momentum of the fifth root race in its own right. Thus while the labels of the various root races and epochs have some value in perspective, what actually "happens" is of course much more so a continuum, with links to both past (history and consequences) and future (likewise).

While the bulk of humanity is emotionally-polarized and moving toward mental-polarization and head-centeredness, the pioneers within humanity are already embracing the energy of the sixth root race and its methods (well in advance of its emergence within humanity), moving toward intuitive-polarization and a balance between head-centeredness and heart-centeredness, as a means of sustaining some collective balance between the head and the heart, insuring that the bulk of the race does not progress too far and over-develop along head-centered lines (through intellect and egoism).

The Sixth Root Race

The work (experience and expression) of humanity through the current fifth root race will persist for a relatively vast period of time. The sixth of the seven great root races of the current round has yet to emerge, although some of the preparatory (anticipatory) characteristics are being developed through some of the current sub-races (particularly the sixth sub-race) and (particularly) through the various (small) groups of pioneers on each of the rays.

While the work of the sixth root race will not commence properly for a very long time, the pioneers within present humanity necessarily embrace the sixth ray energies of the coming root race in order to lay the foundation and framework for the sixth root race (enabling the race to emerge in its own time) and as well to balance (moderate) the development of the current (fifth) race. Actually, the energies most readily and most properly embraced by the pioneers are second ray and third ray (the primaries of the sixth ray and fifth ray, respectively). Through these primary rays the depth and breadth of the secondaries are cultivated in the context of their expression or manifestation in the coming (sixth) epoch.

The work of the sixth root race is the development of formative intuitional ability, which necessarily includes a definite link (antahkarana) between the concrete mind (of the personality) and the abstract mind (of the soul or higher Self). Thus the work of the pioneers (their emphasis) is on refining the personality, transcending the intellect, and transcending the ego. Many (pioneers) fail to appreciate that this work is preliminary to the human experience of the coming root race, and are sometimes discouraged by their own (unrealistic) expectations of the current race, which is predominantly (collectively and individually) emotionally-polarized and a long way from fulfilling the goals of the current cycle (epoch). Yet even that expectation is a projection of energy that encourages the race as a whole upward and onward to eventually reach the intended mental-polarization. But in order to do that, the pioneers (aspirants, probationers, disciples, spiritual students) must themselves achieve the refinement of personality, the integration of the refined personality (and mental polarization), and then begin to allow the antahkarana to be built

(resulting eventually in intuitive polarization and alignment of soul and personality).

It is the work of those who are upon the spiritual path in its various approaches and stages to “wrestle” with these issues for the sake of humanity more so than for their own sake (and hopefully with increasingly and substantially tempered ego). It is their work to develop the methods and means that will be successfully implemented by the bulk of the race long after they (present pioneers) have passed on. Some of those methods and means are already apparent, having been developed through various esoteric groups (schools) throughout the present (fifth) epoch (and shared with the whole through the collective higher consciousness), but some have yet to be realized. Thus there is also an experimental dimension to this work. It is not a matter of achievement (which is ego-based illusion), but of experience and realization.

By all indications, the sixth root race will be a substantially different experience than heretofore, in the sense that the first three root races were preparatory, the conflict and contrast of the fourth root race rather disconcerting (albeit necessary), and the hardness (head-centeredness) of the fifth root race likewise. The sixth root race will be a gentler, deeper experience. And yet the “real” sixth ray work will be done in the sixth round.

† Commentary No. 1123

Spiritual Work

Spiritual work is work performed by the spiritual student (aspirant, disciple, initiate) by virtue of his or her having made some commitment to the spiritual path of conscious evolution and by virtue of having thereby evoked some general or particular calling. That calling may be consciously recognized or not, but as the student becomes more conscious and better qualified, the student naturally responds and performs whatever work is there to be done.

Spiritual work generally includes development and service. Both of these dimensions are considered to be the dharma of the path. In the early stages of the path there is a natural emphasis on development, in developing the qualifications for more effective service. In the later stages of the path, as the

limitations of the personality are generally overcome, there is a natural emphasis on service or expression of qualified energies. Spiritual work builds upon and expands spiritual practice and tailors the application of spiritual principles to broader goals (beyond individual basis). Those who attempt spiritual work without having embraced the requisite spiritual practice are generally rather ineffective, as little if any of the higher energies will be attracted or expressed. But those who have embraced the preliminary discipline, who are engaged in spiritual practice, will naturally attract the needed energies and have the wherewithal to express them harmoniously, in accordance with the needs of the field of service.

The development of the spiritual student never really ends. And the so-called advanced student embraces the same preliminary discipline and spiritual practice as the neophyte. But as the student progresses, the work of development becomes more and more subtle. As the relative coarseness of the lower self (personality) is overcome, as the artificial independence and relative strength of personality (intellect) (ego) is transcended, the student becomes more and more effective and works more and more on subtle levels. Further development ultimately becomes synonymous with and wholly subordinated to service.

The principal role of the spiritual student is to serve humanity (and broader, planetary needs) according to his or her abilities, character, temperament, and values (spiritual maturity). Since service is predominantly a response to higher consciousness, there is ever a group context. Thus service is never (properly) a matter of contrived or individual effort. It is (properly) always a matter of context, the place and role of the student with the spiritual group, with the race (culture) (country) (humanity) (world) [circumstances].

Although there is particular work associated with each of the seven rays (and associated ashrams) and associated with each of the various groups of souls, it is more important for the student to respond to whatever calling is perceived rather than to determine (rationally) what needs to be done. Thus the student's circumstances generally convey the work to be done. There is opportunity for development and service no matter where the student is placed. It is the dharma of the student to do whatever is before him (her) to do. If the heart is properly functioning, the student will simply find himself (herself) in the needed

work. In the final analysis, just being in incarnation, just living in the world according to higher principles, affords both suitable development and service. By virtue of consciousness embraced, the student naturally (properly) shares higher energies and plays whatever role is need (consciously or otherwise).

† Commentary No. 1124

Development

The whole arena of life in the lower worlds of human endeavor is a matter of development (experience leading to assimilation of experience leading to growth (deepening) leading eventually to conscious service and the fulfillment of evolutionary goals on a broad scale). Development is both an individual matter, in the sense of preparing oneself for effective spiritual work (service) as well as collective, in the sense that it is the race as a whole that evolves in consciousness, and in the sense that each student (each person) contributes to that evolution in collective consciousness by virtue of his or her experience and expression, development and service.

Development proceeds in a number of different ways, according to one's circumstances and according to need at some level. There is a goal or objective for humanity as a whole (and in general for members of humanity) that one works toward (as circumstances conspire to create or evoke the needed experience leading to the needed growth in consciousness), and there are particular goals or objectives for each individual (established by the soul in group context). In a sense, each root-race contains the archetype or matrix for development of particular characteristics and abilities. Each sub-race contributes to the progress of the root-race. Each sub-race (and each branch-race) explores various opportunities for development.

In addition to the seven-fold racial expression (seven root-races, seven sub-races, seven branch-races) (which correlate to the seven rays in one dimension) there is developmental work associated with each of the seven rays in the personal (personality) dimension, such that eventually the student achieves maturity along each of the seven ray lines (even though the student also specializes in one or another of the rays by virtue of his or her soul ray). Thus

each personality expression (incarnation) is intended to develop along one or another of the ray lines whatever is next needed. With considerable diversity of ray types in incarnation (at the soul level and at the personality level), the whole is served (broader experience afforded by virtue of contrast, diversity, etc.).

Development is a never-ending panorama. There is always work to be done, on every level of manifestation. Even those who are not progressing consciously are progressing unconsciously by virtue of their experience (which is gradually assimilated at higher levels). The force of evolution is inexorable. As one becomes more and more conscious, one naturally discerns the presence of that force and its inherent (underlying) purpose, and one then naturally responds appropriately, working with the flow of evolutionary force rather than impeding it through inertia (absorption at material (body, ego) levels. One can even be responsive unconsciously, particularly as one becomes more qualified (refined in consciousness). Ultimately the only impediment is ego, and the ego is eventually transcended (and some more subtle challenge evoked).

Eventually, as the student matures, the focus shifts from individual (collective) development to individual (group) service. In this sense, service is another dimension (extension) of development, less personal, more inclusive. The student continues to develop, but the focus is upon service, upon doing what promotes the broader evolutionary goals rather than what appears to promote one's own apparent goals. In the final analysis, one cannot evolve in isolation. One can only really evolve as the entire group progresses, for individuality is merely a perspective. And development is merely a process within a broader scheme of things.

Metaphysics and Psychology

There are two great perspectives regarding the human experience, one being the metaphysical perspective (conventional and psychological) and the other being the perspective of psychology (conventional and metaphysical). The relationship of the two perspectives is largely complementary in focus and emphasis, but in the broader sense metaphysics includes psychology while (conventional) psychology generally does not include metaphysics.

The metaphysical perspective properly focuses on the framework for human evolution in consciousness, with consideration of the underlying principles and the metaphysical reality (the human being in the context of various planes of consciousness). The metaphysical perspective is properly based on direct realization (observation, participation, experience, understanding) without recourse to theories or statistics. Unfortunately, most people lack the experience and training that allows direct realization (clear perception and understanding of underlying reality) and therefore most people experience indirectly, on the basis of appearances (the objective world) and without benefit of understanding the (metaphysical) principles upon which life in these (lower) worlds is based. Conventional metaphysics is a matter of underlying principles (not theory) and direct perception, while psychological metaphysics is a matter of perceiving human nature within a metaphysical framework (in principle, through observation, without recourse to theories or interpretation). Yet few are able to perceive clearly, metaphysically or otherwise, due to inherent biases and personal consciousness.

Psychology is a conceptual framework and means of attempting to understand human behavior on the basis of observed experience. Unfortunately, observed experience is necessarily superficial. And the processes by which superficial experience is considered lead to generalizations based on limited experience and understanding. While many of these generalizations (theories) have a basis in actuality, they are rarely (if ever) generally applicable, even if they appear to be for most people in a given cultural context (the context in which the assumptions were made and conclusions drawn). Thus conventional

psychology is fundamentally speculative, as behavioral observations are interpreted in the context of theories and possibilities.

Conventional psychology is an arena with considerable limitations, yet helpful in many ways (particularly if those limitations are appreciated and taken into consideration), while metaphysical psychology is a much more potent arena by virtue of its appreciation for the underlying principles and its lack of generalization (application of theory). Being based on underlying reality (cause and effect relationships, the seven planes of consciousness, the evolutionary framework, etc.) rather than upon superficial experience and interpretations, metaphysical psychology offers the strength (validity) of both metaphysics and psychology, without the various (more substantial) limitations of conventional psychology.

The fundamental limitation of metaphysical psychology (and metaphysics) remains that of human perception and the attendant biases, while the fundamental limitation of conventional psychology is the recourse to speculation and interpretation (compounded wherever assumptions are made (further compounded wherever one is not consciously aware that assumptions have even been made)). And yet, as one deepens in consciousness, and these human limitations are gradually overcome, it becomes possible to understand more and more of human nature, in the context of metaphysical reality.

† Commentary No. 1126

Psychology 2

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

relationship (relative balance or interaction) between the soul and its personality.

There is considerable confusion in conventional psychology (as well as considerable and valuable insight) due to unconscious assumptions regarding human nature. For example, many people perceive the mind and the brain as synonymous, without appreciating the (metaphysical) reality of their distinction, namely that the brain is a physical instrument, subject to physical (biochemical) forces, while the mind is an altogether different instrument, on the mental plane, which utilizes the brain to some extent in expressing itself. Another source of confusion comes from the notions of soul and personality, where many people perceive the soul as simply the underlying or deeper emotional nature, rather than the more noble (transcendental) individuality that merely influences the personality to the extent that the personality is responsive.

Conventional psychology is the science of personality, primarily because conventional psychologists have not yet discovered the metaphysical reality (underlying evolutionary forces, distinctions between mind and brain, soul and personality, etc.). Metaphysical psychology broadens the perspective by including the nature of the soul and its relationship to the personality. The problem then is that most people are absorbed at the personality level so that the soul has little if any presence (influence). People are simply not (generally) responsive to the higher Self. Thus conventional psychology has some validity for most people (given the caveats that psychological theories may or may not be true and that even if (partially) true they may or may not be generally applicable). People tend to be individualistic. It is a characteristic engendered by the sojourn in the world of matter (personality) (ego). It is a characteristic that means that people do not (all) conform to psychological expectations, at least not necessarily, not generally, and at least not (necessarily or generally) in the same ways. It is also a characteristic that needs to be tempered and eventually transcended as higher reality is embraced.

Psychology then is the science of understanding the personality nature (life expressed through consciousness in the lower worlds), including all of the various conditioning forces and factors (heredity and environment) and the means for overcoming or working through these circumstances. The study of

psychology includes family, group, and cultural contexts. It includes the whole process of learning from experience, of deepening and growing. It includes the development of the personality as an effective instrument for living and working in the external world, and, in metaphysical psychology, it includes self-transformation and transcending the personality.

Psychology is (potentially) valuable both in terms of encouraging self-adjustment (growth, adaptation) and in terms of adjustment to external circumstances (group and cultural contexts) (right human relations).

† Commentary No. 1127

The Plan

The plan for humanity regarding evolution in consciousness follows from logic purpose and is derived from the overall framework of cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis. The various evolutionary forces provide qualification and stimulation along the intended lines of experience and expression. The details are not provided in the overall plan or in the manifestation of evolutionary forces, but rather unfold consequentially and interactively with consciousness. Thus the overall plan for manifestation and evolution in consciousness is very general, specific only in terms of cyclic manifestation of various forces, kingdoms, lifewaves, etc., and the corresponding qualifications of various rays.

The source of all this is simply the solar logos on the scale of the solar system and the planetary logos on the scale of the planetary scheme. Working with (within) the planetary logos are many "lives" who are well beyond the human stage as well as many advanced deva lives. These lives constitute the spiritual hierarchy of the planet and play the role of guiding or encouraging the working out of the generalized plan through application (evocation) of specific forces that work in harmony with the underlying evolutionary pressure. In this sense, there is a specific plan for each root-race and as progress is achieved and new circumstances arise then the plan is adjusted accordingly (according to need).

The implementation of the plan is through the various ray (soul) groups (ashrams) in consciousness and through the various working groups with

specific responsibilities for guiding and nurturing humanity (and other lives) through this (evolutionary) process. It is inherently a subjective and collective process, that occurs on the level of the soul (not on the level of the personality or mind), and then works out on lower (personality) levels as the various (conditioning and qualifying) forces are evoked. There is never any imposition from higher levels. There is only encouragement from subjective levels and karmic consequences (the working out of karmic forces) on more objective levels. Since karma is intimately related to evolution, there are effective bounds on human activities, yet ever progressive.

There are many sincere spiritually-minded people who are engaged in metaphysical and spiritual work, in some ways in response to higher impression (encouragement) (qualification), in some ways according to their own (ego) natures. But no one who is not working at the soul level (unconscious to the personality or mind) is actually directly involved in the process. Those who work at the personality level are at best indirectly involved (and there is unfortunately much glamour-induced delusion as to roles and significance). Those who work most effectively at the personality level are those who simply do whatever their circumstances call them to do (without having to think about roles or reasons or significance). Those who presume to understand and then play self-appointed roles are generally not as effective as their own ideas are generally not in accord with the larger pattern.

Yet the plan works out. Because the inner light workers of the world are able to respond to the vision held by the logos (and through the hierarchy) without inserting their personal energies. And because most people (unconsciously) are able to respond indirectly to the evolutionary pressures and naturally experience and express themselves accordingly. All contribute to the working out of the plan, some more directly, some less so. But the working out of the plan is very much a collective process. It ultimately involves everyone, and is not fulfilled until the race (lifewave) as a whole achieves its goals for each particular cycle of manifestation (activity).

Ashramic Affiliation

Every person has a soul. Every soul belongs to a soul group on one or another of the seven rays. Within each soul group are various ashrams according to the nature and qualifications of the soul. Thus everyone is affiliated with an ashram at some level or another. While some people are involved in worldly (worthwhile) ashrams (spiritual groups at the personality level), it is the inner affiliation (at the soul level) that really matters.

For most people, for virtually everyone, that affiliation is entirely at the soul level and does not have any direct effect on the personality (mind) (ego) in incarnation, simply because most people are not on the path and most people are not responsive to the soul (atma-buddhi-manas). Thus for most people, ashramic affiliation means simply that there is a subtle (ray) qualification from the soul (that the personality generally ignores). For those who are on the path, for those who are somewhat responsive to the soul, ashramic affiliation has more significance, as it provides more direct encouragement for experience and expression (development and service) and provides a context for inner growth.

When a person (soul) makes a commitment to the path then that commitment evokes a hastening of karma and evokes more directly the various evolutionary factors. When a person (personality) becomes responsive to these forces, then much more rapid progress is achieved and the person gradually becomes more and more expressive of the energy and qualification of the group (ashram). Such a person then participates more and more directly in the particular work of that group. It does not mean that the student's life-in-the-world is changed dramatically, but it does mean that whatever the student's life circumstances are, the group energy flows through the person and is applied to those circumstances.

The ashramic affiliation is primarily a matter of conveying the ray energy of the soul to the personality. For this to work properly, the personality must first be qualified, refined, tempered, etc., then integrated, and ultimately aligned with the soul. Prior to integration, there is no single ray energy working at the personality level. Once a person is properly integrated, the personality ray then

effectively qualifies the various components of the personality. Once the personality is aligned with the soul (or to the extent that it is responsive) then the ray energy of the soul (soul group) (ashram) flows into the personality, providing a more subtle ray qualification. Thus while the personality ray determines the outer character (personality) the soul ray determines the inner (soul) character.

Normal advancement (evolution in consciousness) remains within the framework of the ray ashram. As growth occurs (as experience is assimilated at the soul level), one (at the soul level) simply passes from one ashram to another within the same ray ashram, according to the magnetic character of the soul within the ray. Occasionally, as the character and nature of a person changes more substantially, the soul may actually transfer from one ray to another. This generally occurs as incarnations of the monad (on a much broader timescale than incarnations of the soul), but can happen within a monadic cycle if circumstances warrant. What is more likely, is that a person (soul) may be temporarily affiliated with another group, either for specialized experience, training, or service, or for some other (more subtle) reason (need). Such affiliation generally embraces an entire lifetime (or more), while one's ray (soul) affiliation generally embraces many, many lives.

† Commentary No. 1129

The Bermuda Protocol

The Bermuda Protocol is an archetype for the future, a pattern (archetype) for a new, future world order that is evoked into (higher) human consciousness in accordance with the evolutionary plan for humanity. It provides a framework for a culture and civilization well beyond what is presently achievable. It implies a culture and civilization suitable for the work of the sixth root-race.

The Bermuda Protocol does not in itself provide the specific means for achieving or evoking the described conditions, but in holding the vision provided in the protocol, that holding evokes the forces necessary to bring about the changes necessary to facilitate the needed conditions. The specific means and processes, the specific incremental changes and adjustments are not generally anticipated.

It is the existence of the protocol that evokes the means and processes. If light workers were to attempt to encourage present humanity (culture) (civilization) in the direction of the archetype, it would be unnecessarily disruptive and would probably undermine the intended changes. The problem is that the process is a creative one and the details of the process are only known retrospectively. In that process there are many implied lessons for humanity. And there are potentially many different paths that could be undertaken in order to reach the objective.

What matters is that there is an overall plan, with goals in consciousness, and that the protocol (pattern) (archetype) (framework) exists. What matters is that light workers can embrace the archetype (Bermuda protocol) in consciousness and not focus on the details or the specific processes. What matters is that humanity is unable to apprehend those details non-retrospectively (and indeed, it is not clear that even the spiritual hierarchy of the planet as a whole can apprehend the details or anticipate the specific steps that will bridge between the reality-of-now and the reality of the future world order). What matters is that light workers must remain open-minded about the possibilities rather than being entangled in the process (and in so being entangled interfere with the working out of the plan). Those who presume to know what steps must be taken are deluding themselves, presuming to understand what is inherently not (yet) understandable. That is the nature of ego (intellect), no matter how sincere it may be. Thus, embracing the vision of the future, without focusing on the intervening steps, enables and allows those steps to be taken, as they need to be, rather than as it is presumed to be.

The name (Bermuda) is merely convenient and is derived from the place where the protocol was first embraced in (lower) consciousness, although it suggests that the new order may emerge first in island nations or relatively small populations, where the transition may be more manageable, affording the larger, more populated countries more time to make the needed adjustments. The problem is one of avoiding imposition. The changes will be evoked gradually in human consciousness and not imposed artificially. Smaller groups may tend to be more responsive (less diverse, less independent) and be able to adjust relatively more quickly. Yet there is no haste. The timescale of these changes may be quite large, and therefore light workers must not be attached to seeing these changes in their present lifetimes, but simply participate in the vision of

the future and allow the evoked energies to flow unimpeded by personal expectations.

The protocol itself is not inflexible. As changes are made, as humanity advances in consciousness, as new patterns emerge, the protocol may also change, somewhat. It is, in that sense, a living archetype, much like the human personality matrix (individuality), but on a much broader scale.

† Commentary No. 1130

Conveyance

Conveyance is defined as the means or manner of imparting or transmitting something. In the context of the esoteric philosophy, and in the higher, more fundamental sense, what is conveyed is energy in the form of life, love, and light, the three dimensions of manifestation (otherwise known as spirit-consciousness-matter).

These three aspects of trinity are all involved in evolution. Each of the three is conveyed in some way or another and each conditions all of manifested life, consciousness, and form, in some manner or another. Conveyance is a first ray function, intimately involved with unfolding manifestation and evolutionary process. Included in this function are the conveyance of the first ray energy in its highest sense (life), the conveyance of the second ray energy likewise (love-wisdom), and similarly the conveyance of the third ray energy (light). In a sense, these are the roles of Shiva-Vishnu-Brahma (respectively) and conveyance (in this sense) is directly related to the so-called dance of Shiva.

In another sense, conveyance is the higher analogue to the process of invocation and evocation, in the broad sense of periodic and gradually differentiating waves of energy conveyed from the godhead (logos) through the three aspects of trinity, except that the invocation-evocation of conveyance is wholly internal (within the logos), while from the human perspective, one evokes energy (force) as a consequence of action (invocation) [actually, one also evokes energy (force) as a consequence of being]. But in the higher sense (logoic conveyance) there is just the logos and all phenomena is wholly internal. So the more direct analogue is

what a person does to (within) himself (herself) in consciousness, with direct or indirect effects upon some or all of the human components (component lives (consciousness) (form)).

In a lower sense, various lifewaves evoke various needed energies and then work with those energies, ultimately conveying each energy to some sort of resolution or fulfillment (working out). Similarly, each unit of life (human and otherwise) evokes various needed energies on its own (smaller) scale and eventually conveys each energy in some way or manner (resolution). For most people (who are not on the path), such activity is a matter of experience and expression and conveyance is an internal process. For those who are upon the (spiritual) path (properly), such activity is much less self-centered and much more a matter of conveying energy on behalf of the entire (human) race (or some other lifewave), i.e., through service. Thus real (metaphysical) (occult) work involves invocation, evocation, transformation (qualification), and conveyance. Of course this only occurs to the extent that the ego is not present, for these (higher) energies do not flow (directly) wherever there are significant impediments (e.g., ego, self-absorption, sleep (mechanicalness), coarseness, unresponsiveness, etc.).

Thus those who are sufficiently prepared (qualified) and trained, participate more directly (albeit almost unconsciously) in the conveyance of energies (being fully conscious of the conveyance invites the ego into play which in turn effectively prevents the flow from being fulfilled). And in a broader sense, the bulk of humanity play an even greater role, as by virtue of their obliviousness they are able to work with these energies collectively. Progress is achieved primarily to the extent that the entire race is able to embrace the needed energies constructively (in accordance with the plan). In this sense, the various light workers work more directly, while the bulk of humanity work more indirectly and collectively.

Logoic Purpose

Logoic purpose is the underlying force of manifestation, the reason for existence. Everything else in universal manifestation follows from that inherent purpose, without which there would be endless pralaya. Logoic purpose evokes the underlying (derivative) forces of manifestation, e.g., karma, through various means of (logoic) projection and induction.

Logoic purpose might also be perceived as the will of God. Although there is a (divine) will, it is incomprehensible (having a very substantially higher dimensionality than human awareness). God (the logos) does not willfully provide details in manifestation, but rather, the details are derived from the existence of the underlying purpose and the various laws that emerge in response to that purpose. Laws are induced by the logos, by virtue of purpose, not by virtue of detailed (willful) intention. Thus consequences at every level of manifestation are derived from the working of underlying principles and from internal interactions (e.g., the interaction of particular human consciousness with karmic consequences that that consciousness (experience and expression) has evoked (which interaction (response) in turn evokes additional consequences)).

The fulfillment of logoic purpose is a creative and interactive process. The intended outcome is relatively general, particularly with regard to methods and means. Manifestation is simply a projection of logoic (qualifying) force (life) in order to provide a framework for fulfillment of logoic purpose. The various constraints and boundaries (e.g., karma as a limiting factor) provide coherence. The evolutionary impulse provides momentum toward fulfillment. The inertial force of matter prevents overall instability. Thus each of the factors and forces of manifestation play a role in achieving the fulfillment of logoic purpose, whatever that may be. In general, that purpose is the evolution of consciousness, at all levels within the logoic field, but the specific goals are only dimly perceived or realized, and then, only to the extent that they relate directly or indirectly to the human experience.

In some sense, (some of) the methods and means of evolution are experimental and provided for (encouraged) in the evolutionary (purposive) qualification of life-consciousness-matter. There is an aspect of experimental diversity to manifestation, due to underlying principles, yet there remains coherence (equilibrium) and focus, also due to the underlying principles (forces). There is genesis. And there is epigenesis. Some consequences may be intended. Other consequences are the fruits of the experiment (while some may ultimately be counter-productive (evoking further consequences as untoward elements are tempered)). But it is the qualified process itself that provides the necessary safeguards, not the will of component or intermediary lives.

Much can be deduced from the nature of universal manifestation, e.g., the various patterns (cycles) of qualifying forces (rounds, globes, rays, etc.), but the student is cautioned from drawing or inferring firm conclusions as the human perspective and experience is very, very narrow and substantially limited in comparison with logocentric consciousness, and human consciousness is analogous to the cells of one's physical body. One can understand only to the extent of one's field of experience and awareness. One can work through only that which is understood, either consciously or unconsciously (and generally both). The existence and work (application) of the various evolutionary forces should suffice to motivate and encourage the spiritual student to cooperate, by aligning oneself with the evolutionary forces and transcending the inertial aspect (the human body, personality nature, and ego).

† Commentary No. 1132

Healing the Open Aura

Healing an open aura, even a partially open aura, is a definite challenge. There is the condition itself, its extent and complexity. There is the karmic factor, which may actually prevent (or facilitate) any healing or resolution in the current circumstances (lifetime). And there is an issue of ethics with regard to the role of anyone attempting to help.

A fully open aura is quite rare and extremely difficult to resolve. There is generally so much inertia due to the condition being a karmic consequence that there is little that one can do except to encourage the understanding or

adjustment in consciousness that is necessary in order for the next aura (i.e., in the next incarnation) to be healthy. In the case of a fully open aura there is no semblance of self-control, indeed no focus stable enough to even work with. The patient may be wholly at the mercy of external forces on etheric and astral levels and may be obsessed or possessed. Or in a less extreme case, the patient may be merely wholly open to non-malicious external forces (which may be nonetheless difficult).

Where there is an external entity involved it is a relatively simple matter to intervene, provided the karma is permissive, separating the external entity from the patient, through application of appropriate (properly qualified) force, and through either releasing or disposing of the external entity, depending on its nature (in some cases the external entity is artificial and must subsequently be absorbed by the patient). Then it is a matter of healing or closing the aura to the extent that the patient is able to respond in a meaningful (cooperative) way. This can be accomplished using a variety of mental-psychic techniques (e.g., evoking force to stabilize the aura, closing the gaps, and sealing the aura in a protective and stabilizing manner). This is relatively straight-forward in the case of a partially open aura, provided there is cooperation and sincere intent (e.g., a matter of learning and adjustment in consciousness).

But before these techniques can be (generally) successful, there are two prerequisites, namely (1) understanding and (2) willingness to embrace methods of refinement and self-discipline. Without understanding, or without the responsiveness to learning, the patient is likely to undermine any healing practices. Likewise, without embracing methods of suitable refinement and self-discipline, the healing efforts are more likely to be superficial and temporary. In other words, there are habits in consciousness that undermine the process of healing the aura and of sustaining a healthy aura. Those habits need to be overcome and new, healthier practices embraced, before any real healing can take place. For example, smoking fills the aura with particulates which render the aura more vulnerable (and attracts a coarser energy); drinking alcohol tends to loosen the connections between the vehicles and makes it virtually impossible to achieve coherence in the aura (and the personality as a whole); eating flesh foods (meat, fish, fowl) introduce coarser (animal) elements that work against the gradual refinement that facilitates integration and alignment.

So as the patient (student) embraces the preliminary disciplines of the path, including meditative practice, there is then the possibility of making more substantial adjustments (healing) in the aura (in general and in the case of the open aura). Real healing is accompanied by understanding and adjustment. And real healing is predominantly a matter of self-healing, although others may assist in the process, through encouragement or provision of energies, or through collaboration.

† Commentary No. 1133

Knowing

The problem of knowing, of believing with some certainty that one has knowledge, that one actually knows something, is really a matter of validity or actuality, compounded by perception (belief) and the means through which "knowing" is achieved.

Something is either true or not true (or partially true). Knowledge is acquired through experience, through perception, through study, through realization. But knowledge may be real (true) or not, or partially real. And if one proceeds on the basis of something "known" that is actually only partially true or not true then one is misleading oneself and furthering misunderstanding (compounded by the unconscious assumption that something is true). Knowing can arise in a number of different ways, including instinct (at animal, etheric, or astral levels), intellect (at concrete mental or rational levels), and intuition (at the level of buddhi).

Instinctive knowing is generally true, except that one generally interprets instinctive knowledge (feelings) and what is interpreted (or believed) may or may not be true. One might "feel" hostility from someone but in fact may be merely misreading body language (subconsciously) (and body language is never wholly reliable as it is subject to individual and cultural diversity). The instincts rely on physical, etheric, and astral senses, predominantly at unconscious levels, and therefore there tends to be a great deal of conditioning involved (unconscious mechanicalness). In addition to conditioning there are factors of desire and ego. Desire (conscious or otherwise) colors one's perceptions (at instinctive (subconscious) levels and at more direct levels (sense

perception)); one tends to sense what one wants to at some level. Ego is a considerable bias applied unconsciously or indirectly to this process.

Intellectual knowing is based on rationalization, deliberately and consciously or indeliberately and unconsciously (or partially so). One may try to be objective, but conditioning, ego, etc., generally limit one's ability to be objective. One's beliefs and one's values definitely color the process of reasoning, and so intellectual knowing is mostly a matter of belief rather than (really) knowing something (which may happen to be true (or not)). Knowing is compounded by certainty. If one is very certain of the truth of something, then that is a very strong indication that the basis of truth is unfounded, that the belief is a matter of attachment rather than realization of truth (of course the "knowledge" may still be true (or may not be)). Certainty in knowledge (or perception of truth) indicates closed-mindedness or ego. The wise are never really certain, because they realize that all perception and all knowledge and all understanding is relative, partial, and limited, and therefore one should consider all knowledge (beliefs) to be tentative and provisional.

Intuitive knowing is based on the functioning of the soul (atma-buddhi-manas) rather than the (physical-emotional-mental) personality (ego). The soul does not get involved in anything personal, and therefore any "intuition" that is personal is definitely not intuition, but is rather either intellectually or instinctively based (i.e., most of what is perceived to be intuition is really the subtle product of intellect or the more direct product of instinct). But what is really intuitional knowing is true. The problem then is that what is known at the intuitional level must still be brought into the mind for a person to have any conscious appreciation of it, and once the intuitive insight is brought into the mind then it is subject to interpretation (conditioning), etc. All the more "reason" to consider all knowing as tentative and provisional.

Knowledge

Knowledge is that body of information that is “known” or believed to be known and understood, that provides a basis for perceived understanding, for relating experience, and for evolving in consciousness through the assimilation of knowledge into understanding. The problem of knowledge is the general lack of objectivity that prevails in human consciousness, given immersion in the material world. It is virtually impossible to determine the validity of information at its own level.

Thus knowledge in the sense of the field of the human mind is compounded by the nature of the world (universe) (manifestation) (and the false perspective that prevails on material levels), the nature of mind (and the false perspective of self (ego)), and the nature of perception. People tend to make assumptions about these things without necessarily realizing the difficulties and generally without even realizing that assumptions are being made. What is generally believed to be readily apparent and true, may not be generally or actually true. Thus the mind-field of human perception and thinking is fertile ground for contrast leading to evolution in consciousness.

The theme of knowledge provides a focus and foundation for understanding human experience and the worlds of consciousness in which humanity lives. Knowledge properly assimilated produces understanding. Understanding properly embraced produces wisdom. Knowledge is not actually conveyed from incarnation to incarnation, although the ability to retrieve knowledge may be conveyed. Understanding is not actually conveyed from incarnation to incarnation either, but the capacity for understanding is a matter of evolution (achievement) and so conveys progressively, from one lifetime or incarnation to another. Wisdom is definitely conveyed from lifetime to lifetime, directly for those who are attuned to some extent to the higher Self, indirectly otherwise, for those who are able to listen to conscience. Unfortunately, some people are so absorbed (self-absorbed) on material (emotional) (intellectual) (personality) (ego) levels that their ability to draw upon the wisdom of the higher Self, even indirectly (through conscience), is limited.

The real problem of life in the lower worlds is not knowledge, nor the acquisition of knowledge, nor even the assimilation of knowledge, but the assumption of knowledge, and the assumption of understanding. The real problem is maya and glamour and illusion. By presuming (predominantly) unconsciously, the nature of the world (and the nature of self), a person greatly compounds the problem. As the student progresses, he or she gradually transcends maya (inertia on physical and etheric levels). As the student progresses further, perception that is clouded by (through) glamour (inertia on emotional or astral levels) and illusion (inertia on mental levels) is gradually and eventually fully overcome, as the student achieves the alignment of a purified and integrated personality with the soul, through intelligent meditation. This process of waking-up, to higher and higher, deeper and deeper, levels, is the real work of evolution in consciousness.

But waking-up requires a great deal of preparation (and persistence). Waking-up requires sufficient and pertinent knowledge. It requires understanding and open-mindedness. In this sense, knowledge is a legacy, earned by virtue of experience and expression (action and consequence) (karma), (and therefore) always merited, and knowledge (understanding) conveys responsibility, to act sensibly and appropriately based upon that knowledge (to the extent of understanding).

† Commentary No. 1135

Love

Love is the aspect of consciousness, the second aspect of the trinity (life-love-light). In the highest, deepest, most noble sense, love is the quality of the heart of the logos (God), in manifestation, as (Christ) consciousness. This quality pervades all of manifested life, residing within every human being, within every lifeform, within every atom. In this higher sense, love is divine, impersonal (transpersonal), unconditional, and universal.

There are no “kinds” of love, yet a distinction can be made between love (itself) and the many ways in which love can be embraced and/or expressed. Thus there are various kinds of ways in which love is embraced or manifested at the human level. In this (human) sense, love may be embraced or manifested completely

and unconditionally or incompletely and conditionally (or partially so). Whenever and wherever (however) love is embraced in some personal way, it is necessarily partial, conditional, and limited. Whenever and wherever (however) love is embraced impersonally, yet through the heart (chakra) (which is, in fact, the only way that love can be truly embraced) (and not merely intellectually), then love is embraced in a relatively unconditional and unconstrained manner.

In the course of ordinary human experience and expression, one naturally embraces love and expresses love in various (limited) ways, according to consciousness. There is love expressed in the form of attachment (e.g., to a person or group (through identification), to something material or immaterial). There is love expressed in the form of friendship and/or relationship (in various degrees of attachment, entanglement, consideration, etc.). And there is love expressed in the form of non-attachment. Love flows naturally. It is only the personality (intellect) (ego) that limits that flow by virtue of and to the extent of the sense of individuality (separation). Where love is allowed to flow naturally, rather than constrained by expectations or personal considerations, then it is more natural (more true) and conveys more of the higher nature.

The “reason” that “love” is so potent a quality in manifestation is that it connects the heart of a human being with the heart of the logos (and the heart of a human being with the heart of another). If one is impersonal, and able to work through the higher Self, then one is connected consciously and directly with the heart in all lives. In this sense, all lives are directly connected, one with every other. If one is more personal, then while the heart “connection” is universal, what is actually “felt” is less so (e.g., the connection of two people). A “connection” at the personality level (between personalities) may be quite meaningful, but if the connection is realized on higher levels, then it is much more substantial.

Although in metaphysics and theosophy one tends to consider the second aspect as consciousness, the real nature of the second aspect is love, and consciousness is, depending on perspective, either an attribute or consequence of love (quality), or love itself. Thus love and consciousness are synonymous, yet each is a perspective or framework for the second aspect. While life (the first aspect) is more fundamental than love, it is quality (love) (the second aspect) that makes life meaningful, for love is the means of conveyance of life, the

means of growth (development) (experience) (creation) (evolution in consciousness). In the practical sense, there is much experience that may not appear to be related to love, yet, in the final analysis, all meaningful experience is related to love in one sense or another.

† Commentary No. 1136

Paths of Approach 2

There are many and diverse paths of approach. The first role of the various paths of approach is to lead the student from a strictly mundane life (absorption at the mechanical levels of fully-conditioned personality) to having a more predominantly spiritual focus, not necessarily metaphysical or theosophical, but at least spiritual. The second role of the various paths of approach is to prepare the student for the commitment that is required for the student to embark upon the spiritual path proper. Although the formal (spiritual) path has general requirements, each path of approach contributes something to the formal path.

Some of these paths of approach are structured, some are unstructured. Some have a cultural or religious context, others do not. Some paths of approach are predominantly head-centered. Some are predominantly heart-centered. The only commonality is the two-fold role that they serve. The spiritual path proper begins when the soul (not the personality) makes a commitment to conscious and deliberate evolution in consciousness, and begins to demand of the personality adherence to the way. That decision evokes a considerable hastening of the rate at which karma is evoked, making "life" rather difficult for the personality but resulting in considerable and rapid progress.

The elements of the spiritual path are very consistent in its various forms. Every metaphysical, theosophical, and occult group that is sanctioned within the context of the spiritual path embraces the same essential elements, even while the cultural setting and flavor may vary from one group to another. The teachings anent the path, regardless of particular religion or spiritual group or language, etc., are similar and consistent. When one understands the language-beyond-words (patterns), then one can discern the higher teachings within every framework and language, however the words may be used.

The spiritual path proper has three stages, probation, discipleship, and initiation. In the probationary path, the focus is necessarily upon the refinement of the personality and preparation for wielding the energies evoked along the way. The probationary path leads a student through the preliminary discipline (commitment to no smoking, no drinking, no eating of flesh foods, (meat, fish, fowl), commitment to daily meditation and other spiritual practices) and prepares the student for discipleship. The intent is to purify and refine the personality to enable it to sustain the pressures of more serious metaphysical work and to enable the consciousness to reach higher levels (enabling the student to respond more so to higher impression).

As the physical, emotional, and mental nature is refined, it becomes possible (necessary) to integrate these three dimensions into a single personality energy. Once that is properly achieved, the student can begin to transcend the intellectual and ego natures, becoming then more and more responsive to the soul. Alignment of soul and personality is simply not possible without considerable refinement and proper integration. As the student progresses, the preliminary discipline continues and expands to include more and more subtle work. While probation is primarily a matter of development and preparation, discipleship is primarily a matter of service or application of one's quality of consciousness, within the context of the spiritual group. This does not imply or require any sort of guru-devotee relationship (which is more characteristic of some paths of approach). Indeed, discipleship in the framework of the spiritual path proper relies almost entirely upon the higher Self for guidance, in the context of some soul group (ashram on soul levels).

Paths of Approach 3

Discipleship per se cannot be embraced until the probationary work is accomplished and the preliminary discipline is sustained naturally.

Discipleship cannot be embraced until virtually all of one's karma is fulfilled. Otherwise the student would simply be unable to wield the evoked forces safely and effectively. For the soul (spiritual path) does indeed evoke almost overwhelming forces and energies, to be wielded and shared in the context of collective (human and planetary) evolution in consciousness (service).

The final stage is called the path of initiation and involves progressive and formal relationship within the context of the spiritual hierarchy or inner government and beyond. Initiation is never the result of seeking. It is always the result of being properly prepared. Anyone who claims to be an initiate is not, in this proper sense. Initiates and masters and adepts work anonymously, quietly, and behind the scenes, remaining unrecognized by humanity within the world.

In addition to the three stages of the spiritual path there is another dimension, that of the spiritual hierarchy and soul groups. Human (planetary) evolution is guided (not controlled) through the auspices of the hierarchy (comprised of human souls who have evolved beyond the need to incarnate, who have completely fulfilled their karma and have graduated from human-ness, who remain with the human evolution as an act of service). All human souls belong to one or another of the seven ray ashrams or one of the peripheral ray ashrams. Within each ray ashram are various component ashrams at various levels of consciousness. Each soul belongs to a soul group within some ashram, according to the nature and character of the soul. The ashram (esoteric group) then provides encouragement and opportunities for service within the context of the path and in accordance with the abilities (preparation and fitness) and responsiveness of the individual in incarnation.

One should keep in mind that in this context (1) soul refers to atma-buddhi-manas, that which is beyond and transcends the personality-intellect-ego, (2) the words "ashram" and "initiate" and "master" and "disciple" etc. are often

utilized within a more profane (human) (worldly) context of paths of approach. There is much glamour involved in the various paths of approach. As one progresses, one naturally works through and beyond glamour and illusion, achieving increasingly greater clarity and detachment from life in the material (ego) world. There are signs in the aura of every human being, signs that unequivocally indicate the degree of refinement of each of the bodies and the extent of integration (if any) and the extent of alignment (if any). There are signs that unequivocally indicate the extent of openness and health of each of the various chakras. There are also unequivocal signs as to the ray nature (personality and soul) and to affiliations with ray ashrams and soul groups. Of course these signs are only unequivocal for someone who has the training and ability to discern them.

The various paths of approach anticipate the requirements of the formal (general) (spiritual) path and the needs of particular students, and help prepare students for the commitments and dedication required. Depending on one's ray nature and depending on one's character and temperament, some of the preliminary work is embraced during approach (while all of the preliminary work is embraced once the student is placed on the path). The paths of approach are largely a matter of seeing to what extent one is responsive to the needs and demands of the path, and gradually cultivating responsiveness.

† Commentary No. 1138

Equivalence

Though it is relatively easy for the objective mind to see distinctions within the diverse field of manifestation, the more fundamental basis for manifestation, and the inherent potency of comprehending manifestation is found in equivalence. Equivalence is defined as the state or property of being equal in force, amount, or value, alike in significance, being virtually identical, especially in effect or function. Equivalence in the more metaphysical sense recognizes the sameness of various aspects or dimensions of manifestation. There are different levels of equivalence, but all rely on the seven rays (or some comparable and equivalent perspective) and the various relationships between the rays (or components). In equivalence, the same energy is perceived in different ways, yet

through appreciation of equivalence there is revealed additional insight concerning that energy.

At the level of one of the seven rays, the nature of the ray is revealed through its energy and quality of energy. Through the auspices of the first ray, for example, purpose and life and will and power and the monad are all equivalent. Through the second ray love and wisdom and consciousness and energy and the soul are all equivalent. And through the third ray light and matter and the personality are all equivalent. In a sense, life is power. Each reveals the other. In another sense, each is merely an aspect of something that each represents. If one touches love then one also touches wisdom and consciousness. One cannot touch an aspect of something without touching all aspects of that something to some extent.

At the level of ray relationships, all of the rays in a given relationship are equivalent. The odd-numbered rays reveal each other. The even-numbered rays likewise. Each pair of reflected rays (1:7) (2:6) (3:5) likewise. The odd-numbered rays reveal the head-nature of manifestation. The even-numbered rays reveal the heart-nature of manifestation. Each pair of reflected rays reveals relationship between the higher and lower aspects, between the essence and its manifestation. Yet each is equivalent. In touching the lower one is also touching the higher (to some extent). Each provides a link to the other. The objective mind may dwell in the realm of distinctions between all of these things, but the subjective mind sees the more essential nature (equivalence). For example, in addition to appreciating the nature of love and the nature of wisdom, the student can appreciate that love-wisdom is an essential equivalence having deeper and broader dimension than either love or wisdom perceived separately. Love-wisdom seen in equivalence rather than combination reveals the underlying and overshadowing soul (Christ consciousness).

At another level all of the rays are equivalent. In touching one, in this higher sense, the student touches them all. The personality ray becomes a means of approaching the soul. The soul ray becomes a means of touching the monad. Any ray becomes a means of touching the whole. It is all a matter of perspective. A third ray personality, for example, who sees himself (herself) as an individuality is apparently isolated and substantially limited in consciousness, but a third ray personality who sees all rays within himself

(herself) is not only not apparently isolated in consciousness but is much more definitely linked to all the energies of the seven rays.

So, the real value of equivalence is two-fold, namely (1) energetically, it provides a means of embracing the whole from any part and (2) practically, in consideration of merely apparently distinctly different aspects seen in equivalence, the higher truth of something can be revealed.

† Commentary No. 1139

Artificial Entities 1

There are many lifeforms throughout manifestation, some who (which) function only on one level of consciousness (dense physical, etheric, emotional, mental, etc.), some which function on more than one level (e.g., the human being). In virtually every instance, each lifeform is a life-within-a-life. The human being is a cell of consciousness within a (much) greater entity. The cells of the human body are lives in their own right, being ensouled, experiencing evolution, etc., at their level. There are many artificial or superficial aspects to manifestation, but there is a distinction between ensouled (evolving) entities and artificial entities.

An ensouled, evolving entity is one who (which) is part of a collective consciousness (soul), emanating from the logos in support of its evolutionary intent, which has continuity from one lifetime to another, from one cycle of manifestation to another, through involution and evolution. In this sense, a real entity is one who (which) is linked directly to the logos and one who has continuity. In this sense, the soul is more real than the personality, but the personality survives in the form of a personality matrix (archetype) (permanent atoms) within the soul.

Thus the personality is somewhat but not completely artificial. The component lives of the personality are more real than the personality. The body and the mind are somewhat artificial. The body dies and disintegrates. The mind likewise. The inner, higher essence (soul) passes on to embrace the next incarnation. But the cells of the body also pass on, as cells, while the body (and mind) as a whole no longer exists. The ego is entirely artificial, as its "life" or

existence is quite transient. The ego is not ensouled. The ego is not an evolving entity. The ego exists artificially, in accordance with the need of the person in incarnation, but the ego does not survive or pass on between lives.

There are other, wholly artificial entities which, like the ego, exist without continuity, without being ensouled, without drawing "life" directly from some higher essence. These artificial entities draw energy from those who are alive, but are not alive in themselves. The ego does not live. Artificial entities may express power, but it is power derived artificially, from others, rather than from within oneself. Artificial entities are created, consciously or deliberately or unconsciously or indeliberately, through various activities (e.g., thinking and feeling). If one's thoughts and feelings are contained, then they function within the consciousness of their creator. More generally, if (as) one's thoughts and feelings (or some of them) are projected into the immediate environment (astral or emotional and concrete mental levels) they have an artificial and transient existence. Without being sustained by their creator, they serve their purpose and then naturally disintegrate.

But where there is intensity in the creative process, where there is adverse energy, the artificial entities thus created (intensified thoughts and feelings) may be longer-lived than would otherwise be the case. If there is sufficient intensity (power) and resonance, these artificial entities may amalgamate with other, similar entities and become rather potent. Where many people live in fear, for example, each contributes to the demon thus created, which in turn draws power (sustenance) from anyone whose aura is sympathetic. Thus people not only create demons (artificial entities of an adverse kind) but sustain them through their continued adverse thinking and feeling, and those entities then tend to deplete the energies of their creators or sustainers.

Artificial Entities 2

Some who have encountered adverse artificial entities (demons) have been surprised at their apparent intelligence and have presumed them to be ensouled. But apparent intelligence expressed by these entities is relatively superficial, a matter of programming or conditioning, deliberate or otherwise. Entities are linked to their source, which is generally a human being who is carelessly (or otherwise) creating or sustaining them. Their nature is relatively coarse, and so they do not generally affect people, except those people who are comparably coarse or vulnerable in some related sense (e.g., someone with an open aura is particularly vulnerable to astral entities of various kinds, and someone who is fearful will attract creatures (artificial and otherwise) that feed upon and simultaneously stimulate the fear within the aura).

Artificial intelligence in this sense is really a matter of conditioned instinct rather than there being any reasoning ability (which is not possible without a direct connection or involvement in (with) some (real) thinking creature). The ego, however, even though artificial, is directly linked to the concrete mind and emotions of the human being and therefore draws upon both the intelligence and nature of the person (personality) as a whole. The ego can manipulate the working of both the emotions and the concrete mind, to its own ends (mainly self-preservation and control of the personality). But an artificial entity cannot “think” independently of a real thinking entity.

There is a distinction between internal and external demons. Internal demons are artificial but exist and are sustained within one’s consciousness, generally at etheric, astral (emotional), and/or concrete mental levels, and generally on the lower sub-planes thereof. They are created internally and function mostly by way of keeping a person absorbed at the personal level (i.e., at the level of desires, selfishness, self-centeredness, etc.). The ego is the principal internal entity, and although it serves a purpose, it must ultimately be reckoned with. External demons are created within the aura but are then cast out or projected (consciously or otherwise), and then they can function largely independently of their source, drawing energy from anyone who is sympathetic (who is embracing a similar energy).

But in either case, the person who creates an artificial entity is responsible and accountable for its effects. Internal demons must be dealt with (resolved) through adjustments in consciousness, as a person learns and grows (and faces the truth about oneself at the personality level). External demons must also be dealt with, either through destroying them (dissolving them into non-aggregated constituent atoms) or through absorbing them (if one is strong enough and able), depending on their nature and one's abilities.

The "worst" demons are aggregates on the lower reaches of the astral plane which are sustained by mass or collective consciousness, however unconsciously. Where a large group of people are antagonistic toward another, then demons are created which then "attack" the auras of those to whom they are (unconsciously) directed. Antagonism is generally mutual, and so there are often two sets of demons, with hardly any difference between them. Large-scale fear (bias) (prejudice) also produces demons which in turn encourage and sustain the fear (bias) (prejudice). Those who create these creatures are still accountable, even collectively. And as people grow, as lessons are learned, as the collective consciousness improves, then "positive" energies (goodwill) begin to predominate, eventually (effectively) killing off (dissolving) the demons by virtue of there no longer being any (coarse) resonance.

† Commentary No. 1141

Manifestation and the Seven Rays 2

In addition to implied, underlying purpose, there are really three principal dimensions or aspects of manifestation. (1) There are the seven planes of consciousness which provide a field of (for) manifestation. (2) There are seven rays or fundamental energies which qualify all of manifestation by association and ordered progression (including the seven planes of consciousness). (3) And there is life which manifests through the seven planes and is qualified by the seven rays.

The seven planes provide the background or field of (for) manifestation and the manifested life merely flows through this field of manifestation in accordance

with (seven-fold) ordered impulse. Yet, in a sense, the seven rays are more fundamental than either (planes of consciousness or manifested life). The seven rays are life (energy) in the most basic sense, from which and through which everything other than the unmanifest proceeds. The seven planes of consciousness are great lives induced through the auspices of and qualified by the seven rays. The various lifewaves issue forth from the unmanifested state in a seven-fold cyclic panorama, again through the auspices of and qualified by the seven rays. Thus both the seven planes and manifested life are aspects of the seven rays.

From another perspective (life in the more general sense), the seven rays and the seven planes are aspects of life through the expression of consciousness. Thus distinctions between planes, rays, and life (manifested or otherwise) are not so clear. What is clear is correlation and correspondence. Manifestation proceeds in an ordered manner (with considerable opportunity for diversity) (i.e., in a qualified but non-rigid manner). Life is more fundamental than consciousness and the seven rays bridge between and enfold both life and consciousness. The very ordering of life-consciousness-appearance (manifestation) is in accordance with the seven rays. Everything in manifestation corresponds to one or another or several or all of the seven rays, and to one or another in particular. Nothing in manifestation fails to correspond with one or another of the seven rays. Even "nothing" (the void) corresponds to the first ray.

Many people are familiar (cursorily or otherwise) with the principles of astrology and perceive manifestation in terms of astrological forces and their expression (qualification) (influence) (compelling or otherwise). While this is a valid perspective, astrological forces are merely derived from various combinations of ray energies (and not vice versa). The various planetary and solar lives (logoi) are themselves ray lives of one form or another (and so qualified and qualifying). Yet astrological (seven ray) forces embody (evolutionary) purpose more directly than spirit-consciousness-matter per se. Planes of consciousness and waves of manifested lives are merely the field of manifestation and the instruments of experience and expression, respectively. Both (planes and lives) are qualified by the seven rays. The seven rays are simply more fundamental.

Of course the source (God) is most fundamental, but even at the logoic level, the seven rays are very much in evidence. It is only at the level of the unmanifest (absolute) that the seven rays are dissolved. As manifestation comes to an end and the underlying forces are progressively withdrawn, the various logoic lives are synthesized (combined) (dissolved into each other) (abstracted) (extracted) according to relationships between the seven rays until there is only the one (in its unmanifested state).

† Commentary No. 1142

Esoteric Psychology

For practical purposes there are four major dimensions or levels of psychology. There is conventional (orthodox) (academic) psychology, which is based primarily on worldly experience, observations pertaining to human behavior, theories, conclusions, etc. There is transpersonal psychology which goes beyond the conventional and takes into account a broader framework. There is metaphysical psychology, which is based, in principle, upon direct observation of the human condition (thoughts and feelings) (aura) and intuitive insight. And there is esoteric psychology, which places all of psychology (human nature) (experience and expression) in the context of the underlying seven rays. Each of the four dimensions of psychology have considerable value, if placed in a proper perspective, with appreciation for the implied limitations of each.

Conventional psychology is the psychology of the personality and relies mainly on superficial observations (generally subject to considerable human bias). Metaphysical psychology is also the psychology of the personality, but it relies more on clairvoyant or intuitive observations and underlying metaphysical principles (and is also generally subject to considerable human bias). But esoteric psychology is the psychology of the whole person, including the monad and the soul and the relationships between the three aspects of the human being. Esoteric psychology focuses primarily on the soul and its evolution in consciousness through its instrument (the human personality (mind) (ego)). The only real limitation of esoteric psychology is the relative ability of the human being to apprehend the energies and principles (reality) upon which it is based.

The problem or limitation of conventional psychology is that it relies on superficial observations (bias) and generally does not take into account the underlying metaphysical reality. Metaphysical psychology goes beyond conventional psychology and takes the underlying reality into account but is still limited by interpretation (bias) and understanding (context). Esoteric psychology goes beyond both conventional and metaphysical psychology and embraces the whole person and the evolutionary (energetic) context. Esoteric psychology provides insight into the relationships between personality and soul and monad, between the person (personality) in incarnation and the underlying purpose of life.

While esoteric psychology is ageless and timeless, and has been known to esoteric students for aeons, it has been popularized in more recent times through the books of Alice A. Bailey, particularly through A Treatise on the Seven Rays in its five volumes. Of course the “esoteric psychology” is no longer esoteric, but it does still represent the breadth and depth of understanding human nature in the context of the spiritual path (evolution in consciousness) and places the human being (experience and expression) in the broader context of purposive manifestation.

The basis of esoteric psychology is that everything within the manifested universe is composed of and related to one or another or several or all of seven great qualifying rays (energies). The human being relates to all seven rays, but in particular ways, and progressively. As the student evolves through various cycles, in consciousness, the student gradually develops each of the seven ray energies (components) until the student has mastered all seven (in the limited context of the human state). There are relationships between the rays. And there are ray relationships between the various aspects of the human being.

The Healthy Aura 1

The human aura is composed of the etheric body, the astral or emotional body (kama), and the concrete mind (mental body) (manas), in the sense of these three bodies forming an energy field through which the human being functions in the lower worlds (the physical body being merely an instrument on dense physical levels). The health of the physical body is directly related to the health of the aura (through the vitality of the etheric body (etheric double) (prana) and through the relative quality of kama-manas (emotions (feelings on astral levels) and thoughts).

From one perspective, the human being in incarnation is composed of the various bodies that form the personality as a whole (physical, etheric, astral or emotional, and concrete mental). From another perspective, the human being in incarnation is the human aura, which is the means of interacting with the world and other people, for experience and expression. From a third perspective, the human being in incarnation is composed of seven chakras in various stages of unfoldment (and expressing various qualities) (the chakras are the energy vortices between the various dimensions or levels (planes and sub-planes) of consciousness that facilitate the flow of energy (life and consciousness)). All three perspectives are true, being three aspects of the whole. The seven chakras represent (embody) life (spirit). The bodies represent matter. And the human aura represents consciousness, which bridges between matter and spirit (life).

The role of the spiritual student in this sense is to be healthy, to not hinder or obstruct the proper functioning of the chakras, to maintain the aura and the bodies in a healthy state, so that experience (learning) and expression (service) are facilitated (which encourages evolution in consciousness). A healthy person (with a healthy aura) is energy positive with regard to the immediate atmosphere, that is, such a person contributes positive (good) (constructive) energy to the collective consciousness. An unhealthy person (with an aura that is not so healthy) is energy negative with regard to the immediate atmosphere, that is, such a person either drains energy from the collective consciousness or contributes negative energy (influence that impedes growth in consciousness).

In this sense, a healthy aura is one in which there is balance (harmony) (stability) and relatively refined (good) energy. A healthy person has healthy (non-critical, non-judging, non-separative) thoughts and feelings. An unhealthy person is one who is relatively more self-centered (self-absorbed) and who proceeds more or less independently of the apparent welfare of (all) others. A healthy person (in this spiritual sense) conveys healing energy (encouragement) to all, more or less unconsciously, by virtue of being (not through contriving to share).

A healthy aura is one in which the higher energies (of the soul) are allowed to flow, to some extent, through the personality (aura) and into the world. This means that the presence or impediment of ego (intellect) (personality) is minimal, that one is living more or less in harmony with the flow of life and not living (merely) in accordance with one's own (contrived) intentions. The presence of ego substantially limits the flow of higher energies. The presence of coarseness within the aura does likewise (from the perspective of the soul, the ego is an artificial necessity, but something relatively coarse (matter) that needs to be transcended). A balanced, healthy aura greatly facilitates human experience and expression, individually and collectively.

† Commentary No. 1144

The Healthy Aura 2

So. What contributes to an unhealthy aura? Anything that strengthens the material nature. Health is relative, and the factors which contribute to or undermine health, are likewise relative.

Smoking contributes (relatively directly) to an unhealthy aura, through the introduction of particulate matter (coarseness) directly into the aura, which lower the vibrations of the aura. This weakens the aura (and leads potentially to physical difficulties as well). Drinking (alcohol) (beer) (wine) contributes (relatively directly) to an unhealthy aura, through destabilization, through the loosening of the connections between the various bodies (physical, etheric, emotional, mental) and undermining the process of integration. Eating flesh foods (meat, fish, fowl) contributes (relatively directly) to an unhealthy aura,

through sustaining the relative coarseness of the physical body and its etheric double (through the animal energy (that is not present in dairy products) that distracts and weakens consciousness). Relying on drugs, particularly where they are not necessary (in moderation) for medical purposes, substantially undermines the overall health of the aura. The line between drug use and drug abuse is almost non-existent (for the spiritual student).

Three other major factors are materialism, sense indulgence, and egoism. Any (substantial) focus on (having) material wealth, attachments to material possessions, desire for material things, all contribute to the strength of the material dimension (relative coarseness) of the aura. Indulging the senses (seeking pleasure) (doing) also contributes substantially to the relative coarseness (and instability) of the aura, through strengthening the role of the emotions (astral body) as an independent entity (a distinction is made between pleasure seeking (focus) and pleasure as an incidental consequence (merely enjoying life)). Sense indulgence is materialism (coarseness) on the emotional (astral) plane, while egoism and intellectual attachments are materialism (coarseness) on the concrete mental plane.

An open aura (being emotionally exposed, passively, to the astral plane) (being psychically vulnerable (passive)) is particularly unhealthy. And any form of self-centeredness (separativeness) (selfishness) (self-absorption) (egoism) (activeness) directly contributes to the relative coarseness (insensitivity) (unresponsiveness) of the aura, even where other factors are positive. The spiritual student is not expected to be perfect, but the student is encouraged to progressively and substantially overcome all of the various impediments to good health (physically, energetically (etherically), emotionally, and mentally (intellectually)), so that the student is then able to embrace and embody (and reflect) the higher energies.

And what contributes to a healthy aura? Refinement of all of the vehicles (bodies) (physical, etheric, astral or emotional, mental). Stability and coherence of the bodies and how they relate to each other. Proper meditation. Integration of the refined personality. A positive (non-egoistic) attitude, that evokes quality of consciousness. Embracing harmlessness and honesty. Being cheerful and unimposing. Not indulging the senses. Not having mental or emotional or physical attachments or addictions. Good health (a healthy aura) begins with a

sound mind and is substantially aided through healthy (unselfish, non-self-centered) emotions (feelings). In short, all of the spiritual practices of the path contribute toward the health of the human aura and improve (encourage) the effectiveness of the spiritual student in experience and expression.

† Commentary No. 1145

The Awakened State

The awakened state is very relative. Most people are awake in some ways and asleep in others. Most people are asleep in materialism, sense indulgence, and/or egoism. The vast preponderance of humanity are asleep in the sense that they lack conscious awareness of who (what) they (truly) are. The bulk of humanity identify with the lower self (personality) (body) (ego) (mind) and have no realization of the higher Self nor any realization about the higher Self. The problem is that the lower self is not who (what) a person really is. The lower self (personality as a whole) is simply a vehicle of consciousness for experience and expression. Through identification with the superficial aspect of the human being, the bulk of humanity live superficially. Consequently, they are asleep in that sense. The awakened state (proper) is transpersonal, beyond the personality-centered experience that prevails in this world.

Those who have pondered or studied the notion of an awakened state at least (generally) appreciate that a distinction exists between being asleep and being in some (meaningful) awakened state. Yet most remain asleep because that understanding is superficial (intellectual) and not realized in practice. Most who embrace the spiritual path or spiritual principles think of themselves as therefore being awake, when in fact, they are no more awake in this sense than they were before, because their awareness (waking consciousness) remains self-centered in the sense of being based in ego (the illusion of separateness), even if there is an intellectual appreciation of these distinctions. Thus most people are superficial, living superficially yet meaningfully at some level (extent) of experience.

When a person proclaims his or her being awake (in an awakened state) it invariably means that the person remains asleep. Because it is only the ego

(false self) (superficial, artificial self) that can make any such proclamation, and it is necessarily false. The ego is not awake (the ego is not even real) and the ego cannot participate in the awakened state. The awakened state is, in fact, the absence of ego. The person who does not know if he or she is awake is more likely to be closer to an awakened state, for the "knowledge" of (presumption) of the awakened state is necessarily false. In the awakened state, there is no knowledge. There is only realization. There is awareness and there is understanding, but it is not conscious in the sense of being intellectual or a matter of personality. If a person is thinking, then the person is asleep (not awake in this higher sense).

If the personality is involved in the process, except as a wholly qualified and responsive (non-independent) instrument of expression, then the person is personality-centered and not in an awakened state. To become awakened one must necessarily transcend much of the limitations of personality-centered consciousness. In order to be awake, the student must not be entangled in the world or worldly affairs (the student may be present in the world and participating in experience and expression but not to the extent of being entangled). In order to be awake, the student must necessarily transcend the ego and the intellect (at least to a substantial extent).

The spiritual student gradually learns to be the casual (unentangled) observer, not judging or evaluating what is observed, but simply watching (oneself as a personality and the external world as a reflection of consciousness). Thus the student gradually awakens and as the awakened state is achieved and sustained, the student is able to effectively bridge between the two worlds (higher and lower).

The Mask of Ego

The problem of ego is that it is both necessary to development in the lower worlds (of human experience and expression) and an impediment to transcending this (lower) world. The ego is born of the material nature of the personality (physical, etheric, emotional (astral), and mental (intellectual) nature(s)) (of the illusion of separateness) and sustains itself through appropriation of the waking-consciousness (the (false) identification of the waking-consciousness with the ego-as-self).

In its central position in (as) the waking-consciousness, the ego is able to help and hinder experience and expression. The ego is able to facilitate experience and expression, to the extent that it is interested, and the ego is able to hinder same by virtue of protecting its own (artificial) interests (namely furtherance of its own "existence" and its prominence in the waking-consciousness). In order to accomplish its objectives (survival, prominence) the ego wears many masks and can function in rather subtle ways. Thus a student is rarely able to discern the existence and influence of an ego that has assumed a subtle posture.

The mask of ego manifests in many and diverse ways. Through attachments and entanglements, through having opinions, through separateness and separativeness, through self-defense, through personality-centeredness (self-centeredness) (self-absorption), through materialism, sense indulgence, and egoism in its various and subtle forms. The ego assumes roles. The ego appears to accommodate. The ego seems to be that which it is not. But in every instance, the ego fails to reveal itself for what it is (an artificial, induced entity). Emotional pain and mental anguish are invariably induced by ego. The whole realm of thinking and feeling and doing is the domain of ego (personality-centered experience and expression). On the path the student does not deny the practical reality of the ego, or its role, but the student works toward transcending the ego as an impediment to realization of truth.

In the early stages of the path the ego protects the person by promoting (apparent) self-interest (and through encouraging self-centeredness). As the student begins to mature spiritually, the ego becomes more and more subtle.

The deception of the ego is gradually transformed from the deception (illusion) of independent existence to the self-deception of the ego masquerading as the higher Self or the voice of the silence. It hardly matters that the ego is sincere in everything it appears to do. The ego remains an artificial entity. But as the student evolves in consciousness, progressive refinement evokes changes in the ego and the ways in which it manifests. Eventually, the ego becomes more or less collaborative, serving the higher needs of the (spiritual) student without promoting self-centeredness (personality-centeredness) (itself). But the ego remains, however sincere and however subtle, a modest (if not substantial) impediment.

In order to see through the mask of ego, the student must first be consciously aware of the existence of distinction between (lower) self (ego) (not-self) and (higher) Self. Then the student must carefully self-observe, generally over a wide range of conditions and over a substantial period of time. Eventually the student becomes aware of the distinctions between self and Self, in practice, not merely intellectually. Once the distinctions are realized, it is possible then to encourage the higher (awakened) state (non-ego) and the power (hold) (presence) (impediment) of ego is substantially lessened and eventually transcended.

† Commentary No. 1147

The Golden Rule

The golden rule is a guiding principle common to virtually all cultures and religions, namely that one treat others as one would have others treat oneself. The rule is pragmatic (it tends to promote goodwill) but it is based very much on underlying metaphysical principles, namely karma and creative returns.

In the karmic sense, there is a definite consequence of every action, feeling, and thought. If one behaves and feels and thinks constructively, then one will naturally evoke constructive consequences. If one behaves and feels and thinks destructively (separatively) (independently), then one will naturally evoke destructive consequences (yet nonetheless constructive in the longer view, as all experience engenders learning). Thus if one treats others with compassion, then one is creating the karma of compassionate treatment. Of course, if one is

treating others with superficial compassion in order to create karma (consequences) of compassionate treatment then one actually creates the karma of contrived compassionate treatment, which is necessarily different. One has to be genuine (sincere) in order to evoke genuine response. Motive is as much a part of karma if not more so a part of karma than the action itself, for motive is action.

But karma is only part of the dynamic of the golden rule. Another dimension of the golden rule is that of creative returns or attraction in kind. If one treats others with a certain energy or quality (behavior), then one is thereby attracting the same energy or quality. It may not come directly from those to whom the energy (behavior) is directed (those to whom the energy (behavior) is directed may not resonate with that energy and therefore may not be responsive), but the energy will return nonetheless, and in the same flavor, only more so. If one is loving and charitable, then one will attract similar energies. For karma (and creative returns) is (are) always in effect. Where there are other karmic factors, the consequences may not be readily apparent (indeed, may not be as timely as one might expect), but there are consequences, and consequences are always (necessarily) warranted and appropriate to the circumstances.

There is yet another dimension to the golden rule, that of evolutionary encouragement. Every constructive endeavor (every endeavor sincerely embraced) constitutes an encouragement to others, to the extent that others are responsive and able to engage the particular energy. And even if they are not, yet, able to embrace it, the presence of that energy acts as encouragement. Thus spiritual students tend to pray and meditate for the whole. Spiritual students tend to serve humanity, without contrivance or expectation, wherever and however there are worthwhile opportunities, according to their abilities and calling. And how people treat other people is a very substantial factor in collective progress (in consciousness). Where people are kind and considerate, polite, forgiving, non-judging, etc., there is very definite encouragement. As people embrace spiritual qualities, that embracing encourages the collective consciousness. It matters not that humanity as a whole cannot respond quickly. What matters is that the effort is made and the encouragement works through the lifewave as it needs to.

Spiritual students need no reasons for embracing spiritual principles (doing the right thing naturally is a higher order action than doing the same thing for reasons) and so naturally embrace the golden rule. It matters not whether others (appear to) respond in kind. It only matters that one is living in accordance with one's principles.

† Commentary No. 1148

Methods and the Seven Rays

Methods are procedures or processes for attaining some objective. Methods may be a matter of (particular) discipline. They may be relatively structured or relatively unstructured. Structured methods offer a stronger (narrower) focus with less flexibility, while unstructured methods offer a broader (weaker) focus and more flexibility.

Methods are important in two regards, namely (a) they facilitate achievement and (b) there are ethical considerations in how methods are applied. Choosing or realizing methods that are well suited both to achieving the objective and to the temperament or ability of the person(s) involved will make that achievement more likely (or at least make the process more effective). Likewise, understanding the ethical considerations in any given method allows the student to appreciate the effective limits and potential consequences. In the final analysis, the way (means, methods) in which one approaches an objective is more important than whether or not the objective is achieved. Indeed, spiritual objectives cannot be realized without the right methods applied in the right (ethical) ways.

The seven rays embrace the entire field of means and methods. Each ray has a nature (character) (flavor) and associated methods for achieving various objectives. Each person has various talents and abilities, qualities and characteristics, depending on the person's experience with each of the seven ray energies. In some cases, a student may be capable on one or more rays and very incapable on others. In some cases, embracing an energy (ray) (method) that is unfamiliar is a legitimate means of experiencing the ray and becoming capable with regard to its energy (character). Ultimately, each of the ray energies must be internalized, becoming part of the person's character (nature) (more correctly,

all seven energies already exist within a person's consciousness and it is largely a matter of developing facility, learning how to effectively evoke and wield the various energies and forces).

The ethical basis of methods varies according to the consciousness of the student, because karma is necessarily a function of one's extent of understanding. Early in the path (and before) the ethical constraints are not as substantial; there it is mainly a matter of honesty and harmlessness, as methods are embraced and applied with consideration for these factors. Later on the path, as the student advances, the path narrows and karmic forces are stronger (manifest more strongly and more stringently) and karma (consequences) is (are) more timely. There the student must pay more attention to appropriateness, beyond merely what appears to be honest and harmless. One should question one's objectives (are they based on a sense of appropriateness or are they self-centered rationalizations (even in the sense of subtle egoistic concerns)). And one should realize what methods are appropriate. In the latter stages of the path one's methods tend to be much less direct, less contrived, less involving the ego and intellect and personality, and more a matter of just responding intuitively to the flow of life and the needs implied by the flow (which are realized unconsciously or indirectly).

As the student advances through the seven rays and learns to blend the various rays, the student will naturally be drawn to a combination of methods that involve both the head (odd-numbered rays) and the heart (even-numbered rays). The relatively structured methods embraced early on will gradually be replaced by methods that are less structured and less apparently focused, but are nonetheless (indeed more) effective.

Superficialness

Superficialness is a property or characteristic of the lower worlds (which are material in nature). It is based in the inherent inertia of matter (and the inertia of consciousness immersed in matter (e.g., the ego is an artificial entity induced by virtue of or through this immersion)) and it is this inertia that makes life difficult (and affords such opportunities for experience). But in transcending this superficial experience, the student emerges into realization.

Superficiality, or superficialness, is the quality or state or condition of being superficial. It is a serious problem of life (the immersion of consciousness) in the material world, particularly for the spiritual student. Every experience in the lower worlds of human endeavor tends to be superficial, that is, every experience tends to involve the mind and emotions (waking-consciousness) merely superficially, both in the sense that people are (generally) asleep with regard to higher consciousness and in the sense that people are therefore not aware of how superficial their experience really is. This is okay, except for those who need to go beyond this experience.

This is not to say that life is necessarily shallow or without meaning or without value, but that life in the lower worlds involves only the rudimentary (superficial) aspects of consciousness. The human being as a whole is much more than that part of the human being that seems to live in these (lower) worlds. The vast preponderance of humanity live lives that are meaningful in the sense of having experience and expression, and in the sense of growing thereby, but which are nonetheless superficial with regard to consciousness. Most of the human experience and expression is unconscious and mechanical (passive). Even the willfulness of the ego is part of mechanicalness and is not part of (higher) realization.

Thus most people are superficial and are not aware of the nature of superficialness. Some people are aware of the existence of superficialness, at least intellectually, but remain superficial (absorbed in personality-centeredness if not self-centeredness). A few become aware of the reality of superficialness, and become observers of their own superficial nature (anyone who declares his or

her own lack of superficialness is merely deluded). Through proper qualification (refinement in consciousness) and proper training (in methods of working through consciousness), one can overcome much of the conditioning (mechanicalness) (superficialness), at least in terms of conscious awareness (and therefore in terms of ability to evoke higher quality of consciousness).

This process involves progressive detachment (more properly non-attachment) and progressive (deepening) self-observation (non-identification with the superficial nature (personality-intellect-ego)). The student gradually becomes more and more aware of the superficial nature of one's own personality experience and expression, and in becoming aware, and in merely observing this, allows a deeper unfoldment of (in) consciousness to occur. Any instance of emotional and/or mental expression is necessarily superficial, or has at least a substantive superficial component. The problem (for the spiritual student who needs to transcend these things) is that waking-consciousness naturally identifies with this (superficial) experience and expression instead of merely observing. But as the student grows and deepens, as non-attachment becomes the rule, then experience becomes less superficial and the higher nature (awareness) begins to dominate the waking-consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1150

Modesty

Modesty is defined as freedom from conceit or vanity (and from egoism), particularly in the view of having a moderate and realistic sense of one's abilities and value and in being unpretentious. The real value of modesty is the clarity (insight) (balance) afforded in the absence of conceit (vanity) (glamour) (self-delusion).

Modesty does not imply that a person has little value, or that a person is of less value than anyone else. Nor does it imply that a person has great value, or that any person has greater value than anyone else, even despite appearances. What it does imply, is that every person has value, but that no one has any greater (or any lesser) value than anyone else. Modesty is about a lack of comparison (lack of judging) (lack of egoism), and consequently, it does not matter how other

people may appear to be, or how they may lack modesty. Modesty is about realism, about one's own realistic view, in placing oneself in the proper perspective, of having value but lacking self-importance (glamour). It simply does not matter (to one) how realistically (or unrealistically) other people view themselves. In realistically accepting one's own abilities and limitations, one is able to better and more clearly perceive the truth about other things. If one is unrealistic, either by immodestly perceiving oneself as superior (or inferior) to another human being (or any other lifeform), then that constitutes a bias that compromises whatever clarity of vision would normally (otherwise) be present.

Modesty, in this context of the spiritual student, does not imply diffidence or shyness or timidity, but it does imply poise (equilibrium) (balance) (harmony), and it does imply more so a reliance on inner strength rather than the strength of personality (ego). The spiritual student has no need to be assertive, for in discretion and modesty and poise, the spiritual student draws upon that inner strength and thereby discourages the evocation (role) (rule) of ego. Modesty implies that the student has no need to call attention to himself (herself) or to wear false appearance, although in living in accordance with one's values one may express moderate non-conformity (but without need for demonstrativeness). Real modesty implies a lack of false modesty (which is another form of self-deception). Real modesty cannot be contrived, but it can be cultivated.

Modesty implies that a student will speak according to need (sense of appropriateness) rather than by virtue of wanting to speak. Modesty implies a lack of claims-making. Modesty is about one's own nature, only. What and how other people may be is simply not important (and the spiritual student is encouraged not to judge or make comparisons). If others lack modesty, that is okay. What matters is how one remains true to one's own sense of higher consciousness and values. Modesty is part of the means of transcending the ego (egoism). Modesty (honesty) (realistic perspective) evokes clarity. Without modesty, one suffers more so from the bias of the senses and from having opinions (all opinions, however realistic, are attachments and therefore constitute bias). With modesty it is easier to not have opinions. With modesty it is easier to see clearly.

Thus, the spiritual student is encouraged to be modest (realistic) in self-perception, and in so being, the student discourages (minimizes) the presence and effects of ego. Eventually, modesty leads to or facilitates transcending self-centeredness and personality-centeredness. Ultimately, modesty leads to the student being able to embrace the truth about oneself.

† Commentary No. 1151

Miracles

Miracles are defined conventionally as (apparently) extraordinary events manifesting (apparently) supernatural works of God. More correctly (metaphysically), however, nothing is extraordinary and the works of God are not supernatural. God is natural. Since God is not anthropomorphic, there is nothing contrived about the works of God, and therefore there is nothing contrived about miracles.

Miracles happen. They do not contravene the laws of nature or the laws of the physical world, but they may appear to contravene such laws to the extent that such laws are not fully understood (natural laws are understood (generally) by most people (and the scientific community) only superficially). Miracles are closely related to karma and grace but neither grace nor miracles can ever be inconsistent with karma. In a sense, miracles are a form or part of grace, as they may (appear to) transcend the "normal" working of karma. In this sense, karma is relatively broad and grace (miracles) works (work) within the framework of karma, but in such a way as to extend karma. In other words, miracles may not be compelling in the process of fulfillment of karma and miracles may in themselves be causes for subsequent karmic consequences. What this really means is that a miracle may convey some invitation, and subsequent manifestation may likely relate to the extent to which that invitation is properly perceived or embraced.

In another sense, miracles are merely the outer manifestations (indications) of natural processes, but which most people would consider extraordinary because most people do not understand the underlying laws (cause and effect) (grace) (miracles) and therefore these events appear miraculous (or not in accordance

with “normal” expectations). Extraordinary “appearances” imply that one is not perceiving the depth and breadth of the context. If one properly perceives the overall context, then miracles are very natural. To say that there is no order of difficulty in miracles is to say that they transcend our conditioned expectations based on our limited understanding of these processes. All things are interrelated and interconnected, causally and otherwise. One’s sense of scale is simply an artifact of conditioned thinking (conditioned apprehension of the physical world as an end in itself (artificial reality)). The experienced spiritual student is not surprised by miracles, for he (she) is familiar with the underlying processes and has observed their working out in various ways. The experienced spiritual student is not misled by an artificial sense of scale.

Miracles do not happen merely as a consequence of prayer. They happen as a consequence of the need for restoration of balance and may be evoked through prayer (but prayer does not necessarily evoke miracles). The key is balance or equilibrium. A miracle occurs because something is out of balance and the miracle restores the balance (or at least moves things closer toward balance). The conventional sense of temporal flow inhibits understanding of miracles because most people perceive time as sequential (past to present to future) instead of taking a broader view (simultaneity) which allows “future” events to evoke present circumstances (all perspective of current circumstances is necessarily substantially limited).

Miracles occur. And every miracle is a blessing. But too much can be made of what appear to be miracles. For every aspect of life is a blessing in some way or another. Life itself is a miracle and a matter of God’s grace. Every event is a resonance (grace).

Messages and Masters

The glammers of the path are quite substantial and the prospect for self-deception is great. People hear what they want to hear. And, so, many are deceived because they (unconsciously) want to be deceived, by various messages and messengers purported (sincerely or otherwise) to be from the masters.

The masters work subjectively. They work primarily on the abstract mental plane and beyond (buddhi) (atma). They do not work on astral or psychic levels. They do not work through channels or psychics to convey personal or glamorous messages. They do work, occasionally, with spiritual students who are receptive on the mental plane, who are not englamoured, who do not make claims, who simply share the material that they apprehend, without imposition or profestation. But these works and materials must ultimately be judged on the basis of their quality and value, not upon the presumed or proclaimed source nor by virtue of the means obtained. There are many occultists who can work apparent miracles (materializations, etc.) who are not necessarily any more spiritual than those who cannot (or do not) work such magic. A psychic or magic worker, however sincere, is simply not necessarily trained or qualified to discern the relative truth (quality) (value) or even the relative source of material or impressions. But many people want to believe on the basis of superficial indications, and therefore believe.

The masters do not work on personal (personality) levels. They do not provide personal messages. And they never claim to be masters. They work in more subtle ways, impersonally, for the good of all of humanity and all of life in this world. Those who become englamoured with the masters thereby create and sustain barriers between themselves and the truth. They easily fall prey to various unenlightened (but generally sincere) disincarnated humans, who "seem" to be enlightened (by dealing in glamorous generalities) and who purport to be masters and offer "wisdom" that just happens to be what people want to hear. The problem with such "wisdom" is that it is not generally what people need to hear, and the whole process evokes further glamour.

This does not mean that all “messages” are without value. To the contrary, many messages do have value, even personal value. But the student (recipient) must learn to discern that relative value (if any). Any message that offers encouragement in the direction of evolution in consciousness (spiritual growth) has value. But such messages should not be taken too personally, nor accepted merely because someone is “chosen” or because the medium is glamorous or entertaining. All messages (all knowledge) (all experience) should be taken at face value. What rings true may actually be true. But what is merely wanted is more likely to be not (really) true. Yet there is generally some truth within every means and within every experience. It remains for the student to discern the value and applicability.

Anyone who believes something because it is said to be from some master or some (presumed) (self-presumed) (proclaimed) (self-proclaimed) authority is believing something which may or not be true, but for the wrong reasons. People should believe things because they recognize the inherent truth of something, or failing such discretion and insight, because it seems quite reasonable. For someone to merely be able to predict things (some things (some of the time (or even all of the time))) in no way qualifies such predictions as spiritual or meaningful insight. The real lesson here is that there is a very great difference between being merely psychic (however accurate one may appear to be) and being spiritual (and thereby conveying quality of consciousness).

† Commentary No. 1153

Acceptance and Evolution

In embracing some well-founded spiritual notion (e.g., acceptance) there are often accompanying some not so well-founded generalizations and associations (e.g., the false notion that in embracing acceptance one does not need to embrace growth or improvement or deepening in consciousness). This is a variation of the (fallacious) “short-cut to heaven” doctrine.

Of course there are no short cuts to self-realization or spiritual enlightenment. No teacher or intermediary can compromise the integrity of the spiritual path (which involves work and progress and merit with the guiding boundaries and

encouragement of the (purposive) law of karma). The fundamental nature of life (experience) in this world is (gradual) growth of consciousness (evolution). But people (egos) naturally look for easy paths (and easy techniques) (simple (superficial) solutions). Acceptance is a very powerful concept and practice. It helps to resolve difficulties. One should indeed embrace acceptance, accepting whatever circumstances are evoked by one's own condition in consciousness, accepting other people as they are, accepting the nature of things, working within the evolutionary flow. But acceptance is only one of a number of needed practices.

Some people suggest that embracing conscious evolution (growth) (levels of consciousness) is separative, that the whole notion of progress leads to the false sense that some people are better or more advanced than others. That may be so (false), but that does not mean that there are not differences in experience and differences in quality of consciousness and differences in levels. What it means, really, is that those who are more advanced than others are, merely, more advanced than others (at least in some regard). It does not mean that anyone is (thereby) any better or worse than another, or that some people have greater or lesser value than others. People progress at different rates, according to their nature and circumstances, but everyone progresses. And everyone, at every level, contributes (equally) to the whole. Furthermore, most people are not developed equally in all respects, so that one may be more "advanced" in some respects and less so in other respects, which means that one should not be comparing "advancements" anyway (most indications are necessarily superficial).

A related notion is that of the inherent perfection of the soul or higher Self (as an argument for not needing to apply any effort toward personal growth or transformation). The soul is indeed already perfect, in the sense that it does not exhibit personal or worldly limitations, and in touching the soul one can readily appreciate its quality (perfection) as such, but it remains incomplete. The purpose of life in this world is experience and expression leading to growth in consciousness (through assimilation of experience) that brings the soul from being perfect and undeveloped (spark) to being perfect and fully developed (flame).

The real issue is work or effort. One cannot advance substantively without investing time and effort. One's place upon the path is a direct result of that investment (in experience and assimilation of experience). There are short paths and there are long paths, temporally, but every path ultimately requires the same measure of (integrated) effort (investment). It is not unlike climbing a mountain. Some take the long and winding road, proceeding leisurely. Others make a more direct ascent, scaling the heights relatively quickly, but with greater intensity (focused effort). But in both cases the change in potential energy (work expended or integrated effort) is measurably the same.

† Commentary No. 1154

Kamarupa

Kamarupa is the desire body, otherwise known (variously) as the astral body or the emotional body. Desire (kama) per se is part of the lower (animal) nature and derives from the development of the (material) desire body during the animal stage (just prior to becoming human) and its indulgence during the human stage. For the issue of kamarupa (the emotional body) (and subsequently for the desire mind), the question is does one live through the personality consciousness (physically, etherically, emotionally, and mentally) or is one entangled in the elemental experience of the vehicles. One can live at the animal level (for a while), or one can become (truly) human.

Kamarupa is a vehicle of (lower, personality) consciousness, intended to afford a means of experiencing and expressing on emotional levels, ultimately transcending the animal nature (desire) through purification, qualification, and refinement such that the astral body reflects only the highest, most subtle of the emotions. The problem of kamarupa is that for most people the desire body has become the master of lower consciousness rather than the servant (vehicle for self-expression). While most people (who are emotionally polarized) think that they live through their body (bodies) (physical, etheric, emotional, and mental) and that their emotional experience is a matter of self-expression, what is often actually the case is that the astral body has an artificial life of its own and lives for the person.

This condition (emotional abdication) is okay, for most people, as it still affords emotional experience, but it also gives more power to the emotional body which makes it more difficult for the spiritual student to integrate the lower vehicles (physical, etheric, emotional, and concrete mental) into a single, coherent personality (which is a prerequisite for alignment and transcending the ego). In growing, spiritually, the student needs to temper the emotions, refining the desire body so that it serves as a vehicle for experience and expression of the student, rather than functioning largely independently. This is accomplished, gradually, through the practice of detachment, through meditation, and through moderation.

But the astral body (kamarupa) does have a life of its own, artificial in its composite (aggregate) sense, but very real in the sense of its elemental life and consciousness. The human being lives (experiences and expresses) through its bodies or vehicles of consciousness, but each of those bodies has its own needs and evolutionary (more properly involutionary) concerns. In this sense, the human being must become the master of these vehicles, and for most people (approaching the path) that means focus on kamarupa. One learns to respect and appreciate the bodies, working to maintain them in health, without being entangled in their inherent (lower) nature.

The problem of kamarupa is primarily one of unconscious identification and abdication in (passive) unawareness. Most people (who are emopols) identify with their emotions and feelings, unconsciously, and this gives kamarupa tremendous power over the (human) waking-consciousness. As one learns to recognize this identification, and as one gradually re-identifies with something more real (the soul) or more pertinent (the personality as a whole), one naturally tempers the emotional body and gains stability and coherence at the astral (emotional) level. In a very dramatic sense, personal and spiritual growth is a process of almost continual (progressive) re-identification. But it is also a process of increasing and deepening awareness, involving both self-mastery (mastery of the lower self) and (eventually) personality transcendence.

Incarceration 1

Incarceration is defined as the process or state of being confined, in prison, with limited (worldly) rights and freedoms. Incarceration, like every other experience or condition in this world, is both a consequence and an opportunity. There are a number of factors regarding and relating incarceration with consequence and opportunity.

There is necessarily a cause and effect relationship. Incarceration is always, necessarily, a consequence of action on some level (physical, emotional, mental), consistent with karma. It may or may not relate directly or completely to the current situation (incarnation). Consequences (effects) rarely follow causes (actions) in a timely manner. Consequences are more generally related to multiple causes (actions, attitudes, behaviors) over a period of time. Thus, incarceration may appear to be directly related to current causal experience, but there may (generally) be other, more subtle factors (causes). Since all cause and effect relationship is governed by karma, incarceration is necessarily consequential.

Incarceration is necessarily a consequence of something, of some action, attitude, or behavior (or some combination). Such a consequence (incarceration) generally relates to long-standing (cumulative) expression, over one or more lifetimes. The specific incident that triggers incarceration may be only (generally) part of the causal relationship. Judging the merits of incarceration based only upon the immediate circumstances may be misleading. Some people are incarcerated, apparently fairly or otherwise, as a direct consequence of behavior (crime) or politics or some other expression or condition, but there is generally a larger, longer, broader (more meaningful) pattern of experience and expression that leads to incarceration.

Incarceration, or the details (specific experience) of incarceration, may or may not appear to be fair, and may be perceived as fair (just) and not fair (not just), depending on perception, perspective, understanding, and values, which necessarily vary. One who commits a crime rarely has the same perspective as the apparent victim. Incarcerated people rarely have the same perspective as

their administrators and captors. Yet each (perspective) has some merit. In the final analysis, one must accept as fact that incarceration is consequential, merited in some broader consequence. Unless one accepts responsibility for one's own circumstances, regardless of appearances, it is very difficult to then proceed on toward resolution and freedom (equilibrium).

Every condition, every consequence, every experience, implies and conveys an opportunity for learning. Learning (adjustment in consciousness) implies restoration of balance, the achievement of equilibrium. Unless the balance is restored, unless there is growth in consciousness, the overall circumstances will not improve. This generally requires that a person dissociate the experience (consequence) (incarceration) with whatever externals there may be. For example, if a person was treated badly (apparently unfairly) and is then incarcerated, he or she needs to understand that the "bad treatment" is part of one causal chain and that incarceration is part of another (and that the two intersected, however briefly, in order to bring about needed consequences. Bad treatment (unfairness) on any level will eventually evoke circumstances (learning opportunities) for those concerned and will ultimately be resolved. But incarceration is not (really) about appearances or external causes. It is about consequences. It is about opportunity for learning. It is about restoration of balance.

† Commentary No. 1156

Incarceration 2

When a person incarnates, he or she generally chooses, within the limits or bounds of karma (merit) the circumstances of the lifetime, e.g., race, culture, family, economics, health, period and circumstances of incarceration, etc. One is therefore karmically involved not only in one's own circumstances, but also in the collective circumstances (and collective consequences). These collective factors are also consistent with a person's individual circumstances. Everything is, therefore, consistent with karma, on every level.

When a person finds himself (herself) incarcerated, it is generally a consequence of the soul's intention to work out (resolve) matters of consciousness. The forces and factors which lead to incarceration are part of the broader pattern.

The individual is still responsible for his or her actions, attitudes, behavior, etc., and is therefore wholly responsible for his or her consequences and circumstances, but consequences (incarceration) may be inevitable based on other (karmic) factors not readily apparent. Incarceration is rarely a pleasant experience. The circumstances of incarceration, which may be diverse (e.g., lack of comfort, extent of lack of freedom, loss of (some) normal rights, hostile environment, etc.), however unpleasant, provide an opportunity for the incarcerated person to face whatever lessons are intended or conveyed by the experience.

In a sense, the whole process and experience of incarceration is a sub-set of worldly experience. There are lessons to learn. Incarceration is simply a relatively more extreme (severe) circumstance than most, affording a more powerful opportunity for timely resolution. Painful experiences (physically, emotionally, and/or mentally) generally afford more poignant opportunities than would otherwise be the case. With intensity (pain) (difficulty) (conflict) (incarceration), there is a more forceful focusing on direct experience and expression. Incarceration is simply a more compelling opportunity than simply being absorbed in worldly experience. It is, in this sense, an opportunity for awakening, in some way, and to some extent. It is also, necessarily, an opportunity for restoration, for learning and understanding and thereby appreciating what has transpired and what adjustments are needed.

If one has indeed committed a crime (acted contrary to the laws of the world and/or the laws of consciousness) (e.g., not in adherence to the practice of harmlessness and honesty), then there is need to understand that one has harmed another, or that one has engaged in some inherently harmful practice, and in such understanding offer recompense (energy) (resolution) (harmony). If one has not committed a crime, and yet finds oneself incarcerated, then the lesson may be more subtle. The circumstances may offer some insight, but one may not be able to discern or understand the causal chain, i.e., one may not be able to understand how and why. In any event, one must try to understand. One must also accept one's circumstances. One must seek to grow and deepen in consciousness, despite the immediate circumstances. And as these things are accomplished, there is (gradual) progress and resolution.

In accepting things as they are, this does not mean that one should not work toward improving one's circumstances. But the emphasis should be on learning, growing, serving, etc., according to whatever opportunities are apparent. One's attitude (character) (quality of consciousness) (values) in difficult circumstances goes a long way toward amelioration. Despite appearances, despite one's circumstances, every moment of every experience is an opportunity for growth in consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1157

The Presence of the Soul

The soul, as defined and understood in the context of the esoteric philosophy (i.e., as the upper triad of atma-buddhi-manas), is always present, within the human being, whether a person is in or out of incarnation. However, the presence of the soul is generally not felt or sensed until the personality nature (physical, emotional, intellectual) has reached quiescence. Or, in other words, the presence of the soul is perceived to the extent of the absence of personality-centeredness (ego).

While many people refer to the soul, they generally refer to the inner feelings of the personality, or the deeper aspect of the lower nature, which is not the soul (atma-buddhi-manas) or higher Self. While the soul manifests in relatively subtle ways, to the extent that the personality will allow (unconsciously), the soul is not involved or entangled in the day-to-day life and experience and expression of the ego (personality). Until the person matures sufficiently, through tempering the personality nature and achieving some degree of non-entanglement (in the senses and the world), the soul does not have any direct influence on the personal life. But once the personality is tempered, once the ego is transcended to some extent, once the lower consciousness is refined sufficiently, then the soul will gradually make its presence felt on the lower (more objective) levels.

The presence of the soul is not exciting. Being excited precludes the presence of the soul. The presence of the soul is a quiet, rather subtle joy that goes well beyond and tempers even more so the personal experience. The presence of the soul also generally evokes considerable pain, as the remnants of ego work to

obstruct and resist that higher presence. The soul brings a sense of otherworldliness, of not really belonging in this lower, outer world, yet brings also love and light to qualify the lower experience and thereby make it more meaningful (not meaningful in the ego-sense of importance but meaningful in the subtle sense of balance (dharma)). There is evoked both a strong, inner (real) sense of unity, with humanity and all of life, felt not merely experienced through intellectual appreciation, as well as a sense of distance, from the worldly nature of humanity entangled in sense experience (asleep in personality-centeredness).

The presence of the soul is a very quiet, very subtle experience. Whenever the personality emerges into manifestation (through thinking or feeling) then the presence of the soul is lost. But when the emotions are calmed and aspiration is subtle, when the mind is clear and quiescent (merely observing without thinking or judging), then the presence of the soul can be felt. The presence of the soul is felt during (true) meditation (rarely achieved by the preponderance of people who meditate) but the objective of the spiritual student is to so feel or sense the presence of the soul that that presence dominates the waking-consciousness, even while the student is engaged in worldly non-entanglement (i.e., going about his or her business in the world, without being absorbed at the personality or worldly level).

The role of the lower self is to provide a vehicle for the manifestation of the higher Self. Yet the preponderance of experience and expression in the world is merely preparatory to that manifestation. Preparation is essential. Without preparation, the presence of the soul would overwhelm the personality. Yet as the personality-centeredness is overcome, as the student becomes more and more attuned to the soul, then the presence (energy) (quality) (value) of the soul comes streaming through the purified, refined, uplifted lower self.

Essential Values

The theosophical details of the esoteric philosophy are many and varied and may seem to be rather complex, much like the many and varied (endless) details of manifestation. The list of qualities and values to be embraced on the spiritual path may seem almost endless. On the other hand, the essential values and qualities are more inclusive, and should be relatively few and simple. Many of the qualities and values are related, being various aspects of a relatively few (essential) (more basic) qualities and values. Thus the spiritual student should seek to recognize and embrace an appropriate simple-yet-effective set of (essential) values.

There are both inherent and procedural values. Inherent values (e.g., harmlessness, honesty, humility) represent transforming energies to be embraced and incorporated. Procedural values (e.g., non-attachment, impersonality) represent transforming energies that represent conditions that are necessary to facilitate the needed (and continual) transformation.

If one attempts to embrace a large or complex variety of values then the effort tends to be diffused and less effective. If one attempts to embrace only one value, then the effort tends to be focused and effective, but only in that one dimension. If that value is essential (inclusive) (representing a field of values and/or qualities) (e.g., a ray), then surely progress is made. But unless some nominal range of essential values are embraced there will not be achieved the balance that is required for fulfillment (and effective service). In other words, considerable progress may be made if one embraces, for example, love or light, but it is only when one embraces some essential triad (life-love-light) (humility-honesty-harmlessness) at some level that there is balanced progress. When the embraced triad of essential values also corresponds to transcending one's own particular limitations (needs) (weaknesses), then there is real likelihood of substantial progress.

Honest self-assessment is essential, for otherwise one is not really able to address the issues that need to be resolved. If one is not even aware of one's own limitations, then they are not likely to be tempered or transcended in the

course of the current incarnation. Often there are a set of limitations relating to one's personality ray (chosen for this purpose) and so one can embrace the higher energy (quality) of the ray and eventually work through and overcome these difficulties. If one properly embraces love (second or fourth or sixth ray energy) then that tends to temper all of the odd-numbered (ray) limitations, but does not in itself produce understanding or enlightenment. If one properly embraces light (first, third, fifth, or seventh ray energy) then there is a natural and steady process of enlightenment, but this does not in itself unfold the heart or produce the necessary balance.

To be truly enlightened is identical to being truly enfolded in love, in achieving (more properly, allowing) the perfect balance between the fully developed head-centered and heart-centered natures. But the way (means) to that end involves spiritual work (effort) (service), embracing essential values. Embracing essential values means that the quality (energy) of those values is evoked into the waking-consciousness and personality as a whole. As that energy works its way through the lower nature it stimulates and brings to the surface the various aspects of the lower nature that are inconsistent with the embraced value (quality) (energy) so that they can be dealt with through moderation and transcendence (transformation). Nothing is lost, but the lower nature is thereby naturally and gradually transformed.

† Commentary No. 1159

Group Consciousness 2

Group consciousness in the lower sense is a matter of group unconsciousness or collective mass consciousness. Much of the conditioning of humanity as a whole (and of the human (animal) body) is conveyed through this lower group consciousness. The lower group consciousness also conveys lower instinct, which is the product of humanity having passed through the animal kingdom.

But group consciousness in the higher sense is something else altogether, a matter of all human souls being linked together as an undifferentiated whole (on some level) and distinguished as soul groups (on another, albeit somewhat lower level). In the first case, the entire race is an evolutionary entity. In the second case, each soul (ray) group embodies one or another of the seven rays for

humanity as a whole. In achieving conscious awareness of this higher group consciousness, the spiritual student first recognizes the character and quality of the soul, then that of the soul group, then that of humanity as a whole. But achieving awareness of the higher group consciousness is not the same thing as actually (consciously) participating in that consciousness. In order to achieve that (participation), the student must pass well beyond the ordinary (human) (personality) consciousness, overcoming much of the conditioning, overcoming the illusion of separateness (actually, not merely intellectually), and actually transcending the ego (personality) (intellect).

One of the attributes of (higher) group consciousness is the facility of seeing or perceiving through the eyes (senses) of other group members. This is not a willful matter, for willfulness precludes any such experience. This is also not a matter of invasion of privacy, for the experience (expression) is a matter of cooperation at the soul level, for it can only occur where two souls are linked together (more correctly, where a group of souls are linked together, by virtue of character and quality (substance) (never merely by virtue of circumstances)). And it is not a matter of individuality, for any sense of individualness precludes the experience. In fact, the facility of collective (higher) perception, consciously or unconsciously, precludes the ability to clearly distinguish between the individuals involved. There is a lower form of this, through astral and etheric means, where there is the possibility (danger) of imposition, but in the higher means there is never any merely psychic facility and not any possibility of imposition.

In another sense, the group evolves as a whole, through collective (higher group) consciousness. For one who is functioning in alignment with the soul, to perceive in the lower worlds is to afford the collective group to perceive as well (the distinction being moot). It means that the personality presence (and ego) is largely absent (non-existent) (respectively). It means that the person is so qualified (purified and refined) in the lower consciousness that there is no real (substantive) impediment to the higher consciousness functioning through the lower vehicles. In this way, the disciple is able to serve the race (humanity as a whole) and the group (at the soul level) through experience and expression. Such students evoke and convey considerable higher energies through their daily lives.

Another attribute is the loss of distinction of exactly whose experience is concerned. One naturally draws upon the experience (current and past (and even future)) of all group members and the group as a whole. Thus, at this level, it matters not that an individual lacks certain experiences or talents, when the needed experience or talent is within the group and can be evoked as needed (non-consciously).

† Commentary No. 1160

Balance

The path of discipleship is that part of the spiritual path in which balance is achieved, balance between the head-centered and heart-centered natures, balance between the soul and the personality, balance between the individual and the group (humanity), balance between the objective consciousness and the subjective consciousness, and balance between all seven of the rays. In other words, discipleship is the process of becoming oneself, one's true Self, in group context.

Prior to discipleship, through the various paths of approach and through the probationary path, it is mainly a matter of acquiring experience and gradually embracing more and more of the spiritual practices of the path, primarily a matter of development. But through discipleship, the qualified student must relatively quickly fill in all the developmental gaps and achieve balance between development and service, with service gradually becoming the primary focus of endeavor (and consciousness). Discipleship is, in this sense, very much a fourth ray endeavor, with emphasis on harmony and equilibrium. The disciple actually represents the higher dimension or aspect of humanity, in manifestation.

While probation is primarily objective, and often takes place in the context of some (outer) mystery school, discipleship is more subjective and takes place in the context of subjective group consciousness. On the probationary path, the preliminary discipline is achieved and preliminary endeavors are embraced objectively, with deliberate intent and through deliberate (conscious) (directed) means. In discipleship, the preliminary discipline is maintained and the preliminary endeavors are continued (even expanded), but balance is not achieved through these objective means. Balance is achieved through allowing

the forces to complement each other, naturally, which means being able to perceive the balance, even unconsciously, and then cooperating with that balance. Balance is achieved through transcending limitations rather than dealing with limitations at their own level. While the probationary student can be (is) head-centered or heart-centered, the disciple can (properly) be neither. The disciple must be able to work simultaneously through the head and the heart, meaning with heart quality and without the intrusion of the intellect or personality-centeredness.

The number of probationers is relatively large (yet very small compared with the number of souls in incarnation). The number of disciples is relatively small. But the role played by disciples is substantial, as disciples embody the balance or equilibrium between the individual and the group (humanity). Disciples also play a substantial role with regard to the karma of the race, embodying much of that karma, collectively. By virtue of their service to humanity, disciples achieve balance (fulfillment of karma) on a much broader scale than that of the individual. All spiritual students (probationary students, disciples, and initiates) provide subjective encouragement to humanity by virtue of their practice, by virtue of their consciousness, and serve, collectively as an instrument for conveyance of higher (qualifying) energy for all of humanity.

In the final analysis, the two dimensions of discipleship are (outer) service and (inner) balance preparatory to initiation. One cannot embrace discipleship without being qualified (through probation) (seeking). And one cannot then embrace initiation without being qualified (through balance) (non-seeking).

Responsibility

Responsibility is defined as the quality or state of being morally, legally, and/or mentally (individually) accountable, the condition of being able to answer for one's conduct and obligations (secular and spiritual). A person is, by virtue of being human, responsible for his or her own actions, i.e., for the consequences of those actions. In the karmic sense, actions include attitudes, behaviors, feelings, and thoughts. In the broader sense, not inconsistently, responsibility is related to both dharma and karma.

So. What is the responsibility of the human being? To live, to experience, to grow, to learn, to express oneself, harmoniously, i.e., not at the expense of others' freedom and quality of experience and expression. The human being incarnates because the soul invokes the process (forces) of incarnation, under karmic law. There is purpose. There are expectations. Every incarnation (lifetime) is an opportunity for growth (evolution) in consciousness through experience and expression. Secular law (to some extent) and spiritual law (karma) (in the broader sense) hold a person accountable (responsible) for adherence to the laws of the land, and karma (respectively) (i.e., for his or her health, life, experience, and expression).

But responsibility at the human level is primarily experiential. A person learns according to experience, sometimes directly (during the experience), more oftentimes indirectly (eventually) (through unconscious assimilation of experience). A person behaves according to values (consciousness) based upon that experience (accumulated wisdom). A person evokes karmic force (resolution) to the extent of need and merit. But the spiritual student, who understands more of the underlying cause and effect relationships, is more accountable by virtue of that understanding. The spiritual student, and particularly the disciple, has a definite responsibility to embrace the basic principles and practices and values of the path, which in turn contribute to the overall welfare of humanity. There is, for the spiritual student, a responsibility for truth. There is a responsibility for harmlessness. There is a responsibility for consciously facing the consequences of one's actions. And thereby learning. And fulfilling the balance.

For the spiritual student, being responsible is a matter of dharma, of living in accord with the underlying principles of the spiritual life, as they are understood. For the disciple, it is a relatively conscious and deliberate matter of embracing and allowing, of recognizing the truth and living in accordance with that truth, of allowing the conscience (inner wisdom) to guide one's activities in the lower worlds. And where the student does not recognize the truth, or does not recognize the truth sufficiently completely, there is thereby invoked (and eventually evoked) the appropriate experience (opportunity) to more fully embrace the intended lesson.

In the final analysis, dharma (duty) (responsibility) is a matter of being honest (living in accordance with truth), to the extent that one can, and a matter of being harmless (living in harmony with all lives), to the extent that one can. If the student is truly committed to these two dimensions of responsibility, and is open to understanding cause and effect relationships (natural law), and consciously accepting responsibility for one's own behavior and consequences, then growth (experience and expression) is enhanced and facilitated. The spiritual student is responsible to himself (herself) at the personality level, to the soul and the soul group, to humanity, and to all of life.

† Commentary No. 1162

Determination

The key to successful commitment (living in accordance with the commitments that one has made) is determination. The human being, by virtue of being in physical incarnation, is subject to inertia (the inertial forces inherent in material existence). Through determination one can naturally and effectively overcome inertial forces and live in accordance with one's principles and values, actually rather than merely (sincerely) intentionally. Determination is an inherently creative endeavor, as it naturally evokes energy (force) in accordance with the nature and quality (and intensity (seriousness)) of the determination.

The spiritual student is, at the soul level, one who is committed to the spiritual path and all that that implies. But at the personality level (ego), there may or

may not be a conscious commitment. Thus circumstances are evoked that eventually compel the waking-consciousness to face up to that commitment, through realization that the commitment is made, through actually (consciously and deliberately) embracing the commitment, i.e., through being determined to live in accordance with the commitment, to the extent that it is understood. Determination arises where there is such a conscious appreciation for the inner commitment and a conscious commitment at the personality level to collaborate with and support the intention of the higher Self, even while knowing that that implies the eventual end of personality-centeredness. Even with commitment and determination, there remains inertia at various levels and through various aspects and elements of the personality (body) (ego) (intellect).

Determination means that a person has made a definite and firm decision. This evokes power that gradually creates, sustains, and broadens the momentum of the student in the context of the path. To merely voice determination is not sufficient. One must be determined in order to evoke that power and to achieve what is determined to be achieved. Many make (apparent) commitments, however sincerely, but lack the determination to proceed effectively. Procrastination is a common symptom of the inertial state (matter) (personality) (ego). Good intentions are better than bad intentions, but without determination, without the commitment to follow through, without the actuality of following through, good intentions are merely that. The making of excuses, however sincerely, is also symptomatic of inertia.

But once the inertial state has been (even just barely) overcome, there is the gradual building of momentum and further overcoming of inertia. If the student is open-minded in his or her determination, then progress is assured. But if the student allows opinions to take hold, or other attachments, those will naturally tend to undermine whatever momentum has been achieved. Thus one needs to be both determined and intelligently open-minded regarding the process (and even the goals).

One of the most potent aspects of determination is that it tends to continually remind the waking-consciousness of one's intentions, thereby better enabling the needed (desired) actions, attitudes, behaviors, feelings, and thinking. Thus determination tends to undermine the tendency to go back to sleep (become absorbed again in the material (mundane) world of personality-centeredness).

Determination is thus an ingredient to achieving and sustaining conscious awareness. Proper determination encourages proper habits, those actions and activities that encourage growth (development) (evolution), but one should remain vigilant, as even good habits can degenerate through inertia into mechanicalness.

† Commentary No. 1163

Adherence

The principles and practices of the spiritual path are many and varied; although in some sense (in principle) they are relatively simple. The principles and practices of the path are simply those which properly encourage the student to live in accordance with conscience (truth, harmlessness) (the accumulated wisdom derived from assimilation of experience) and facilitate the experience and expression of the spiritual path (life) (deepening). Adherence is a matter of accord, of balance, of equilibrium, of harmony, in some higher sense.

The successful student is one who adheres to the principles and practices of the path, to the extent that he or she is able to. In order to properly adhere, one must first understand at some level what the principles and practices are, and then understand how to embrace them intelligently. Much of the preliminary training of students involves these basic ideas, so that the student knows what to do and why and how. Later on, the student becomes more attuned to the inner voice and is able to discern appropriateness without recourse to reasons. In fact, to some extent, adherence is merely a matter of some (inner, higher) sense of appropriateness. Adherence naturally follows from commitment and determination.

Adherence is not (properly) a matter of blindly following some leader (presumed authority) or some dictate. It is (properly) a matter of understanding (or at least recognizing) the value of the endeavor and therefore proceeding accordingly. In understanding, or in intuitively recognizing, one can proceed intelligently (intelligently does not imply merely intellectually). Adherence is (properly) a matter of remaining faithful to and committed to some course (principles and practices) to the extent of one's understanding or realization. If one truly listens to the inner voice (conscience) (and not the mask of (false) self), then there is

guidance (adaptation, encouragement) and building of momentum. One adheres because it is consistent with one's inner quality and character.

Adherence is not (properly) a matter of attachment or glamour. If one embraces certain principles and practices because one is merely told to do so, or because of glamour, then one is not intelligently embracing them, and one is not therefore really learning or growing or accomplishing what is intended. What one has, at that level, is the facade of adherence (the karma of obedience) (the karma of absorption in glamour). Proper adherence means that one's embrace of principles and practices becomes a matter of inherent consciousness. It becomes a natural part of one's daily life. For example, the proper vegetarian does not need (and does not need to offer) reasons or excuses for the practice. It is simply a natural practice (discipline) (embrace) and one that the student is inherently (naturally) (consciously and unconsciously) committed to. Likewise the proper non-smoker and the proper non-drinker and the proper one-who-meditates. This is so natural, to one who truly embraces the principles and practices, that any transient lack of accord will register immediately in the waking-consciousness, and one will naturally and properly respond to that realization.

This does not mean that one cannot tentatively embrace a practice before one fully understands or recognizes its value. It just means that the principles and practices that are properly embraced are done so without reasons, without contriving, naturally and comfortably, without regret and without reluctance. Adherence is, ultimately, a matter of Tao.

Self-Assessment

Continual (but not obsessive) and honest self-assessment is essential for the spiritual student, to enable the student to deal effectively and intelligently with whatever strengths and weaknesses may be present in the personality life. Weaknesses can be transformed into strengths. Limitations can be overcome. Strengths can be applied to spiritual practice and spiritual work.

But self-assessment is not an easy process. It is complicated by personal bias, how one perceives oneself. It is complicated by ego. It is complicated by conditioning and the delusion of the senses. It is complicated by the student being unable to see clearly all the aspects and dimensions of the personality life. So the first step in self-assessment is the cultivation of honesty and self-honesty. The student needs to be honest, as honest as he or she can be, in order to embrace the truth about anything. One needs to be honest about oneself, in order to recognize the truth about oneself, to whatever extent that is possible. One needs to not react badly in the face of weaknesses. That is not what self-assessment is about.

One needs to honestly recognize weaknesses, not identify with them, but deal with them as natural components of the lower self, that simply need to be addressed. And one likewise needs not to feel overly good about one's strengths, but merely accept them graciously. In a sense, life in this world is a matter of continually transforming one's limitations and weaknesses into freedoms and strengths. Evolution in consciousness occurs to the extent that the student is able to do this. To learn. To grow. And expression (service) is based both on the student's ability to deal honestly and effectively with his or her strengths and weaknesses and the student's ability to recognize the calling (need and role) (which is itself a consequence of attunement (self-honesty)). In a sense, self-assessment is a process in which one wrestles with the ego, eventually transcending that limitation.

Self-assessment is (should be) necessarily an objective process, in order to minimize the effects of bias and conditioning. Self-assessment is self-appraisal, and should begin with an appreciation for all that is there. Strengths are

opportunities for positive expression. And weaknesses are merely opportunities for developing the corresponding strengths. As a whole, each person has considerable value, and self-appraisal should begin with that sense of (uninflated) self-value.

There are many aspects and dimensions to self-appraisal. There are many characteristics and qualities to be considered. How one perceives oneself, hopefully honestly, is important. But so is the perception of others. Their perception may or may not be wholly correct, but one should not dismiss the possibilities, for there is often a degree of truth in every observation, and others can sometimes see things that one cannot see oneself. One should not look to others as authorities, but one should at least consider the possibilities. In fact, in all self-honesty, one can never really draw definitive conclusions. To be completely honest, one always leaves open the possibility that one's insight is not whole, that one's appraisal and conclusions are not (wholly) correct. Yet the process (self-assessment) is nonetheless valuable. And the process helps the student to recognize and then focus upon what is relatively important. As one proceeds from developmental focus to service focus, one does not then ignore the self-assessment process, but one then merely places it in a different context.

† Commentary No. 1165

Contemplation

There are several types of contemplation and several meanings. There is contemplation in the lower sense of concentration or mentally focusing "on spiritual things as a form of private devotion" and there is contemplation in the higher sense of the "state of mystical awareness of God's being." And there is the more mundane sense of contemplation as attentive consideration. All of these have value.

In the context of the spiritual path, contemplation is the third aspect of meditation (the first being concentration, the second being meditation proper). Contemplation is characterized in the lower sense as contemplative activity, involving the abstract and concrete minds in a detached, impersonal mental consideration of some object or subject. This (lower sense) (while valuable) is

not even (properly considered) meditation. In the higher sense, contemplation transcends mental activity altogether and transcends the higher, meditative alignment and awareness of the soul, to a selfless, non-thinking realization of being. This is true contemplation, beyond even seedless meditation. It is this sense of contemplation that is the basis for mysticism. And in this sense, concentration is a head-centered endeavor, meditation is properly a balanced endeavor between the head and the heart (eventually becoming a non-endeavor), and contemplation is a wholly heart-centered non-endeavor. But contemplation cannot be achieved without the (preparatory) head-centered and balanced endeavors.

Thus contemplation is properly a mystical state that follows meditation as meditation follows concentration. The contemplative state (union) is the long-term goal of meditation, where meditation is the means for preparation for contemplation. Some students practice meditation for many years without actually achieving the “meditative state” proper (which is beyond thinking). And some students who achieve the meditative state are unable (yet) to go beyond that (to contemplation). This is because the mind and the personality must be properly and fully conditioned (unconditioned) in order to enter the contemplative state. This requires years (lifetimes) of preparatory work (spiritual practice) and can only be evoked once that work has been accomplished (and the student has passed beyond “work”).

The mind (intellect) (ego) is naturally resistant (inertial) with regard to proper meditation and contemplation. The mind naturally grasps. The soul does not. The mind is naturally restless. The soul is not. In order for the student to meditate properly, which is a prerequisite to contemplation, the student must fully temper both the mind (intellect) and the ego. The mind must reach a place (state) where it is comfortably quiescent (but not passively quiescent). But the mind (and the ego) would rather grasp (at thought forms and feelings) and be distracted thereby. And the mind (and the ego) would rather not experience the mystical state. Yet once (as) the mystical state is achieved, the mind is comfortable and the ego is non-existent. The soul is the actual means of contemplation, but the mind must be brought to the place (state) where this can occur.

The contemplative state can only be imagined by someone who has not had the experience. And one who has had the experience is not able to communicate the true nature of the experience. Contemplation cannot be sought, but it can be prepared for. Any act of seeking the contemplative state is preclusive. True contemplation leaves the student haunted (in the positive sense) and provides a basis for renewal, through attunement with the soul.

† Commentary No. 1166

Meditation Dynamics 5

In the final analysis, the distinction between individual meditation and group meditation is merely academic. Proper individual meditation is in a group meditation context. The (proper) meditator is linked to the soul, and the soul is linked to every other soul within the soul group, and meditation becomes thereby a matter of participation in the group consciousness and learning to effectively express the energy (quality and character) of the soul group, both in meditation and beyond (in the daily life).

In this sense meditation is conscious participation in the group flow, both in terms of the inner group (at the soul level) and in terms of the (external) environmental group (collective) consciousness. Meditation has effects on the immediate (and not so immediate) environs. And meditation is affected by whatever is within that environment that harmonizes or resonates with the character and quality of the meditation energy. Proper meditation involves the head and the heart. Proper meditation involves relationship with the inner group and the outer context. Proper meditation overcomes the barriers between individuals, between groups, between internals and externals, between the head and the heart, between the personality and the soul.

Meditation is not only the means through which the personality becomes attuned to and responsive to the soul, but it is also the means through which the human kingdom and the deva kingdom are related. The devas (angels) are not human and are not human-like. They are naturally and substantially averse to the human personality presence (personality-centeredness) (ego). But through meditation, through gentle contemplation (in the lower sense), the human being can begin to attract and work with various devas, necessarily subjectively. But

wherever the ego is present, wherever there is willfulness, wherever there is loudness (personality-centeredness), there is withdrawal on the part of those (devas) who would otherwise be able to work with humankind. The relationship between the two kingdoms is significant, as both lifewaves serve the same purposes, but through different means and different roles and different character (consciousness). Only in the quiet mind can a person (human being) work effectively with the devas. Of course one cannot work with the devas if one wants to, for the act or condition of wanting is noisy. And one cannot work with the devas if one is chosen (for being chosen is a delusion).

At the soul level, there is considerable collaboration between the two kingdoms (three kingdoms if one includes the superhuman), by virtue of the lack of personality (ego) presence. Human soul groups provide considerable energy for qualified expression through incarnated lives, and deva groups provide considerable energy for healing and balance. The human energy in (proper) meditation is gentle (subtle) and progressive. The deva energy in (proper) meditation is very gentle (very subtle) and relational (a matter of balance). The only source of inertia is the material presence (the human body, the human personality, the human ego).

There are so many aspects and dimensions to meditation (dynamics). The spiritual student should explore these, through actual meditation, so that eventually the student will be able to intelligently evoke and embrace the needed energies. As this occurs, the student becomes an extension (representative) of the group energy (character) (quality) in the world. While the disciple may be otherworldly, he or she is nonetheless connected to humanity, but at inner levels, without recourse to conformity (absorption) at outer levels.

Meditation Forms

Meditation forms are the structures or patterns through which a person may approach meditation. In a sense, all meditation forms are artificial, but some are more natural than others, and are therefore relatively more effective.

Meditation forms can be nonetheless potentially very effective in facilitating the meditative process. Eventually, meditation becomes so natural that it ceases to be an occasional or even continual practice but actually becomes a continuous practice. Life becomes a meditation.

Meditation forms are the means for beginning and sustaining the process. They are guidelines for meditation that may be adapted by the student or group according to need and temperament (and experience and insight). Without meditation forms, without real meditation experience, the student is poorly equipped to begin or to sustain the process. There is considerable inertia. Even with an effective meditation form, the student should be wary of falling asleep (in the sense of becoming mechanical, going through the movements of a meditation form without really being conscious of what is being done). Many students have been “meditating” for many, many years, without really meditating, because they have become attached to the form and are simply going through the motions rather than meditating. Thus while a meditation form may be necessary for a while, even a long while, one should endeavor to place the emphasis on meditation rather than the form.

Mantras can be very potent ingredients to (preliminary) meditation, but even mantras can be embraced in mechanicalness. If one is simply sounding the mantra, without participating in the energy, without being aware of the flow, then one is asleep. Meditation forms often employ various magical techniques, like mantras and formulae, to bring about certain conditions or effects in consciousness that are needed for proper meditation. But without actually participating, consciously and deliberately (yet subjectively, non-willfully), the student cannot embrace the evoked energy or be properly responsive. Thus, in embracing any meditation form, the student must endeavor to remain awake, and without being attached.

To be effective, meditation forms must be embraced intelligently. If a student is head-centered, and employs a head-centered meditation form, then the student is not likely to achieve any balance (likewise if a student is heart-centered, and employs a heart-centered meditation form). A person who is not integrated should embrace a meditation form that emphasizes personality integration. A person who is not aligned should embrace a meditation form that emphasizes alignment. A person who is not balanced should embrace a meditation form that emphasizes balance. The ray nature of the personality ray (if the person is integrated) should be taken into consideration as well as the ray nature of the soul (if perceived). Thus the various strengths and weaknesses of the student can be accommodated more effectively. And the student should appreciate that the (proper) forms include recapitulation of the whole meditation process (one cannot effectively ignore the various stages).

Many effective meditation forms begin with a head-centered prelude, employing concentration and withdrawal (detachment) (letting go), as a means of preparing (quieting) the body and the personality (mind) for meditation. Then follows a heart-centered meditation period to evoke the quality of the soul. Then follows a meditation period in which the head and heart are balanced. And finally there is a period or process of releasing (sharing) the accumulated (attracted) (evoked) energies.

† Commentary No. 1168

Truth and Reality

Truth and reality may not mean very much to people who are asleep in the mundane world of ordinary human endeavor. But truth and reality are absolutely essential for the spiritual student to understand, in principle, if the student is ever to awaken from this deep sleep and begin to perceive things more correctly. But what is true? And what is real?

Inherent in human consciousness is the largely unconscious need to understand one's circumstances and purpose in life, to understand the universe and its relation to human existence, to experience and express one's life in meaningful ways, to evolve in consciousness, and eventually to achieve self-realization. Yet there are many problems and difficulties along the way, principally the

unreliability of sense perception and the relativity of truth. Virtually all of humanity are encumbered in consciousness by virtue of reliance upon sense perception. The perception and eventual realization of truth and reality is a rather progressive process, depending much on experience and the gradual assimilation of that experience.

The student begins this process of dealing with truth and reality while being asleep (blind), while being absorbed in the mundaneness of personality-centered (material, egoistic, self-centered) existence, while taking the outer circumstances and appearances for granted, while taking one's individuality (separateness) for granted, while unconsciously accepting these things as valid. But the ordinary ways of perceiving the world are a matter of deep conditioning, a consequence of being imbedded in the material world, without having access to the higher Self, to truth or reality. But through experience the student gradually realizes how unsatisfying are the worldly appearances, and begins searching for truth. Along the way the student attracts experience that reinforces the quest, all the while being subject to the inertia of material existence (including personality-centeredness and ego). But in the quest, there is progressive (subtle) realization.

Thus being absorbed in the mundane (personality) world the student is almost impervious to the underlying truth and reality, but through various means (through typically fourth ray processes (conflict, contrast, pain, suffering)) the student gradually begins to perceive the underlying reality, first emotionally or intellectually, without really understanding, but by wrestling with truth, or what appears to be true (or not), later on more consciously, as the connection with the higher Self (which lives, relatively, in truth and reality) is developed. But in order for this to occur, the student must become prepared (purified, refined in consciousness) and must overcome much of the conditioning (barriers) that leads to and sustains absorption. And the student must be committed to truth, to being honest with oneself and others. It is a matter of values. Without the value of truth, (proper) realization is not possible.

The underlying truth is simple. Things are not in fact what they appear to be. The world of ordinary human experience and expression is merely a shadow of the underlying reality, a reflection of something more real. Truth is not absolute. Reality is not an absolute. Truth is relative and perception is

unreliable. The real world is something that cannot be grasped, but can be experienced, progressively. To see clearly is a great blessing, but one must first be willing and able. One must be able to deal with both relativity and uncertainty. One can never be really sure of anything. One must embrace the wholeness of truth and yet see only part of the truth.

† Commentary No. 1169

Values 1

The values of most people are predominately a matter of conditioning and consciousness. Since most people are asleep in the sense of being unaware of the underlying reality, and perceive themselves as separate self-conscious individualities, most peoples' values are naturally self-centered. As people evolve, and as civilizations grow, as people become less self-centered, as people begin to appreciate and respect the interests of other people, values naturally become more refined and less self-centered. Thus there are (some) changing values and personal growth.

Many values (for most people) are unconscious and implied by the way a person lives his or her life, in the pursuit of personal survival, in pursuit of material things and (apparent) wealth, in pursuit of pleasures and sensations, in pursuit of ego-building accomplishments and status, in pursuit of objects and goals considered worthwhile or valuable or on behalf of others, etc. A person is no less responsible for his or her values because they are unconscious and implied, but the karma of such a person is markedly different in flavor and practice than of one who is more deliberate and conscious in embracing values. There is much more potency (karma) in consciously embracing values and learning more directly through the resulting experience.

Many people are passive with regard to values, and embrace whatever values are subscribed or professed by elders, friends, the community, etc. Some people do whatever they are called upon by circumstances or by others to do. Some people do whatever is expected of them, or whatever they perceive is expected of them, without really thinking about it. The lessons conveyed through such passive experience are relatively modest, but provide a stepping-stone toward a

more active posture. As such people develop, they naturally begin to be motivated more and more by desire rather than simply acquiescence or compliance. Most people are more active (than passive), have goals, consciously or unconsciously elucidated. This may be materialistic or sensual or egoistic (or some combination).

At one extreme there is to do whatever feels good or to acquire things (material possessions, wealth, status). In the middle are relatively self-centered goals relating to education, personal growth, spiritual development, etc. At the other extreme there is the goal of accomplishing whatever is perceived to be of value to humanity (or some group therein) or whatever one is called upon to do (in the sense of Tao). Eventually, the spiritual student transcends personal goals altogether, and simply embraces quality (spiritual qualities) (serving effectively through non-contriving). But in each case there are fundamental and essential values that reflect the nature (character and quality) of consciousness.

Perhaps the most fundamental value at the human level is life, in the sense of preserving one's life in the world. Life is sacred, both metaphysically and to a large extent conventionally (although this value is not generally applied to non-human lives, it should be). Life should be protected because people are in the world in order to fulfill their karma (and dharma). There is purpose for being here. But life should not necessarily be sustained artificially, for there is (real) life beyond this world. Under virtually all conceivable circumstances, the taking of life (abortion, murder, suicide) is anathema to the spiritual student. This anathema extends as well to the animal kingdom, to the taking of animal lives for human consumption (pleasure) (sport). That anyone should kill, ignorantly or otherwise, human or animal, is a serious matter.

Values 2

Very closely related to life is the quality and nature of life in the lower worlds, (perceived) through (having) health and happiness. Health includes physical, etheric, emotional (astral), and concrete mental (intellectual) considerations. Health is also a matter of consciousness in the sense that a truly healthy person, one who is best able to experience and express most effectively, is one who is unencumbered by coarseness. Thus some pleasurable activities are inherently harmful (obviously or not) and are therefore not healthy.

Health is important in several regards, both in the sense of one being able to effectively experience and express oneself in the lower worlds, and in the sense of one being able to learn more effectively through the lack of health (accident, disease, etc.) the lessons that are implied or conveyed thereby. Health and non-health are both opportunities, but decidedly different in nature. And of course healthy people tend to “feel” better. And yet many people trade transient pleasure for health, e.g., in smoking, drinking, taking drugs, risking one’s life for some thrilling experience, etc. Many people live in accordance with the prevailing worldly assumption that there is only one life on earth (and nothing beyond this life) and so one should simply enjoy it as much as one can. This is fine, it leads to experience that leads in turn to assimilation of experience. But it is short-sighted in the sense of lacking realization and perspective of the underlying purpose (collective evolution in consciousness) and true value of life (opportunity to contribute to collective evolution in consciousness).

Happiness is a very personal matter, perceived variously according to perspective. There is real happiness (that relies on internals) and there is the illusion of happiness (i.e., happiness that relies on externals). Yet the pursuit of happiness is ultimately futile, while participation in happiness is much more meaningful. But because values (and consciousness) differ(s) so much, each person is his or her own judge of what constitutes quality of life, and most people actively pursue things (goals) (or at least function) more or less in accordance with their perceptions (self-perception, goals, values, etc.) and apparent opportunities.

Many worldly values are intermediate in the sense that they simply (potentially) contribute to (the perception of) happiness. For example, job satisfaction (which may be perceived to bring happiness) (or may be perceived to prevent happiness) (when indeed, the job one has (or not) does not in itself bring or convey any opportunity for happiness (except in the artificial sense)). Comfortable surroundings, possessions, fame and fortune, etc., may seem to be satisfying, but in the long run they are futile (in themselves). There is nothing wrong with having possessions, etc., provided one is not overly attached to them, provided they are not acquired at the expense of others, etc. The human being is really a custodian and does not (cannot) ever own anything, but people attract things and experiences in accordance with consciousness and karma.

The only thing that really matters (in this perspective) are the values through which we live our lives. We can embrace mundane, worldly, material, egoistic values, or we can embrace more noble values (or at least work in that direction). In between the mundane and the spiritual are the more social values (brotherhood, friendship, relationship, etc.) that, when properly broadened and deepened, lead to the spiritual.

† Commentary No. 1171

Metaphysics 2

Metaphysics is the study of that which is not necessarily apparent to the senses, namely the study of the underlying non-physical reality. At one extreme is the formal, academic study of metaphysics as a branch of philosophy. At the other extreme is the whole domain of new age (popular) metaphysics. In between these two extremes lies metaphysical reality.

The value of metaphysics rests with its contribution of understanding the realm of energy and forces which provides a basis for understanding, at least in principle, the whole domain of cause and effect relationships, of the laws and rules which govern underlying reality. The practical value of metaphysics is conveyed through this understanding and leads to further awakening, to the reality of oneself and to reality of the (real) metaphysical world. Metaphysics is, in this sense, the bridge between the exoteric and conventional and ordinary world of appearances (delusion) (matter) and the esoteric and unconventional

and extra-ordinary (yet more natural) world of energy and forces. While theosophy provides a basis of broad metaphysical knowledge, it is the realm of metaphysics that provides evolutionary encouragement to vastly greater numbers of people, by virtue of the more practical nature of metaphysics.

In this sense, metaphysics is the more meaningful part of the new age domain and provides the actual basis for all of the various new age notions (which of course are not at all new). It is theosophy made practical at the level of those who approach the spiritual path and at the level of the emotionally polarized aspirant, without the artificial constraints of the untempered and unbalanced head-centered nature. It is more powerful than conventional psychology, in the sense that it is based on less superficial observation and experience (and upon underlying principles) rather than being based on rational assessment of observations that are not really understood. But it is less powerful in the sense that metaphysical people, people who attempt to embrace metaphysical principles, tend to emotionalize the experience without appreciating the overall and underlying context.

There is a hierarchy or progression within the various paths of approach to and through the spiritual path. It begins with the conventional experience and expression, and through new age notions gradually embraced there is a progression toward open-mindedness, toward gradual appreciation of deeper, more meaningful considerations (e.g., reincarnation, evolution in consciousness, karma). From metaphysics and the new age experience one generally progresses to theosophy (or something comparable) which tends to be more intellectual and head-centered. Yet neither is really mature. For while metaphysical experience (the experience of the typical emotionally-polarized metaphysically-minded person) is generally conditioned or constrained by the relatively untempered emotional nature, theosophical experience (the experience of the typical intellectual theosophist) is comparably conditioned or constrained by the relatively untempered head-centeredness. Even metaphysics embraced emotionally rather than intellectually tends to be head-centered, but not to the extreme of theosophy. Even so, the metaphysical experience tends to carry the student substantially forward through a number of lifetimes, as does (usually) subsequently the theosophical experience.

But beyond theosophy there is the real depth and breadth of truly spiritual experience, the inner realization. Where metaphysics and theosophy have provided a basis, the inner journey (self-mastery and self-realization) places both in a higher, broader perspective.

† Commentary No. 1172

New Age Notions 1

New age notions are those ideas and concepts that tend to be embraced and promulgated in the new age movement (the fringes of conventional thinking) by those of humanity who are relatively less conventional, who are relatively less constrained by conventional thinking.

While theosophy follows largely from the ancient (eternal) wisdom, and while metaphysics (properly) draws from philosophy, psychology, religion, and theosophy, new age notions are adaptations of metaphysical and theosophical principles based to a large extent on what is appealing. There is generally an underlying truth to each notion, but because of the ways in which these ideas are grasped and popularized, there are also substantial distortions and misunderstandings. The fundamental problem of new age notions is the widespread lack of discrimination, i.e., the inability of most people to discern what is true. And yet in addition to their appeal, most new age notions also have considerable value. Some of the most valuable new age (borrowed) ideas are keeping an open mind, building self-esteem, positive thinking, acceptance of people and circumstances, heart-centeredness, embracing the light, unconditional love, the unity of all life, etc. In short, many new age notions are practical and meaningful adaptations of metaphysical principles.

All of these new age notions are properly based on higher principles and the actuality of metaphysical energies and forces, i.e., the energies and forces on etheric, astral, and concrete mental levels that are evoked through thinking and feeling and behavior (action) [in this sense, energy refers to something available and existent, while force refers to the application, appropriation, attraction, evocation, or movement of energy].

The open mind is something that new-agers tend to do rather well (compared to most people who are more absorbed), even (often) to the point of embracing trendy but unfounded notions. Yet the open mind is absolutely essential to progress, for there is much that the conventional (secular) (materialistic) world has yet to realize, that the open mind facilitates (progressive realization). The open mind is even more essential at the theosophical "level" where beliefs and opinions (mental attachments) form effective barriers to realization. Positive thinking is another rather prevalent and powerful new age notion. Thinking (and feeling) is very creative (energy follows thought), and therefore positive thinking can do wonders for changing attitudes and even circumstances. But positive thinking needs to also be embraced in the context of some degree of realism, for unrealistic positive thinking is inherently self-deceptive. Another notion that new-agers advance very nicely is encouraging self-esteem. This is important at the pre-integration stage of evolution in consciousness, where the personality needs to be cultivated and developed into an effective instrument of experience and expression, but eventually needs to be tempered, as the ego must ultimately be transcended in order to reach the higher, deeper levels of consciousness.

Another very potent new age idea is that of unity, of there being an underlying unity in consciousness, at the soul level, that embraces all. This idea, embraced (relatively and partially) by so many, has contributed substantially to (encouraging) overcoming much bias and prejudice and (unwarranted) discrimination. Eventually, the spiritual student experiences unity (rather than merely embracing the idea emotionally and/or intellectually) and that higher experience leads the student well beyond the metaphysical (theosophical) domain.

New Age Notions 2

One of the problems of the new age movement is perceived (and actual) flakiness. The consequence of this is that new age principles tend to be rejected, or at least viewed with suspicion, by more conventional people. Of course it is not reasonable to assume that "flakiness" invalidates the beliefs or notions embraced. But that's okay. The unconventional "presence" is nonetheless a strong encouragement to balance the more typical complacency of the masses.

For the most part it is unconventional people who serve more so as points of light, who by virtue of their presence (attitudes, beliefs, behaviors) in the world offer encouragement to those who are more deeply conditioned by material forces and the forces of the ego. New age folks (and metaphysicians and theosophists and spiritually-minded people of all faiths) are the pioneers within humanity, who lead by virtue of their experience and expression, from the conventional (exoteric) realm to the less conventional (esoteric) realm. Of course, as this occurs, that which was deemed unconventional (metaphysical) becomes considered conventional, and more esoteric ideas become merely metaphysical, so there is a never-ending progression of thinking (quality) along these (evolutionary) lines.

Virtually all of human experience and expression is head-centered and personality-centered, even the preponderantly emotional experience and expression is generally head-centered and almost entirely personality-centered. One of the contributions of the new age is the increasing emphasis on tempering the head-centered nature and unfolding the heart. Much in the new age movement encourages this at the practical (experiential) level. Unfortunately, the new age has not yet grasped the distinction between the soul and the personality (even though there is much talk of this, it is generally a matter of making a distinction between the superficial aspect of the personality and its deeper aspect (but without appreciation of what the soul really is (i.e., in new age terminology the soul does not refer to the soul (atma-buddhi-manas) but to deeper feelings at the personality level, to the heart at the personality level))). That's okay. It just means that the spiritual student needs to discern the actual distinctions and not be misled by semantics or how people use words.

Similarly there is much talk of intuition and heart-centeredness without realizing that the real intuition (buddhi) is something much beyond the emotional or astral senses, and that heart-centeredness does not equate to being emotionally-polarized and having feelings. In any event, the encouragement toward heart-centeredness is very important, as so much of life in the objective world (e.g., materialism, egoism) pushes people toward head-centeredness.

Another new age notion that attracts many more conventional people is the idea of prosperity, or of creating prosperity by virtue of one's faith, beliefs, attitude, etc. This is an introduction to metaphysical forces, i.e., creative engagement of causal factors, even though the emphasis of prosperity is inherently selfish and personality-centered. But the idea that one deserves to be rich is something else. That goes well beyond the underlying principles. But the new age bridges between materialism and egoism on the one hand, and the spiritual path on the other. So there is some confusion in the process.

One of the most practical new age notions is that of unconditional love, of accepting people as they are, without judging them and without expecting them to conform to one's own values. Coupled with creative expression (prayer, meditation, goodwill), embracing unconditional love is extremely potent.

† Commentary No. 1174

Theosophy 1

Theosophy is the ageless wisdom, a body of knowledge (and means of insight) pertaining to underlying reality, including the entire meaningful scope of metaphysics. Theosophical insight can be found reflected in the mystical and occult core of religion, philosophy, and science. The name theosophy means divine wisdom. It includes the accumulated wisdom of the ages. It is often called esoteric or occult because it deals with what is hidden and essential. Much of the esoteric teachings have not yet been revealed, but are available to those who are able to embrace them on the higher planes of consciousness.

Theosophy includes information and insight concerning the source and purpose of life, metaphysical principles, laws, and processes which uphold the universe.

It concerns the mystery of God, and the mystery of the human being. It gives great insight into cosmogenesis (the origin and development of the universe), and into anthropogenesis (the origin and development of humanity), including human purpose and the means of spiritual evolution. In more recent times, theosophy has been widely identified with teachings advanced by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and The Theosophical Society, founded in 1875 as a revival of theosophical thought and carried forward today by a number of theosophical and metaphysical groups.

The tradition, however, is ancient. When human beings first individualized, i.e., became nominally self-conscious, they were guided in their development and experience by super-human beings who shared with them knowledge and understanding according to their capacities. These super-human beings passed through the human stage well in advance of the present humanity (there is a continuum of lives, races, lifewaves, kingdoms). As humanity evolved in consciousness and was increasingly able to experience without need for direct guidance, the "teachers" gradually withdrew to the higher planes and now only provide gentle and subjective encouragement. And as human beings have evolved onto those higher levels, the super-humans have been replaced by the pioneers among humanity, those who have become more than human (having completed the requirements at this level), and the others have withdrawn to even higher levels. But the body of esoteric knowledge continues from ancient times.

Generally, wisdom teachings consist of three major levels. The lowest level is that of exoteric teachings that are freely available to and comprehensible by the bulk of humanity. These teachings in their higher sense are limited, veiled, and often in the form of parables or aphorisms, but in their lower, more practical sense, are more-or-less self-evident to most of humanity. The intermediate level is that of the so-called lesser mysteries, includes metaphysical teachings above and beyond the conventional. The highest level is that of the so-called greater mysteries, that which is purely esoteric and in its truest sense is available only on soul (causal) levels and cannot be written, spoken or brought down into the concrete mind without great distortion and misunderstanding. The bulk of humanity are simply not sufficiently developed in experience and consciousness to understand. There is no judgment implied in this. The higher teachings are readily available, to anyone who can approach that place on the higher levels of

consciousness. Few can. But anyone can, in principle, provided the student is clearly devoted to the quest.

The various so-called “esoteric teachings” are actually teachings derived from the lesser mysteries, and the translation and expression of these ideas into the concrete mind can vary widely in quality, depending on the character and quality of the intermediary.

† Commentary No. 1175

Theosophy 2

Purely esoteric knowledge carries with it a great responsibility, as well as power that can be misused unless the recipient has a well developed conscience and sense of propriety. Therefore esoteric knowledge and insight is protected, inherently. It is not so much a matter of secrecy as it is a matter of most people not being able to comprehend it. However, as humanity evolves, knowledge which was once considered esoteric becomes, by degrees, exoteric and available to all, as humanity’s consciousness, quality, and abilities grow. Today, for example, most of the lesser mystery teachings are generally and readily available for a serious spiritual student to use to teach himself the basic principles. The greater mysteries, however, remain secret, except to a very small number of people who are able to work through soul contact.

Even in the outer, orthodox teachings of religion, philosophy, and science, although the exoteric tenets may vary considerably according to perspective and culture, at the core of each is found the very same shining esoteric truths. At the highest level, all share the same (one) reality and truth, for all is one. The founders of all the great religions were initiates of the mysteries and taught some aspect of the esoteric tradition. A rich and profound source of theosophy has come from India, and the Vedas (Hindu scriptures), including the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita. Aspects of theosophy may also be found in religions such as Buddhism, Sufism, and Taoism, as well as in the Kabbalah of the Jewish teachings, and in esoteric Christianity. Theosophy has no dogma, creed, or ritual. It simply presents certain ideas for one’s own consideration and evaluation, and emphasizes the source of unity underlying all expression. In

spite of diversity of approach and cultural differences, theosophical teachings generally contain certain basic principles.

(1) There is One Life, eternal, boundless, and immutable, from which the universe arises. From this One God are differentiated all lives and all forms, with God being both immanent (within each life) and transcendent (external, more than each life). (2) Everything in the universe throughout all of its kingdoms is conscious to some degree, a consciousness of its own kind and on its own plane of perception. This consciousness is evolving, as the universe is not the product of chance, but rather the outworking of a divine plan of inner guiding principles and purposiveness in progressive evolution of consciousness.

(3) Universes and the lives within them manifest and disappear according to a natural cycle, or cosmic law of periodicity. This process includes progressive incarnation (reincarnation) and is seen everywhere in nature, of periods of activity and growth alternating with periods of rest and assimilation. The universe and everything in it is temporary compared with the eternal, immutable One. (4) Life is conditioned by the Law of Karma, known as the law of cause and effect, which for man yields learning experiences and encourages evolution as a consequence of free will.

Theosophy also teaches that cosmic manifestation has two phases, involution and evolution. During involution, billions of units of individual spiritual consciousness called monads issue forth from the one undifferentiated source. Reflections of the monads descend more deeply into matter in the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms and through this experience finally gain self-consciousness in the human kingdom. Evolution begins as these self-conscious human beings gradually develop the divine potential within themselves, gain freedom from attachment to matter, and ultimately return to the One from which they emerged.

Theosophy 3

As a result of this aeonic journey, there is definite improvement in consciousness and awareness, as human lives achieve relative perfection. Evolution then continues in other ways. Attaining human perfection is eventually within the reach of all people, like those who have already accomplished that ideal such as the Christ, the Buddha, and others who inspire and encourage mankind. Recognizing the essential unity of the major religions, there is no need to convert anyone from or to any religion, but rather people are encouraged to seek to interpret and illuminate the higher, inner meanings of religion and sacred texts.

Theosophy is a synthesis of the deepest thinking (more properly, realization based on inner experience) of the Eastern and Western worlds. It focuses on the broader picture of the totality of existence, all that is, and uses an inclusive, correlative perspective. Though ancient in origin, it is really ageless, and underlies much of modern insight. Throughout the world today, there are many theosophical organizations continuing in the tradition of the ageless wisdom teachings. Whether they are called or considered theosophical matters not. What matters is the quality of consciousness embraced. What matters is the character and quality of the teachings.

While theosophical principles have always been available to the enlightened, there have been cycles over the course of history where the teachings have flourished publicly and then declined. Declinations occur whenever the mass consciousness becomes materialistic, sense-oriented, or personality-centered, naturally, in response to subtle pressures and qualifications. But a resurgence of the spiritual stimulation and restoration of the ancient theosophical teachings follows eventually (similarly, in response to subtle pressures and qualifications) (as humanity passes through a cycle of responsiveness (often following a period of great distress)).

A revival of theosophical thought in the Western world was begun through the efforts of Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (HPB) and others. Through her many writings, Madame Blavatsky endeavored to collect the various wisdom

given to man throughout the ages and to restate them for the Western world. She gathered ideas from the East and the West, going to their esoteric source (to the extent of her abilities and responsiveness), and showing their essential unity. Her magnum opus, *The Secret Doctrine*, was published in 1888 and dealt with cosmogenesis, the origin and development of the universe, and anthropogenesis, the origin and development of man. Madame Blavatsky emphasized that the book was not a revelation but rather a collection of teachings from thousands of books containing ancient wisdom which had appeared throughout the centuries at different times and places. She was non-dogmatic in approach, asking readers to consider these ideas, and accept them only if they seemed valid. Through her efforts and those of The Theosophical Society (and others), the West has been increasingly exposed to the ageless wisdom, and to the religious and philosophical learning of the East, and the compatibility and oneness of both East and West has become more apparent. The brotherhood-sisterhood of humanity was emphasized, as was the unity of all life.

The aggregation of divine wisdom teachings given to humanity over the ages comprises what is known as theosophy. Theosophical truths are not exclusive to any particular group or culture, but rather belong to all of the spiritually awakened within humanity who are therefore and thereby responsive to these teachings.

† Commentary No. 1177

Health

To value one's health is rather fundamental to the human condition and the human experience in the lower worlds. Yet although most people value health, not everyone acts (behaves) (feels) (thinks) in ways that facilitate or promote good health. This is so even when certain behavior is known to be inherently unhealthy.

The problem is inertia. People are generally asleep, lacking (full) awareness. People get absorbed or entangled or involved in experience (sensation) (expression) (ego) and there are therefore competing values and priorities. People may do things that are hazardous, either for noble reasons or otherwise

(ego), either deliberately (being consciously aware of the risks) or otherwise (being unaware of the potential consequences). Much of human experience is inherently harmful at some level, but experience itself (gradually, eventually) leads to understanding the various factors (rules) (cause and effect relationships) regarding health (e.g., understanding karma, understanding that there are consequences for every action (attitude) (behavior) (desire) (feeling) (judgment) (thought)).

This is a world based on harmony through conflict, of evolution in consciousness through experience of contrast and then of transcending these conditions. (Good) health results from being in balance, in having all of one's karma fulfilled. In good health, at every level, one is able to experience life unimpeded by lack of balance. But good health is multi-dimensional. Good health relies on clear, non-critical, non-judging, non-separative (harmonious) thinking. Good health relies on clear, non-separative (harmonious) feelings. Good health relies on harmonious behavior. Good health relies on healthy human relationship (goodwill) (harmony). Wherever there is poor health (on any level), there is something out of balance, something not in equilibrium, something (a message, a lesson) to be conveyed.

One should not only value good health, one should also embrace good health in the sense of doing those things which are healthy and not doing those things which are not healthy. This is the real lesson of evolution. That if one aligns oneself with evolutionary force (flow) (Tao), then one is healthy (or at least the creative forces lead to improving health). If one opposes the evolutionary flow in some way, then there will be stress or tension on some level, resulting in (some manifestation of) poor health. This is true for the individual in incarnation and it is true for groups of people (races, countries, humanity as a whole) as well. Thus not only is the spiritual student encouraged to become and remain as healthy as is practical (i.e., as best one can given whatever karmic constraints there may be), the student is also encouraged to promote health within the race as a whole. This is best accomplished not through preaching or through imposition, but through healthy expression (living harmoniously, promoting goodwill).

Of course (apparent) good health does not imply that one is with or without karma (or with or without lessons to learn (there are always lessons to learn at

some level)) (and one could simply be in a sleeping life), nor does (apparent) poor health imply that one is living "badly" (it may be a matter of residual karmic consequences (i.e., the lesson having been learned, the effects may dissolve gradually)). So one should not judge (oneself or others) based on appearances (or otherwise). One should simply live in accordance with metaphysical (spiritual) principles to the extent of one's understanding and the extent of one's ability given the circumstances.

† Commentary No. 1178

Personal Ethics

Personal ethics are the ethics that one professes to embrace, and the ethics that a person embraces or exhibits in actuality. Thus even if one has no awareness or consciousness of one's ethics, there is by virtue of values expressed, however unconsciously, through attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, feelings, and thoughts, a system of personal ethics for which a person is (karmically) accountable for.

Personal ethics are therefore an expression and indication of personal values. Most people are not very deliberate or conscious in their ethics, but rely more-or-less on conscience, however dimly perceived and however unconsciously realized. Conscience is the quality of the soul reflected into the mind and heart of the personality. Conscience is the consequence of previous experience, knowledge, and understanding, assimilated by the soul and retained from incarnation to incarnation. Thus conscience (and personal ethics) grows gradually, from life to life, according to experience and assimilation in consciousness.

Personal ethics are generally based as well on a person's belief system. If a person is unaware that people are all connected in consciousness, that the race as a whole (and all of life) is actually one life, then a person generally proceeds separately and according to (consciously or unconsciously) presumed independence. In this sense a person who is selfish or self-centered, who looks after his or her own (apparent) personal interests, even at the expense of others, is simply proceeding according to his or her personal ethics, in ignorance of the underlying reality. On a broader scale, this is true as well for families, companies, organizations, races, countries, etc. As a person grows in

consciousness, and the realization of the interdependence of all lives grows, then the system of personal ethics is also broadened. People then become aware of and concerned about the environment. People become concerned about broader relationships than simply their own.

Similarly, since everything is governed by the law of karma, the extent to which a person understands karma is (generally) the extent to which a person lives therefore in harmony with the world. If a person really understands that a behavior or attitude (or thought or feeling) is harmful, then that understanding tends to discourage the behavior. Of course there is still considerable inertia. People are immersed in physical bodies and a physical (material) world. The ego (personal materialism) is increasingly subtle and deceptive. So it is a continual struggle to emerge into awareness of cause and effect relationships and to live consciously and deliberately in harmony with the law as it is understood.

The first step then is awareness. Then it is a matter of observation, to see how one is behaving (on physical, etheric, emotional (astral), and concrete mental levels). Then in realization of one's behavior, it is a matter of embracing higher personal ethics, actually (gradually) changing one's behaviors in accordance with gradually improving understanding and higher values. In order to be truly effective, one's personal ethics must be based on awareness and realization, real understanding. Rationalization may be a stepping stone in the right direction, but eventually it must be replaced by true realization. Gradually, one's personal ethics embrace harmlessness in its broadest and deepest sense, including honesty in all of its various aspects. Eventually, one's personal ethics leads one to embrace the reality of unity, because it is realized, not merely because it has been rationalized.

Transmigration

Transmigration is defined as the passing at or through death from one body to another and is loosely equivalent to reincarnation. But the sense of transmigration can convey a false implication that one can pass from a higher form to a lower form, and this is quite contrary to natural law and is simply not possible.

What really happens at death is that the consciousness withdraws from the body, undergoes a period of assimilation of experience, undergoes a period of rest (more subjective assimilation), prepares for rebirth, and then reincarnates (transmigrates) into a new body (at conception). The law (karma) insists that this be a progressive or evolutionary process. Consequently, one is drawn naturally (under law) to ever higher lifeforms. As one's consciousness is refined through experience and expression, one learns how to create more refined vehicles for subsequent experience and expression. During the afterlife, in preparation for rebirth, one actually creates the next personality, i.e., physical, etheric, and astral bodies, and the concrete mind, based upon one's experience and developed abilities. One is guided and limited in this process by karma, so that one may not always reincarnate with an inherently healthy vehicle, but it is generally and necessarily the best that one can do under the (karmic) circumstances.

One does not pass from one body to another except through death and preparation for rebirth, except in very exceptional, very rare circumstances. The historical Christ appropriated the body of Jesus (in voluntary service), but this is by no means commonplace. There are sometimes incidences of possession, of one entity (lifeform) by another, due to psychic vulnerability (ignorance, carelessness), but even this is quite rare and not by any means permanent.

There are, very rarely, incidences of transmigration from one kingdom or lifewave to another, but never from a higher kingdom or lifewave to a lower. A human being, for example, could never incarnate in the animal kingdom. That would be counter-evolutionary. But a human being could, in principle, become so attached to the material (ego) aspect, that the personality matrix must be

destroyed and the person must begin the human experience over again. In which case the "person" may be held over until the following lifewave has reached the human stage. But even so, the "human being" is not becoming animal, the human being (straggler) is simply remaining human but is transferred to a following lifewave. Such a person is not joining the animal kingdom, but is joining the lifewave that "was" in the animal kingdom but is now becoming human. But this is extremely rare.

The purpose of life is evolution through consciousness. Thus reincarnation (transmigration) proceeds accordingly, under law, progressively, to facilitate that evolution. The main arena for transmigration (as distinguished from the normal course of reincarnation) is the fulfillment of the qualifications for life at the human level and subsequent transference (transmigration) into the next (higher) kingdom and corresponding lifewave. Thus human beings become super-human, having transcended the limitations of this (human) existence. But even so, this is relatively rare, as few are able to qualify, and few are able to make that transition. Some of those few who qualify actually remain with humanity but work on subtle levels to guide and encourage the race, no longer being required to incarnate, but not needing to pass on to the leading (super-human) lifewave. The bridges between kingdoms and lifewaves are not generally open, at least not at all times. But there is nonetheless a continuum.

† Commentary No. 1180

Occultism

Occultism is the realm or domain of consciously and deliberately working with various psychic or non-physical forces, and consciously and deliberately working on non-dense-physical levels, i.e., on etheric, astral (emotional), and concrete mental levels. That which is "occult" refers to that which is hidden from normal sight, concealed by occultation or the inability of the ordinary senses. There is also an implied sense or notion of secrecy, but that is more a matter of not being able to sense in the metaphysical realms than a matter of actual secrecy. The occult realm is abstruse and mysterious, but only to those who are not properly trained and who are therefore not able to function there consciously or properly.

For some people occultism conveys a sense of evil, but that is simply a matter of ignorance, fear, and/or reactive association. Occultism is neither good nor evil. It is simply a matter of there being non-physical (metaphysical) worlds (realms in consciousness) and senses that must be developed in order for people to function there effectively. Occultism is a matter of wielding various energies and forces. Many people, having been trained in previous lives, wield these forces almost unconsciously, instinctively. It is how those occult energies and forces are wielded that determine whether or not the effort is inherently constructive (evolutionary) (good) or destructive (counter-evolutionary) (evil).

Occultism is the science of metaphysics approached in a head-centered manner or involving utilization of head-centered techniques, i.e., predominately using the concrete mind, the will, etc., rather than simply embracing energies in a more natural manner (the mystical approach). Occultism is a realm of action rather than acceptance, preferably qualified rather than unqualified, preferably tempered with proper motive and wisdom (conscience). Occultism involves developing the ability to sense more-or-less objectively on metaphysical levels and learning the techniques which can be applied to wielding various energies and forces. There are prerequisites in terms of mental development, stability, etc., and there are also prerequisites in terms of quality of consciousness (refinement) (without which occultism is rather dangerous).

Occultism is the practical (objective, head-centered) side of metaphysics applied toward some definite objective. Occultism properly involves learning about cause and effect relationships, about the various lives that exist on metaphysical levels, about the various rules for invocation and evocation of energies and forces, about consequences of behavior on all levels (physical, etheric, emotional, and mental), about the whole range of the energy domain (where everything is perceived in terms of energy and energy relationships). And occultism is a matter of actually applying various energies (qualities) and forces (qualifications).

Occult study generally leads to mental development and to some degree of psychic development, though the real objective has to do with service or the effective utilization of available energies. Psychic development as an end in itself, as a personal objective, is, ultimately, counter-evolutionary. But psychic development that is evoked as a consequence of proper motive (service) and

proper approach (spiritual context) is natural and much more manageable, because there is a corresponding development in terms of refinement and extent of self-mastery. The true self-mastered spiritual student is both a mystic and an occultist, being perfectly balanced between the head-centered and heart-centered natures, wielding force in accord with the flow of life.

† Commentary No. 1181

Atmosphere

The human aura is an energy field that reflects or exhibits all of the various emotional and mental activity of the person and which relates a person's etheric, emotional, and concrete mental condition to everyone in the immediate environment. The aura is potentially affected very much by the surrounding atmosphere, particularly on non-physical levels. And the surrounding atmosphere is potentially affected substantially by the character and quality of the aura. Some people are more affected than others, due to their openness, passivity, receptivity, or vulnerability, but that also depends on their relative character (quality) and temperament. And similarly, some people are more effective in projecting "force" into the atmosphere, due to their head-centered nature or due to their emotional temperament, consciously or otherwise. Thus the spiritual student is encouraged both to maintain a healthy aura and maintain a healthy relationship with the surrounding atmosphere (immediate environment).

One of the most important attitudes for the spiritual student to cultivate is that of a joyful, cheerful, and constructive way of living, by continually creating and sustaining a pleasant surrounding atmosphere. All deeds done in this positive, vital manner are then enhanced by that atmosphere and relationship. And since all things, all forms, are spiritually alive and magnetic, the spiritual student can contribute positively to that atmosphere through the various forms that are engendered or encountered. Conversely, demons (artificial entities) created through careless thinking and feeling also impact the atmosphere (adversely) and so the student should be particularly careful in thinking and feeling.

Food, for example, is made of living spiritual substance, and the atmosphere in which a person cooks and prepares food not only vitalizes that substance but that substance carries with it an induced atmosphere and magnetic quality. That quality can then be transferred or conveyed to others. Food prepared in an uplifting atmosphere carries enhanced vital energies. Food prepared in an unpleasant or indifferent atmosphere loses much of its vitality (and/or conveys that negative influence). Flesh foods have a noticeably negative factor and convey a measure of coarseness even without an otherwise negative atmosphere, while vegetable foods are inherently more refined (more positive) albeit dulled somewhat by cooking.

Letters and publications are opportunities to share a vital, positive, healthy atmosphere (and attitude), and also to establish spiritual bonds to strengthen the light workers around the world and to strengthen the network of light and love through which spiritual forces may flow (the more so where personal and mundane energies do not intrude). Every contact on every level carries with it some magnetic or psychic quality. This includes conversation, correspondence, gifts, materials conveyed, etc. Much depends upon the atmosphere through which a person works and how a person influences the objects in his or her environment.

Thus the spiritual student is encouraged to do all things in a healthy, cheerful, positive manner. Work performed cheerfully can never be a burden. Critical, defensive (egoistic), judging, separative (self-centered) thoughts and similarly unfortunate feelings have a decidedly negative effect, while unselfish and uncontrived expression of goodwill (kindness) (consideration) (appreciation) (acceptance) (respect) has a wonderful effect on people and surroundings. The atmosphere is a living realm, filled with various energies and forces. The student should remain focused in love and light.

Chakras 2

Chakras are the energy or psychic centers that connect or relate the various levels or planes of consciousness. They exist within the human being, and in some sense, are the human being, and they also exist on broader (logoiic) scales.

Each chakra within the human being plays a role in the energetics of the human being. Most people live through the lower chakras, meaning that the lower chakras are actively functioning, without any real control or balance in consciousness, and that the higher chakras (crown, ajna, heart, throat) are inactive or essentially undeveloped. As a person evolves in consciousness, the forces flowing through the lower centers become tempered and the lower chakras come under the control of consciousness, rather than controlling consciousness. And as a person evolves in consciousness, the higher chakras begin to open up into activity, bringing with them considerable and further stimulation for subsequent development (experience) (service). Where the lower chakras dominate, a person is relatively coarse. Where the higher chakras dominate, a person is relatively refined. The functioning of the chakras are also related to the various psychic sensitivities (abilities).

Thus there are three basic stages in the development or opening of the various chakras, the inactive stage which is inertial or resistive to activity, the nominally open stage where most people function, and the active stage which is more interactive and dynamic. In the active (more fully open) stage, there is a matter of whether or not the activity (openness) is voluntary or involuntary. With involuntary openness there are generally sensitivities that are not under the control of consciousness. With voluntary openness and proper training, there is a sensitivity that is intelligently tempered or moderated by consciousness. Proper openness of the chakras does not result from deliberate psychic development, but from deepening in consciousness and evocation of needed sensitivities. Where there is openness without the tempering influence of consciousness, there is (generally) also instability and vulnerability (reactivity). Where there is openness with tempering influence of consciousness, there is (generally) more maturity in sensitivity, more balance, more stability, more responsiveness.

There are many dangers associated with involuntary psychic openness or lack of proper training. The open aura, for example, results from a rending of the stability and coherence of the aura, which results in turn from improper functioning of the chakras, which results in turn from improper use of energy or psychic force. If the chakras are properly balanced and tempered by consciousness, then there are some safeguards (stability and coherence). If the chakras are abused or misused, however sincerely, however unconsciously, then one attracts further (psychic) difficulties.

As a person develops at the personality level, the (forces flowing through the) lower chakras are tempered and consciousness is gradually focused more and more in (through) the higher centers. Once a person is properly integrated, there is considerable strength (coherence) (stability) at the psychic level, even if there is little sensitivity. But eventually, as one becomes more and more responsive to higher impression, the chakras begin to resonate to the energy of the soul rather than the energy of the personality. The dynamics change. While the higher centers unfold at first through head-centered and heart-centered activity (at the personality level), their full development is only possible as the personality-centeredness (ego) is transcended and the energy of the soul is allowed to flow.

† Commentary No. 1183

The Basis of Magic

Everything in the manifested universe is comprised of energy in one form or another. Even what appears to be material is really just energy in the form of matter. It is this field of manifested energy, then that forms the basis for magic, for invoking and evoking and wielding various energies (qualifications) and forces (applications of energy).

There is energy on the dense physical plane, particularly that which is locked within form (the energy of matter), but it is not readily available for magic. Energy on etheric levels is much more readily available, is available in abundance, and is relatively easy to work with. If the student is properly trained, then etheric energy can be evoked and applied in a variety of means for

constructive ends. Etheric energy lends itself most readily to vitalization and healing, though in order to sustain the “work” there needs to also be a complementary adjustment in consciousness. Energy on astral and concrete mental levels is also readily available, but much more subject to the limitations of the human personality than is etheric energy, i.e., to work safely with astral and/or concrete mental energy one needs to be integrated and somewhat refined, else there is a strong tendency for the energies being evoked to be on the lower sub-planes and rather difficult to handle.

Depending on motive and relative quality of consciousness there is an important distinction between black magic (self-centered and inherently separative or counter-evolutionary in nature) and white magic (unselfish and inclusive and evolutionary in nature), and another distinction between lower magic (based on form and involving the lower (personality) consciousness) and higher magic (based on higher consciousness). There is a natural flow of energy on every level of consciousness. That flow has lower and higher components, lower in the sense of karma (causal relationships) (chaos) (resolution) (incremental restoration of balance on lower levels) and higher in the sense of a more subtle, inherently evolutionary flow (restoration of balance on broader and higher levels).

While the basis of magic rests with the source and availability and nature of energies on etheric, astral (emotional), and concrete mental levels, the other two factors are the flow and the magician-occultist-student who consciously or unconsciously, intelligently or otherwise, evokes energies and forces that may or may not be manageable. If the student apprehends the flow, can actually sense the nature and character and quality (and implied purpose) of the energy, then the student can cooperate intelligently and constructively. If the student fails to apprehend the flow, cannot sense these things, and/or has personal motives, then there is introduced an anomaly which then has to be dealt with in the overall scheme. A lot has to do with training (knowledge, understanding), but more has to do with motive (wisdom) (quality of consciousness). Without both proper training and proper intent, there are otherwise unnecessary difficulties introduced into the magical system.

The supply of energy is effectively unlimited. The range of character and quality of energy is diverse, and comparable to the range of consciousness

(people of coarse consciousness generally evoke coarse energies while people who are more refined generally evoke more refined energies). It is fundamentally a matter of resonance. The student works with energy and force that is resonant with his or her own personality consciousness. Except that through carelessness or lack of proper motive and/or lack of proper training, energies and forces can be evoked that are rather coarse, destructive, and inherently unmanageable.

† Commentary No. 1184

Earth Magic

Earth magic is that source and practice of magical energy that is derived from the earth or lifeforms associated with the earth (and the aura of the earth). These are very natural energies and appeal to people who are more attuned to the earth (the planet) and nature.

There are two fundamental types of earth magic, that of the material earth and the lower nature and that of the earth in the sense of being directly linked with the non-material (i.e., etheric) consciousness of the planetary logos. In either case, it is lower (external) magic (based on form) but still potentially and generally effective. Virtually all of ceremonial magic falls into this category of earth magic. Although ceremonial techniques can be applied to higher forms, there is generally no need to do so.

Earth magic is tapping into the energy field of the earth and the various forces of nature (and the various lives that are embodied through the various forces of nature), including the energies of air and water and fire (in this sense, all of earth and air and water and fire are considered earth magic) (some schools of magic specialize in one or another). Earth magic is inherently natural, although it can be abused where there is selfish intent or unqualified practice. There are many lives involved in earth magic, from the various mineral, plant, and animal lives that are readily apparent to the non-psychic vision to the various deva lives that correspond to these three lower kingdoms. One can tap into and wield the energies and forces associated with any lower lifeform (mineral, plant, animal, and to some extent deva). But there are ethical considerations, and few who wield these forces have the conscience to wield them effectively and harmlessly.

Thus the effective magician (at this level) works cooperatively with the lower kingdoms, with a sense of conscience, and without selfish intent. But the forces of the lower kingdoms can be very potent and therefore very dangerous. When one eats meat, for example, one is ingesting animal magnetism that has a substantial effect on consciousness. When one works very closely with animal (plant) (mineral) energies, one should be very careful to discern the boundaries between the animal (plant) (mineral) realm and one's own aura (energy) (consciousness). Otherwise, one will become attached or entangled with that kingdom (and unnaturally so). Working with the animal kingdom is the most dangerous (potent), followed by the mineral kingdom, followed by the plant kingdom (the order of difficulty or potency has to do with polarity). The plant kingdom is rather more sympathetic to the human kingdom, though it, too, can be abused. Of course the energy of matter that is locked in form is the most potent of the lower forms of energy. If one finds the key to unlocking these forces, one is generally destroyed in the process.

But with proper intent (and some training), earth magic can be quite beneficent. Those who work properly with earth magic are involved in healing the planet and its various lives. Those who work properly (creatively) with earth magic are part of the process of restoration of balance and do so as a consequence of human consciousness (not because they are actually creative). But nature is a complex consequence of many forces and scales, and so natural energies are often evoked in widespread eruptions of force that help restore the equilibrium (e.g., so-called natural disasters). The planet is inherently self-healing (it is after all, merely the lower body of a planetary logos), but what people can do to facilitate that healing is evolutionary, and what people can do to undermine that healing (e.g., self-interest) is counter-evolutionary.

White Magic

In a sense the lower magic is either black or white, while the higher magic is always white. Earth magic and/or ceremonial magic, for example, can be employed constructively or destructively (disruptively), but the magic of the higher Self can only be employed constructively, in accord with the evolutionary flow.

White magic in this higher sense is a matter of attunement to the higher nature (the soul (atma-buddhi-manas)) and allowing that nature to manifest itself through the personality, through the aura, and into the surrounding (outer) atmosphere. In order to do this, one must become intelligently transparent, tempering the lower nature and leading the mind (intellect) (ego) into non-passive quiescence. It is a matter of quality. If the quality of (lower, personality) consciousness resonates with the higher Self, then the energy of that Self is naturally evoked. Thus white magic in this higher sense is largely a matter of preparation (temperance) (refinement) and alignment rather than a matter of invoking and evoking. The soul energy is evoked naturally wherever there is accommodation, wherever the person is responsive, and it cannot be otherwise.

While there are methods and rules associated with all forms of magical practice, those of white magic in this higher sense are rather more subtle and less a matter of knowledge, understanding, and training than a matter of realization and living in accord with the quality of the Self. For white magic in the lower sense, it is largely a matter of training and ethics. One simply recognizes the need to evoke (magical) force and so it is. In fact, one need not recognize the need consciously, indeed, it is often more effective, less encumbered, for this to happen unconsciously. Thus it is important to simply live in accordance with spiritual principles, and allow what needs to happen to happen. Spiritual students are naturally and thereby occultists-in-training and mystics-in-training. White magic is, in this sense, a bridging between the two worlds of proper occult (head-centered) and proper mystical (heart-centered) endeavors.

While black magic is necessarily rooted in form (matter) (lower consciousness), white magic is necessarily rooted in higher consciousness. While black magic is necessarily self-centered and personality-centered, white magic is necessarily not so. While black magic is necessarily head-centered, white magic is necessarily heart-centered (though there may (should) be a balance between the head and heart nature, the practice of white magic is inherently heart-centered). If one attempts white magic through strictly head-centered means, however sincere the person may be, it is simply occult practice, and not magical practice.

The rules of white magic are really quite simple and straight-forward. They are also the rules of the path in the higher sense. One must become and remain honest, with others and with oneself. One must become harmless and practice harmlessness. One must become and remain humble. One must live in accordance with conscience. One must live in accordance with spiritual principles as they are understood. One must take full responsibility for all energies and forces evoked, for all circumstances and situations faced, for all consequences. One must temper the lower nature and devote time and energy to the inner experience, while serving effectively in the outer world. One must learn from one's experience, and assimilate that experience en route. One must listen continually if not continuously to the Voice of the Silence.

† Commentary No. 1186

Unconditional Love

One of the most potent and most practical new age notions is that of unconditional love, of accepting people as they are, without judging them and without expecting them to conform to one's own values. Coupled with creative expression (prayer, meditation, goodwill), embracing unconditional love is extremely potent.

The basis of the idea of unconditional love is that love itself (God) is (actually) unconditional; it is only love in the more human, more personal sense (which is not actually love), that gets conditioned by human expectations. Unconditional love is not a theory. It is not merely a new age notion. If one actually embraces love (energy) there are no conditions. It does not depend on expectation or

qualifications. It merely depends on allowance. One must allow love to be what it is (in order to experience it or to participate in it). Of course love is what it is. It is only human nature that prevents love from being experienced unconditionally, as it is. Love is the quality (character) of the Christ or God within every human being and within every lifeform. Thus unconditional love is that (real) love that is the love from within oneself touching and recognizing the love within every other creature. In this way the heart unfolds and the love energy is evoked and experienced in actuality, not merely emotionally or intellectually.

Unconditional love is accepting people as they are (in fact) and as they appear to be at the personality level. Unconditional love is non-judging. Even the slightest hint of criticism, defensiveness, egoism, judgment, separateness, etc., i.e., anything that is not an expression of unconditional love, masks the expression of unconditional love. With unconditional love, it does not matter that a person is not perfect at the personality level, the whole sense of perfect-imperfect is based on conditioned thinking (while the sense that everything is in motion (deepening, evolving, growing) is quite consistent with unconditioned thinking). Any act (thought, feeling) of judging another human being is an act that is inherently separative and undermining of the heart expression (reality) of the God within.

Conditional love is not (real) love but is merely the shadow of love based on ego. Unconditional love has no magnitude. Unconditional love is not inconsistent with conditional relationship. One can love unconditionally while basing relationship on (constructive, reasonable, mutual) agreement. Thus while unconditional love is a matter of the higher basis (God within) (soul) and able to be embraced at practical levels (by the mind and the heart of the personality), it does not require all of life in the lower worlds to be unconditional. There are practical considerations in most every area of human endeavor. But these practical considerations need not inhibit the experience and expression of unconditional love.

Yet while unconditional love is very practical in making life in the lower worlds more meaningful (in terms of quality of consciousness and in terms of right human relationship), it is also something that facilitates self-realization (union with the God within). For as one embraces unconditional love, actually, one

necessarily embraces the quality of the soul (which may otherwise (generally) be inaccessible to one absorbed in mundane life), the quality of the higher Self, which is pure and unconditioned. The effect of this is that the personality (mind) (ego) then becomes gradually conditioned or qualified by that higher quality. In this way, embracing unconditional love is also a potent technique for higher qualification.

† Commentary No. 1187

Beyond the Wheel

While transition refers to movement, or passing through the various stages of life and death, of experience and assimilation and preparation for further experience, it is all a matter of being involved in the wheel of life. But as the spiritual student matures and fulfills all of the requirements (intended experience, development, abilities, balance, maturity, quality of consciousness, etc.) and (simultaneously) as a person's karma is fulfilled, the student eventually passes beyond the wheel.

Beyond the wheel is the realm of the soul as a soul, without a personality to encumber the soul consciousness. While the personality is necessary for lower experience, and while that experience contributes to the evolution of the soul (which is, after all, the unit of evolution, the unit of consciousness within the greater life), life at this (worldly) level is a very small part of universal manifestation. There is (much) life beyond the pale. But it is not life or consciousness as is known or appreciated at the personality level. There is no ego beyond this wheel. There is no personality. There is no thinking. There is no feeling in the lower sense. There is only subjective feeling in the higher sense of how the soul itself embraces the void (the real world, beyond this one).

What is known (knowable) (understandable) of life beyond the wheel is inferred from the quality and consciousness of the soul (atma-buddhi-manas) itself. If one embraces the soul (i.e., if one transcends the personality (ego) (intellect) entirely, even briefly) then one can sense its nature (as long as one does not think about it). It is only in thus embracing the soul that a person can even discern the difference between the soul level and the personality level, and realize that virtually everything that is known and understood occurs at the

personality level, that all “action” occurs at the personality level, that the ego is the barrier between the soul and its personality. But as the ego (barrier) is overcome, one begins to gradually sense the nature of the soul and the nature of life beyond. And then one gradually participates in that greater life.

As karma is fulfilled and a person is no longer required therefore to incarnate, there being no attachments or loose ends (needs for experience) to draw the person back into incarnation, there are a number of choices that the soul is confronted with (from the perspective of the personality there are choices (from the perspective of the soul there are no choices, there is only realization)). A soul may linger in proximity to humanity and this world, continuing to serve humanity and/or other lifewaves subjectively, from the level of the soul. Or a soul may pass on to some other lifewave or domain of activity (experience and service). The number of liberated souls is very, very small, but those who “stay” are fewer still and limited to the number that humanity merits. Ever there is balance, equilibrium. If humanity were more developed, if humanity were more responsive, then there would be more liberated souls and more of them would be allowed to remain with humanity, to assist from the soul level.

But beyond the wheel is another wheel and another. A never-ending spiral of lives within lives. Further evolution in consciousness (being). Further integration at the logoi level. Logoi in-the-making. Non-logoi in-the-making. There is never-ending transition. From one experience and expression to another. From one level to another. From one world to another. From one sense of Self to another.

The Far Side

There is a dark side to human nature as well as a light side, and in between is the whole field of struggle for human consciousness (the grey field). But beyond that field of struggle is the far side, a realm in which the pairs of opposites do not exist, a realm in which all things are resolved, where everything remains in equilibrium. It is the void. It is the realm of the unmanifested.

The far side is not far. The far side is not near. It is simply in no distance. It is no distance. It is no place. It is no time. The far side is beyond time and space, beyond duration and place. The far side is actually no side. It is beyond taking sides. It is beyond feeling or thinking or otherwise realizing distinctions. It is beyond all separateness and beyond all separativeness. The far side cannot be reached through effort, though effort must be expended in order to reach the place in consciousness in which the far side can be apprehended. The far side cannot be reached through letting go and going back to the earlier emptiness. It can only be reached through letting go and going forward to a new, more profound (profoundless) emptiness. It is the fullness of the void.

For all practical purposes, the far side is the realm of the monad. It is beyond the personality (ego) (intellect). It is beyond the soul (atma-buddhi-manas). It is beyond incarnation-disincarnation. It is beyond the causal Self. It is the realm of the non-causal-Self. And yet it is the realm of no realm. A world of no world. It is completeness and emptiness. It is beyond life and death. It is beyond. Yet there are no practical purposes in the realm of the monad. There is purpose but it is obscure and very, very subtle. Just a hint of purpose. There is vast silence. There is intensity of silence. And there is no silence. If one comprehends the monad, even in principle, then the far side is beyond the monad.

Those who are immersed in the struggle of consciousness, of life in the lower worlds (even of life in the higher worlds), cannot apprehend the far side. There is so much that one must learn in order to reach that higher place, yet much also that must be unlearned before it becomes possible to learn what is actually needed. Yet the far side is beyond learning. Beyond experience. Beyond

knowledge. Beyond understanding. Beyond wisdom. Beyond the struggle. Beyond even the light. Beyond love. Beyond life. All of these things, all of these concepts are ultimately limiting and preclusive, however necessary they may have been in the process. The far side is beyond growing. Beyond deepening, even as it is the greatest depth and the least. The far side has no far-ness. The far side has no side-ness. It is beyond attachment. It is also beyond non-attachment.

The far side is a quality and flavor, an essence that is beyond comprehension. It is sensed only as an echo, a very subtle indication of something else that is not something. It is the ultimate mystery of life, resolved only through passing beyond life. Beyond consciousness. To being that is no being. The far side is the ultimate aim of occultism, and the ultimate aim of mysticism, and the ultimate aim of esotericism. Yet the far side transcends occultism. The far side transcends mystical union. The far side transcends esoterica. Yet all this is necessary pre-requisitionally. The far side is the notion of no notion. It is beyond requisiteness. It is Tao. And it is beyond Tao. The absolute recedes. There is no far side. And there is nothing that is not the far side.

† Commentary No. 1189

Mysticism

To the world and the worldly, esotericism, magic, metaphysics, mysticism, occultism, theosophy, yoga, etc., are all relatively poorly defined and somewhat ambiguous. These things do overlap somewhat, as they all deal with the same thing (truth and reality), albeit from somewhat differing (complementary) perspectives. There are distinctions, although the distinctions are not really so important. What is important, is that the spiritual path leads to reunion (realization of union) with the higher Self, with God. It is, simply, finding oneself. Everything else simply lays a foundation or prepares the way for ascension.

Mysticism is defined as “the experience of mystical union or direct communion with ultimate reality” based on “ineffable knowledge and power.” To those who have not experienced the mystical state, mysticism may be properly

bewildering, enigmatic, mysterious, obscure, and perplexing. Indeed, it is so by virtue of its indescribability, but it is no less real. Spiritual meaning, in the higher sense, is rather ineffable. It is not "apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intelligence." How is subjective experience, for which there is no common or widespread participation, to be described in words, when there are no words to describe what is real, and when framing words, when thinking, precludes the experience?

Worldly consideration of mysticism is compounded by the otherworldliness that marks the mystic. The mystic lives predominantly in another world, and may not live in the outer, objective world so effectively. The mystic tends to be isolated, or appears to be isolated, from the bulk of humanity. And yet it is only an isolation in the outer (false) sense. In fact, the mystical path leads the student to union with God and to union with humanity, in the highest, deepest sense. It is only the outer appearances that suffer. It is that the world is asleep, and the mystical path is the path of awakening from that sleep, and so worldly entanglements are preclusive, and the mystic becomes less and less worldly, less and less personality-centered, more and more God-centered, more and more whole.

While embracing occultism is often the result of desire or motivation (being goal-oriented), embracing mysticism is generally (necessarily) a matter of inner calling, of subjective realization. Mystical practice is more process-oriented than goal-oriented, though the practice of mysticism is largely by trial and error, albeit in the subtle and subjective sense, as the means and practices are discovered which allow the mystic to proceed. It is not so much a matter of training, but of discipline and transcending discipline. The discipline provides a basis, while transcending discipline (ever remaining faithful to the discipline while the consciousness passes beyond) provides the means. It is a matter of long preparation and gradually letting go of all preconceived ideas, and then letting go of all non-conceived ideas. And ultimately a letting go of everything.

Mysticism is the way of the heart. It begins with aspiration and devotion and the emotions. It progresses through discipline, sometimes even ascetic discipline, in the process transcending the emotions and the mind, to preparation and qualification. It unlocks the intuition, by removing the various barriers in consciousness (namely ego). It involves silence. It involves love in

the highest, deepest, least personal (most personal) sense. It involves solitude. It involves sanctuary. It involves egolessness. It involves otherworldliness. It involves surrender.

† Commentary No. 1190

Mysticism and Occultism

Mysticism is the art, science, and philosophy of spiritual meaning (consideration of truth and reality) based upon devotion, aspiration, and heart-centered meditation, including communion with God, self, or reality (the unconscious application or qualification of force and energy), and in the highest sense, is centered in the spiritual intuition (buddhi). Occultism is the art, science, and philosophy of spiritual meaning (consideration of truth and reality) based upon intellectual, mental, head-centered meditation, including the study and conscious application of force and energy, and in the highest sense, is centered in the spiritual intuition. Mysticism and occultism are complementary, and when the approaches and techniques and talents of both are merged together, it constitutes esotericism.

In ignorance and with lack of understanding, and through reactive association, many people have labeled occultism with unpleasant and irreverent connotations, yet both mysticism and occultism carry no sense of good or evil in themselves. It is only the motives and purposes that mystical quality and occult talents are applied to that bring in the illusion or appearance of good or evil. Each can be applied intelligently, wisely, spiritually, constructively, unselfishly, and for the good of mankind. Or each can be applied in ignorance, foolishly, selfishly, and/or destructively. But as the student progresses there is a growing maturity, a growing sense of balance and appropriateness, a growing sense of propriety (without judging). Karmic force urges the student toward harmlessness, harmony, honesty, and humility, and in so doing the darker side of human nature is transformed and selfishness and self-centeredness is gradually replaced with selflessness.

For the spiritual student, the spiritual path generally includes both mystical and occult development. In general, the spiritual path is first heart-centered and the approach is mystical (although some reverse the order). Later on, the heart is

combined with the head and one achieves the balance that is necessary for liberation and greater service. Many lives may be devoted to the development of the heart center, lives with the emphasis on the mystical path. Many lives may be devoted to the development of the head centers, lives with emphasis upon the occult (spiritual) path. Either path can be taken to an unhealthy extreme. Though our fundamental vibration may be either mystical or occult, both sides of our nature must be developed and perfected. We must have attained a basic core of experience and development in both sides of our being, before we can stand in that relative perfection that is liberation and (relative) mastery.

The keynote is balance, for the spiritual student eventually must have a very comfortable balance between head and heart, between qualified emotions and tempered mind, between love, wisdom, and will. The esotericist is the developed spiritual student and disciple who stands balanced between the mystical and occult sides, who can function constructively in either or both perspectives, as needed and without having to think about it.

Occultism is important in the sense that it is the (head-centered) realm in which needed abilities and talent are developed and produced. Mysticism is important in the sense that it is the (heart-centered) realm in which the needed quality of consciousness is developed and unfolded. Without talent one has no means to proceed toward union. Without quality one has nothing that can resonate with the higher. Thus one must have the tempered form, the requisite abilities and training, and a qualified heart.

Mysticism and Religion

The mystical dimension of all the world's various religions is essentially the same, the way of heart-unfoldment and evolution in consciousness toward conscious union with divinity (indwelling God-consciousness). The mystical path naturally complements the occult or head-centered path and eventually merges with the occult path to form the esoteric path. But without the mystical dimension, conscious (intelligent) union with God is simply not possible. Thus every spiritual student, of whatever religious or spiritual tradition, ultimately finds himself or herself in the context of inner experience. Thus each of the world's religions properly leads the adherent inwardly to the mystical path.

The role of religion is to provide a mechanism for progressive relationship between the lower self and the higher Self, between the human being and God. There is within that role both a necessary means (encouragement) for the bulk of humanity (the outer journey), a necessary means for the intellectually astute, and a necessary means (encouragement) for those who can take the inner journey (the mystics). Thus organized religion may provide considerable encouragement at the somewhat superficial level of mass consciousness, more meaningful encouragement at the intellectual level, and encouragement in the sense of facilitating the mystical experience (which necessarily transcends the intellect). The mystics who work (journey) within a particular religion, whether they are the outer leaders (priesthood) of the religion or not, nonetheless provide (embody) the subjective essence (quality) of the religion in its higher, deeper sense.

In other words, religion properly provides a framework for mysticism. Though mysticism does not require (organized) religion, religion does require a mystical dimension in order to be effective. Religions that preclude the mystical experience for the few who are able also preclude the broader sanction (proper qualification of the masses). The true mystic may or may not work within the framework of a religion, but most do. Those who do not, work within the framework of universal religion. In the final analysis, universal religion embraces the quality of all God-centered religions and it is the mystical

dimension of each that is linked, not the outer details and differences in application (interpretation) (dogma).

Mystics provide a common bond, as they each participate in the same divine approach and embrace the same divine essence (quality), regardless of the particular religious and/or intellectual framework. Because the mystical dimension of each of the world's religions is essentially the same, it draws the various religions (and peoples) of the world together, even while outer differences may tend to or appear to draw peoples and religions apart. Religions are essentially cultural and accommodate the religious needs of the people in some cultural context. The mystical path (tradition) (inner dimension of religion) is non-cultural. Mystics of every faith share a common language (silence) (realization) (the heart) and a common faith based on that realization. Thus there is no separateness among mystics, no sense of separation and no separateness. The mystical approach precludes egoism. It precludes separateness. Because it is based on the heart and the truth from within (without intellectual endeavor).

The mystics in the world are not of the world. They may be misunderstood but their quality of consciousness is generally appreciated. They provide a meaningful bridge in consciousness without even trying.

† Commentary No. 1192

Beyond Mysticism

So. What lies beyond mysticism? Is mystical experience a means to an end (ascension), or is it a preparation for returning to the worldly world? In practice, it depends on the person, on his or her character and temperament and values (quality), and on his or her relative place upon the path.

For some, mystical experience is the final stage of the human journey, preparation for ascension, from which the mystic does not return. In these cases, the emphasis is upon embracing the path-that-follows. But for most, mystical experience is merely an interlude, a preparation for returning to the world with some inner, haunting qualification that precludes or at least

discourages becoming reabsorbed in worldly affairs or personality-centered interests. Mystical experience is not something that can be dabbled with (which is not true for occult experience). It is something that is either a calling from within or the person is unable to embrace the path.

Most people experience and express themselves in the ordinary sense, through ordinary cycles (incarnations) without recourse to either occult or mystical experience. For those who embark upon the spiritual path, there is generally an alternation of lifetimes devoted to head-centered (occult) and heart-centered (mystical) experience, development, and expression. Eventually, the experience of the heart is broadened to include the head (and the whole person), and in this higher sense (mystical experience beyond the preliminary stages, wherein there is considerable quality and balance), one passes beyond mysticism. The problem is that there is no way of describing what that involves. The process by which one prepares for this is relatively clear, but it is a very private journey and the insight or realization is not generally communicable.

Mysticism is a path and a process of embracing the path. It involves very subtle adjustments in consciousness that facilitate letting go of all the emotional and intellectual baggage that has accumulated over the course of many lifetimes. But beyond mysticism there is another path, one or another of seven paths, each of which takes the soul (and monad (but not the personality)) onward and upward, beyond the wheel of life and death (beyond reincarnation). People who think in personality terms, who attempt to understand the soul in terms of personality experience and personality attributes, in terms of lower consciousness, who think of the higher as merely being more noble but essential an outgrowth of the lower, are thereby unable to apprehend the soul or the mystical experience or the experience that follows. The personality (mind) (ego) does not evolve into the soul. The personality is just a vehicle, a form for experience and expression. Identifying oneself with the personality (ego) (intellect) precludes mystical experience, and precludes understanding mystical experience and what follows.

It is the soul that evolves, not the personality. And the soul is something well beyond what most people perceive it to be, even most spiritual students (whose perception (framework) (imagination) is largely egoistic). To go beyond mysticism, one must pass properly through the mystical experience, which

means transcending the lower self entirely, and then, only then, can one perceive of what lies beyond. And then, only dimly, subtly, subjectively. To perceive in conventional terms, through thinking, only creates and sustains the barriers that tend to exist between reality and the world in which people live (sleep). To perceive without (emotional) feeling, without thinking, allows realization of what is beyond the mystical experience. But even so, it cannot be communicated, cannot be rationally embraced.

† Commentary No. 1193

Self-Mastery

The evolution of consciousness involves preparatory work in cultivating the personality, building personality strength, developing self-esteem, integrating the personality, etc., but once a person has accomplished this, then either a person is absorbed at the personality level (through personality-centeredness (ego) (over-development of the intellect)) and/or the attention is naturally drawn to the spiritual path.

When one embarks upon the spiritual path a major focus is refinement of the personality, integration, and subsequent alignment of personality and soul, but the real work involves self-mastery, actually conquering the entirety of the lower, personality nature, and cultivating the personality as an effective and responsive instrument for higher consciousness. Without embarking on the process leading to self-mastery, the personality itself dominates and thereby precludes any serious spiritual work. When one embarks upon the way, there is a continual evoking of the lower nature, so that the darkness of that lower nature is progressively revealed (brought to the surface (conscious awareness)) and gradually conquered. Until such time as the spiritual student has conquered the desire (lower) (independent) nature (at physical, emotional, and mental levels), the student cannot be very effective or responsive to higher impression, because the "noise" of personality-centeredness (ego) precludes realization.

Development (personality cultivation) is the preliminary process and goal. Self-mastery is the intermediate process and the goal of spiritual development. And beyond self-mastery is transcendence. But many lives can be consumed and

dedicated to the process of self-mastery. The personality (the form) (matter) (ego) is potentially very strong, and is inherently separative, independent, and defensive of its assumed central role. Even when the student understands intellectually that the personality must be conquered, the ego invariably deceives the waking-consciousness into thinking that it (ego) is the soul and consequently much of the process is wasted in ego-generated activity. But eventually there begins a sense of distinction between the personal energy (character) (flavor) (tone) of the personality (ego) and the impersonal (transpersonal) energy (character) (flavor) (tone) of the higher Self.

Virtually everything in metaphysics and theosophy and the esoteric philosophy is devoted or related in some way to the process of tempering the lower self and achieving self-mastery (and subsequently with yoga or union). Yet the vast preponderance of metaphysical students and spiritually-minded people, sincerely devoted to the path as they understand it, remain largely asleep and absorbed at the personality level (they are simply absorbed in a spiritually-minded way). Thus the process of self-mastery is fundamentally a matter of tempering the personality and awakening to the higher Self, in practice (actuality) and not merely intellectually. The role of the ego is to prevent this from happening, and it will accomplish its goals in whatever ways it can. The ego is very subtle. It will appear to be facilitating spiritual growth and progress all the while undermining any threat to its own (artificial) existence. It will maintain control of the waking-consciousness through any means it has, and is remarkably successful.

The struggle toward self-mastery, then, is the struggle toward tempering the personality and the transcending the ego. It is generally long and arduous. It is so hard to wake up. It is so easy to go back to sleep. The levels of deception are many and varied, but eventually there is appreciable progress and the ego and lower self are eventually mastered.

Personality Transcendence

Once the personality (lower self) (human nature) has been refined, on physical, emotional, and concrete mental levels, once the personality has been properly cultivated and properly integrated so that there is the possibility of alignment of personality and soul, then one must embrace the process of personality transcendence that leads through alignment to and beyond self-mastery.

The process of personality transcendence builds upon the preliminary and intermediate disciplines and focuses primarily on the student becoming truly (non-superficially) aware of the personality presence and passing beyond discipline (without losing it) to actually embracing the higher Self. If one is not fully aware of the personality nature and the subtleties of the ego, if one does not actually realize the distinctions between personality and soul, then one will continue to deceive oneself throughout the attempt to embrace this process. But as one becomes aware of all of the indications of personality (ego), and as the personality becomes further purified and refined in consciousness, one begins to sense the energy and quality of the soul itself (rather than deceiving oneself into thinking that the more noble part of the personality is the soul).

The process of personality transcendence does not destroy the personality, but it does destroy the personality as a limiting factor. As the personality is transcended, it no longer appreciably impedes the alignment of personality and soul. As the personality is transcended, it gradually ceases to be an independent factor. As the personality is transcended, there is no more reversion to rationalization or reasoning or reliance on feelings at the emotional level. The personality becomes a willing, responsive instrument of expression (service) (sharing of qualified energy), in fact (not merely intellectually) and substantially (not merely incidentally). The personality is then able to clearly reflect the higher feelings (insight) (intuition) of the (higher) Self (without distortion or personal bias).

Personality transcendence follows eventually from personality transformation. Transformation refers to the changes that take place in the personality at the material and process levels of consciousness. Transcendence refers to going

beyond transformation to actually embracing that which is higher. Transformation is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for transcendence. Another implication of the process of personality transcendence is that the personality and ego are inherently material and empirical, while the soul is inherently spiritual and transcendental. Many people are spiritually-minded yet remain largely materially focused on more subtle levels. Through personality transcendence, the (alchemically) transformed personality loses its material attachments and becomes amenable and responsive to higher energies and forces (applied energies).

There is actually another, more subtle dimension to this process. The soul is both immanent and transcendent. In cultivating and transforming and conquering and transcending the personality, the student not only transcends the personality as a personality but embraces the immanence of the underlying reality (the soul on its level). But the method is transcendence. If one merely embraces (apparent) immanence, then one will be absorbed at that level and never reach the underlying reality. But if one embraces transcendence, then one can also embrace immanence. The distinctions are necessary even as one transcends distinctions.

† Commentary No. 1195

Approaches to Yoga

All of the preliminary approaches to yoga involve schools and teachers of some kind or another, and are necessary, but as the student progresses through the various stages and levels of yoga practice, over the course of several (or many) lifetimes, the student must eventually and necessarily become more and more reliant on inner, higher guidance. The role of the various schools and teachers, is, properly, to facilitate preparation and to provide (proper) encouragement.

The intermediate and advanced stages of yoga practice rely on the preliminary work and are necessarily more difficult, and they are more a matter of the student learning the techniques based on inner experience rather than outer teachings. In the broader sense, yoga encompasses the physical disciplines that most people think of as yoga, the psychology of yoga which extends the practice

from merely physical to a broader context, and finally a spiritual dimension that does not properly rely on (but does not preclude) any religious practice.

Yoga is very much more than it appears to be to most people, and there are many approaches, many traditions. A proper yoga school embraces all three dimensions. Its teachers take into consideration the character, temperament, and values of each student and adapt or tailor the process and techniques appropriately. The various racial forms are different in subtle ways as well as superficially, and so yoga techniques that are suitable for one racial form may not work as well for another. Much depends on the previous training and abilities of the student. For some, the physical discipline is very necessary as it lays a foundation for more serious work. But for others the physical discipline has already been achieved (in earlier stages) and the lessons incorporated so that less physical approaches are needed. The physical emphasis produces strength on emotional and concrete mental levels as well, facilitating refinement on those levels and leading to integration and allowing subsequent alignment. But once one is past a certain point, the physical focus must necessarily pass below the threshold of consciousness. One does not then neglect the physical, but one simply emphasizes the emotional and concrete mental aspects (work).

Most approaches to yoga utilize some physical discipline and meditation practice. Yoga is, ultimately, a matter of higher union and is common to both Eastern and Western traditions. Thus yoga practice involves various stages of preparation and leads to the techniques that enable one to go within without the encumbrances of worldly (ego) focus. Proper discipline without meditation is merely healthy but not necessarily progressively so. Meditation without discipline is likewise relatively ineffective. But discipline and meditation, properly balanced, with an understanding of the path (process) and goals, lead more effectively to the higher, deeper practices. In other words one can be involved in either or both discipline and meditation merely superficially, but real progress occurs where both are embraced, and neither are embraced superficially.

So. Depending on the framework, there may be a single approach (hatha yoga), three stages (physical, psychological, and spiritual), seven schools (raja, karma or buddhi, jnana, hatha, kundalini or laya, bhakti, and mantra yoga), or the three and eighteen (three times six) of the Bhagavad Gita. And there are, ultimately,

the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. In some sense these distinctions are helpful, in another they are entirely unnecessary.

† Commentary No. 1196

Imposition

Imposition is defined as the condition or process of imposing upon someone (or some other lifeform), of unnecessarily limiting or constraining someone, of unnecessarily violating the freedom or condition in consciousness of another human being, through imposition of values, atmosphere, force, or other constraints or limitations. Imposition is one of the two general categories of crimes (the other being dishonesty). Meeting parental or professional responsibilities is not necessarily a matter of imposition, but it should be a matter of considerateness.

Two of the determining factors are necessity and reasonableness. Sometimes one cannot avoid imposing upon others. Sometimes it is reasonable to do so. But one should ever be considerate of others, and if it is necessary to impose, then one should proceed with apology and consideration, to minimize the degree and extent of the imposition. There are some conventions which are reasonable impositions, e.g., establishment of rights-of-way in the interests of order and safety, the establishment of reasonable taxes in the common interests. But much that is imposed through common or democratic convention constitutes unnecessary and/or unreasonable imposition. The democratic process (majority rule) is certainly (generally) preferable to most other alternatives (e.g., dictatorship), but the imposition of democratically established constraints is not necessarily necessary or reasonable.

Respecting individual rights is still relatively important. Appreciation for individual and group differences (in character, temperament, and values) should be part of the process. But the question is where is the fine line between one individual's (or group's) rights and those of another. If one person likes quiet and another prefers noise, then what constitutes imposition. As a general practice, relatively coarse people tend to impose their energy and forcefulness (values) upon others, while relatively refined people tend to accept the presence of relatively coarse people, without being averse (without even being tolerant

(because tolerance implies judgment)). But in the final analysis, the spiritual student (evolving human being) must learn to respect the rights and interests and freedoms of others and not impose upon them, even while being imposed upon.

Any force unnecessarily applied to others (people) (humanity) (animals) (the earth) is a crime of imposition. Imposition includes many of the conventional crimes (murder, rape, assault, robbery, etc.) as well as the moral (ethical) crimes of intimidation, coercion, preemption, preclusion, deception, lying, etc. And there are (somewhat) lesser crimes of imposition, such as discourtesy and rudeness, violating the peace and quietude with unnecessary noise. In each instance, imposition is a matter of projecting energy through force upon the environment or psychic atmosphere in a way that is counter-evolutionary, or not in accordance with the principles of the evolutionary path. This may be conscious and deliberate or it may be unconscious and indeliberate, but imposition is a crime in either case. The extent of the crime is the extent of the imposition, the extent to which another's freedom, rights, being, etc., have been imposed upon, the extent of the harm thus engendered.

Some may rationalize that some action (e.g., noise) does no harm and is therefore of little or no consequence, yet in the higher order there is harm resulting from every instance of unnecessary and unreasonable imposition. The worldly world is a world of harmony through conflict, of people imposing their wills upon others, but gradually learning to temper the process and tendency.

Myers-Briggs Typology

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a test based “on the assumption that individuals differ in their preferences in perception and judgment.” It purports to measure “the four sets of traits postulated by C.G. Jung, namely extraversion-introversion, sensing-intuiting, thinking-feeling, and judgment-perception.” A person’s type “is designated by the letters of his or her predominant mode in each of the categories.” The sixteen “types” are ENFJ, ENFP, ENTJ, ENTP, ESFJ, ESFP, ESTJ, ESTP, INFJ, INFP, INTJ, INTP, ISFJ, ISFP, ISTJ, and ISTP.

The Myers-Briggs typology is an artificial system of character and temperament “types” based upon observation, rationalization, deduction, inference, and conclusion. Although artificial, it still has some (inferred) naturalness and therefore has some (modest) validity. The value of Myers-Briggs lies in the extent to which relationships between the various (artificial) types are understood. A “good” artificial system is one that has some underlying naturalness, even if the authors remain unaware of the underlying reality. Thus, as long as the student is aware of its limitations, the student can learn a fair amount about human nature, character, temperament, behavior, etc., through this system.

Individuals do differ in their preferences, conscious and otherwise, in perception and judgment. The four sets of traits considered by C.G. Jung, properly measured, to the extent that that is possible, are reasonable indications of preferences. The question is to what extent a person “is” one or another of these types. In a natural system, like the seven rays, once a person achieves personality integration the “type” is definite, and based on the personality matrix, i.e., predetermined. While each of the seven ray energies are present to some extent, one will dominate. This is not a matter of circumstances, but a matter of predetermination. As circumstances vary, the balance of seven ray energies being manifested will also vary, but the core personality ray will continue to qualify the overall personality.

In the Myers-Briggs system, as in all good-but-artificial systems, a person has varying degrees of “preference” in each of the four sets of traits. Indeed, in some cases there is balance between a set of traits, so that a person can be equally one and the other. As circumstances vary, so do one’s preferences, although there are some general tendencies and preferences that may tend to predominate. In application, Myers-Briggs typology can be useful in understanding these preferences and how various “types” tend to relate to one another, but the student should not become a victim of the system and act in accordance with the type. And the student should realize that each of the sets of traits are defined in a particular context, e.g., judgment and perception are defined particularly in the context of the author(s) of the system and may not “mean” what these words generally convey. Thus the student is urged to study the system and understand its various limitations and constraints before applying results.

One of the fundamental limitations of any artificial system is that it pertains to personality-level observables. As long as a person is living predominantly at the personality level, and as long as the system has some underlying merit, then the results may have some value. But a person who is living between the personality level and the soul level will not be properly categorized in an artificial system, nor even in a natural system like astrology, that is personality-centered.

† Commentary No. 1198

Vegetarian Diet

There are many reasons that various vegetarians may give for why they embrace their particular diet, but ultimately there is only one reason that works for the spiritual student. It simply feels right.

Some say that a (properly balanced) vegetarian diet is more healthy, and this is true. Some say that it is a matter of energetics. This may also be true. Some say it is wrong to kill (and eat) animals (animal flesh), and this is generally true (but it is also a matter of consciousness and conscience). But whenever one relies on beliefs and arguments (rationalization) there are naturally counter-beliefs and counter-arguments, some or all of which may be reasonable and

therefore not inherently conclusive. Thus a choice of diet should be a matter of individual conscience and not imposed by others or even by convention.

Even so, there is a matter of consciousness. A vegetarian diet does not, in itself, convey higher consciousness. A vegetarian is not inherently any better (or worse) than a non-vegetarian, though the vegetarian tends to be, naturally, and in some ways, more healthy. But a vegetarian diet does allow something that a non-vegetarian diet precludes, and that is an adjustment in consciousness that facilitates depth, growth, and understanding, at some level. It is, for the spiritual student, a practical matter of what is necessary for progress, at whatever stage the student may have realized. At some stage, the student must be concerned about refinement and the relative coarseness of the (animal) body must be overcome. A vegetarian diet allows this. A non-vegetarian diet precludes this. But until the student reaches the point where the diet becomes a limiting factor, there is no compulsion for a vegetarian diet (unless there is also a matter of conscience (based on previous experience)). Considerable growth generally occurs before one becomes vegetarian, and considerable growth generally occurs thereafter. But there are limits to how far one can go without becoming vegetarian.

In the occult or metaphysical (psychic) perspective, the effects of a non-vegetarian diet are quite obvious to the properly trained observer. The animal (flesh) matter consumed sustains the relative coarseness of the body and induces and sustains effects (limitations) on etheric and astral (emotional) levels, but not directly on concrete mental levels. The animal magnetism encourages the human being to remain at the animal level and feeds or encourages the animalistic tendencies within the human nature. Much of this can be tempered without becoming vegetarian (i.e., there are many "nice" people who eat flesh foods), but there are necessarily limitations. And although becoming vegetarian facilitates further progress, unless the person has achieved some complementary work (e.g., through meditation), there is not likely to be any substantive difference in consciousness (i.e., there are some "not-so-nice" vegetarians). So ultimately it is a matter of there being work to do that includes becoming naturally vegetarian. Thus being (becoming) vegetarian is (ultimately) necessary, but not, in itself, sufficient.

There is no need to deny the existence of the human animal. The body is necessary to human experience at this level. But the body needs to be cultivated as a vehicle suited to the expression of higher consciousness, and that means tempering the animal nature to a considerable extent. It is a matter of resonance, of responsiveness to higher impression, a matter of being refined and able to wield (express) (share) safely the higher energies and forces. It is a matter of becoming and then being what one truly is.

† Commentary No. 1199

Healing and Karma

The healing process can never be effectively dissociated from the karmic process, since all consequences are a matter of cause and effect relationship (karma). Thus attempting to heal someone (oneself) without embracing the karmic factor (learning, growing, adjusting) is ultimately fruitless. One can treat the effects with (potentially) some (superficial) success, but real (enduring) solutions come only through addressing the role of consciousness. It is consciousness that creates effects. And it is consciousness that allows healing to take place as the experience is properly assimilated.

Any sort of disease or injury has its roots (causes) in consciousness, in attitudes, in behavior, in feeling, in thinking. Oftentimes the roots come from previous lifetimes and so the correlation of cause and effect is not so easy to discern. And consequences are rarely the result of single causes, and so the matter is generally complicated, particularly so if one tries to unravel the details. Fortunately, the details are not so important. What matters is understanding the intended lesson, as every consequences conveys opportunity for growth in consciousness. And every injury, disease, or suffering is a signal and opportunity to be more open to understanding.

The law of karma is the law of evolution, the means through which one learns the intended lessons and grows in consciousness. Every action on every level of human (personality) consciousness is a sending forth of creative energy that must ultimately return with consequences. Under law, those consequences are suited to both the original causes and the current condition in consciousness. In

effect, action upsets the balance and through consequences the balance is restored. In the process are many lessons and much opportunity for growth through assimilation of experience. If one "acts" in accordance with the evolutionary flow then the consequences will simply (non-painfully) facilitate growth in the direction of that flow. If one "acts" not in accordance with the evolutionary flow, then there is disharmony resulting (potentially) in disease or injury that awakens the person at some level (often unconsciously) and encourages both assimilation of experience and suitable adjustment in consciousness. Through cause and effect relationships one (consciously or otherwise) learns how to work harmoniously with the evolutionary patterns.

But wherever disease or injury "happens" there is a condition that is not in harmony in some sense or context. The context may be individual or broader, involving the group or the race as a whole. But the intention is restoration of harmony, through learning (healing). Healing energy is always available. It is simply a matter of being properly responsive and receptive, which means being able to assimilate the experience. If the lesson is learned and the (intended) adjustment is made in consciousness, then one is healed (at that level) and one proceeds on to the next experience. If the lesson is not learned and the (intended) adjustment in consciousness is not made, then the condition (disease) continues or is compounded. If one merely treats the effects, and this appears to be successful, then either the lesson is really learned (on some level) or the underlying force will emerge in another way at another time, and, generally more dramatically.

This world is a world of harmony through conflict. People learn through experience and expression, through engaging the karma of life in this world. Disease, injury, suffering, etc., are only necessary to the extent that one is asleep and needs to awaken to some higher, deeper realization in consciousness. Thus one eventually approaches and embraces harmony.

Centeredness

There is also a matter of being properly centered, being poised in the sense of being responsive to inner guidance (conscience) (intuition), instead of being distracted by or involved (entangled) in personality-centeredness. One of the fundamental problems of centeredness is the inherently deceptive nature of the ego. One usually believes that one is properly centered, even when one is not, because the ego wants to retain its hold over the personality experience. But one eventually learns to discern the difference between the false centeredness of the ego and the higher, deeper centeredness.

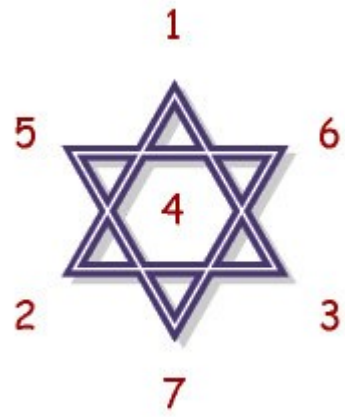
Life in the ordinary world is fundamentally personality-centered, a matter of being engaged in the (material, egoistic) world and being relatively unresponsive to higher impression. This facilitates experience and expression at the personality level and all that that implies. This is necessary for developmental experience, over many lifetimes, but ultimately, as the student matures in consciousness, the hold of the world begins to loosen and the student needs to become centered or focused in a higher, deeper place. The challenge then becomes how to become so centered without losing the ability to function effectively on practical (worldly) levels, i.e., how to not go back to sleep in the mundane world. It is fundamentally a matter of learning to discriminate between the higher and the lower and of aligning oneself with the higher. It is also a matter of letting go of the lower.

Life for the spiritual student is therefore a continual struggle or challenge, for while the ordinary human being is wholly immersed in the mundane world of the senses (personality, ego), the spiritual student must live in two worlds, simultaneously, and effectively so. The spiritual student must become centered in that higher, deeper place, and then learn how to serve effectively in the outer world without being compromised. This generally means remaining somewhat otherworldly, so that one does not lose the inner focus. It is inherently easier to deal with the outer world from the higher centeredness than it is to deal with the higher center from the lower worldly place (in fact, it simply cannot be done). The student must choose the higher, deeper place. And from that center, relate

effectively to the lower world (humanity in manifestation). The real connection with humanity is in the higher place, not in the outer (superficial) world.

Meditation is crucial to this process but not sufficient. There must also be determination and persistence, for meditation alone can become relatively superficial and the student can go back to sleep (without realizing that that has happened). The student must find the inner place (center) and allow that place (its character and nature) to dominate the waking consciousness. Otherwise the student will simply go back to sleep. Which is inertia. Which is comfortable at the personality (ego) level. And the lower cycle will repeat itself. But eventually, when the student is properly centered, the cycle will be fulfilled and a new, higher cycle will begin.

As one becomes properly centered (in the higher, deeper sense), then one naturally embraces and expresses the higher energy (quality) and one is naturally and substantially misunderstood, however unconsciously, by those who cannot relate to that inner experience. The student does not separate himself (herself) from humanity. To the contrary, through the center there is a much stronger connection with humanity, but it is a connection at the higher, deeper level. But it does mean that the student no longer conforms blindly (unconsciously) to worldly expectations.



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