



The Upper Triad Material

Commentaries XIII

Edited by Peter Hamilton

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

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The Full List of Upper Triad Books:

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The Upper Triad Material 3rd Edition

Articles	3 volumes
Commentaries	15 volumes
Miscellany	2 volumes

The Upper Triad Material 4th Edition

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

A Personal Journey 4th Edition

Through the Grace of God 1st Edition

Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Third Edition

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

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

Notes

To the best of the editor's recollection, all of the material in Commentaries XIII 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

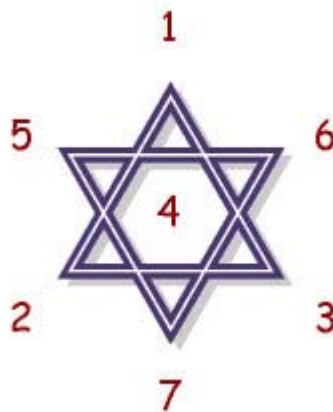
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There is a place, deep within the heart, where we touch God, and where God touches us, where human hearts achieve communion, with God, and with one another, there being no difference, no space between us.

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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Maya 1

The basis of maya is matter. Maya is a characteristic of material existence, of consciousness immersed in matter (form) at the physical and etheric levels. Since matter and consciousness (and spirit) are so interrelated, in one sense consciousness descends into matter, in another consciousness is induced within matter, in yet another consciousness emerges from matter. All are true. There is the consciousness of matter (material existence) (elemental life). And there is the consciousness of the form (physical body and etheric double or vital body). And there is the consciousness of the human being at the personality level, which necessarily works through the consciousness of the form and the consciousness of the elemental life (atoms of the body).

The consciousness of the elemental life is very, very primitive. It is material consciousness. It cannot be dissociated from material existence. It is so bound to matter that for all practical purposes it is synonymous with matter. At the elemental level there is no awareness, even unconscious, of anything external to the atom, even though there is interaction with other atoms. Interactions are entirely mechanical (vibrational). The relative quality of consciousness at the elemental level is very coarse and therefore very unresponsive to anything higher. It is analogous to a very, very deep sleep.

The consciousness of the form (body) is much more "advanced" over that of the elemental life, in the sense that the lifewave is much more advanced, in the sense that there has been much more experience and it (the form) (its consciousness) is much more complex than that at the elemental level. But the consciousness of the form is very primitive compared with that of human consciousness. And the consciousness of the form is very closely linked to the elemental level, as it is immersed wholly in the physical realm. It cannot "see" beyond its own existence as a body and is not even aware of its own existence as a body. Awareness at this level is primarily internal and to some extent an awareness of external forces that have been brought into the body (there not being awareness that they are external or that there is even an external existence). For all practical purposes, the consciousness of the form is wholly bound to that of the underlying elemental consciousness. It is simply more

complex. But it suffers virtually the same limitations as the elemental. And yet it has its own (conditioned) purpose.

But there is also the consciousness of the human being at that level, the animal consciousness associated with the physical body and etheric double. This is very much more “advanced” than that of the form itself and it is the animal consciousness that animates and expresses through the form. But the animal consciousness is not self-conscious. The animal consciousness is very much immersed in matter. The animal consciousness cannot distinguish between itself and the form, any more than the form can distinguish between itself and the elemental consciousness. Because none of these lives (consciousness) have the ability to distinguish anything.

But the animal (body) consciousness has much more of an independent nature than that of the form or that of the elemental. The animal consciousness is related both to the consciousness of the form and elemental, and to the astral or desire nature at the next higher plane of consciousness. The animal consciousness is still immersed in matter, but it is subject much more to internal forces (desire) and external forces (astral sense impressions).

† Commentary No. 1202

Maya 2

The human being in incarnation experiences and expresses itself through the personality, and the personality is a composite of four vehicles in consciousness, a dense physical body, an etheric (energy) (vital) body (double), an astral or emotional body, and a concrete mind. Each of these vehicles in consciousness has a life and consciousness of its own. Each of these vehicles in consciousness is composed in turn of elemental substance. And the human (animal) personality is simply imposed upon the forms and immersed in their nature.

This is the real, underlying basis for maya, that the human being at the personality level is almost wholly immersed in form (vehicles of lower consciousness) which is (are) in turn immersed in elemental (material)

substance. It is as if consciousness is imprisoned in matter to such an extent that there is no conscious awareness of being imprisoned or constrained. There is such a complete identification with lower consciousness (form) and such a complete immersion in material existence, that the waking-consciousness is almost completely and wholly conditioned and constrained by this (lower) experience. This is, of course, part of the plan. The “fall” of humanity into the material worlds does have purpose (evolution in consciousness) (from being wholly blind and unconscious to being self-aware and self-realized in some collective sense).

But humanity immersed in dense matter is involved (entangled) with other lives and not even aware that it is so. The various elemental lives (consciousness) have their own (unconscious) perspective, and the human being accepts and embraces that perspective, unconsciously. The form (lives) (consciousness) has its own (unconscious) perspective, and the human being accepts and embraces that perspective, unconsciously. And the human animal (personality as a whole, and in its several parts, integrated or otherwise) has its own (unconscious) perspective(s), and the human being accepts and embraces that (them), unconsciously. In other words, the human being so (unconsciously) identifies with the lower nature that it unconsciously embraces all of that existence, believing (unconsciously) that that is what it (the human being) really is.

What this means is that even the (ordinary) thinking and feeling human being is wholly immersed in material existence and identified with the material nature, being almost wholly blind to the broader, deeper reality of human existence. Maya, then, is the cloak of material existence on physical and etheric levels, that blinds the human consciousness, that “causes” the human being to perceive itself as a separate, individual, self-determined entity (none of which is actually true), that “causes” a person to identify with the lower nature. Thus the materialism (egoism) (illusion of separateness, illusion of individuality) (separativeness) of the human personality directly results from the condition (maya) of the world.

While maya refers primarily to the physical (etheric) component of immersion in matter, glamour is analogous to maya at the astral or emotional level, and illusion is analogous to maya (and glamour) at the concrete mental level. Maya

is relatively easy to overcome and transcend intellectually (yet somewhat more difficult in practice). It just requires knowledge and understanding (and then training and application) (re-conditioning). But overcoming and transcending glamour and illusion is much more difficult, as they are much more subtle than maya.

† Commentary No. 1203

Illusion 1

Maya is perhaps the most deeply ingrained aspect of conditioning that a human being must necessarily overcome in order to ascend beyond these material levels of consciousness. But in understanding maya, and through self-observation, there is a relatively clear process for transcending this lowest expression of maya-glamour-illusion.

Glamour on its level (astral) is inherently more difficult to deal with; it is more complex. While a person tends to be wholly unconscious of maya, a person tends to semi-consciously involve himself (herself) in glamour, knowing to some extent that there is something there, but not realizing that one is actually entangled, not realizing that one is actually absorbed in something or conditioning (compromising) oneself in the process. Thus while maya is a matter of simply being asleep, glamour is a matter of actually deluding oneself. One's beliefs (perception) (perspective) (unconscious values) then compound the difficulty of overcoming this middle form of maya-glamour-illusion. But the process is still relatively clear, as it is mainly a matter of cultivating honesty (particularly self-honesty), becoming more and more objective (becoming less entangled in sense perception), observing one's own behavior, feelings, and thoughts, becoming less and less self-absorbed (personality-centered), perceiving more clearly, etc.

But overcoming maya is possible by virtue of the human being being able to function on concrete mental levels. Likewise for glamour, as a person becomes mentally-polarized and more objective, a person gradually realizes that there is glamour and that one is (has been) englamoured, a person then perceives the glammers for what they are. In awareness and understanding there is a process for resolution. This is possible because the problem is being dealt with at a

higher level (concrete mental). But in dealing with illusion (maya-glamour-illusion on the concrete mental plane), most people (and most spiritual students) are unable to function properly (or at all) on intuitive levels (misunderstanding the intuition, identifying with astral impressions (emotional insight) rather than intuitive insight (buddhi), is a very substantial impediment). So while maya is most insipid, and while glamour is more insidious, illusion is much more subtle.

Glamour is compounded by desire (attachments on astral or emotional levels), but desires can eventually be recognized by an objective and observing mind. Illusion is compounded by beliefs (opinions) (attachments on concrete mental levels). And few people are willing and able to question their own beliefs or to recognize that their beliefs and opinions are substantial limitations and impediments to realization. Even if they are so willing and able, it is generally a process of replacing more limiting (less true) beliefs with less limiting (more true) beliefs. To go beyond having beliefs (without reverting to passivity in the lower sense) is very, very difficult (and requires substantial buddhi).

So. In a sense the incarnation of the human being, the descent into and through material existence, is a matter of experience through delusion, leading to a gradual awakening, followed by eventual and gradual ascension through the various higher levels of consciousness. The "work" of the ordinary human being is simply to experience, to develop the personality, and learn how to effectively express the personality "energy" in the lower worlds. In which case it does not really matter if the person is wholly engulfed by maya (glamour) (illusion).

Illusion 2

But for the spiritual student it is very different. One becomes a spiritual student toward the end of the developmental (experiential) (expressive) phase, and the “work” of the spiritual student is to overcome maya, to overcome glamour, and to overcome illusion, because it is in overcoming these limitations that a person is able to contribute more toward the evolution of the (human) race as a whole and it is in transcending these limitations that a person is able to become self-realized.

The first step is to understand that there is maya (glamour) (illusion) and that a person is asleep by virtue of these things. The second step is to understand the nature of illusion (glamour) (maya) on the various levels and begin to objectively observe one’s own behavior, feelings, and thinking in the context of entanglement in the senses (delusion). The third step is to actually wrestle with these conditioning factors (forces) (tendencies), eventually transcending them. Somewhere along the way the student realizes that the ego is simply an artificial entity produced through illusion. Then, eventually, the student realizes that he (she) has identified with that ego and must learn to distinguish the ego (not-self) from the (real) self. And, finally, the student transcends illusion (ego) and becomes self-realized.

In the meantime, however, there are many illusions. There is the illusion of the external (physical) (material) world and the illusion that people are individual, separate, entities living in that external world (instead of realizing that what appears in the world is just the shadow or reflection of what is real). There is the illusion of self-consciousness and self-determination (being self-absorbed is the normal condition for humanity entangled in the material-sensual world) (instead of realizing that the soul is something far greater, much more noble than what the person (personality) (ego) appears to be, and that that soul is the only aspect of the human being that is truly self-realized (and even then, not in the sense of ordinary self-consciousness)). There is the illusion of life in the lower worlds (the worlds merely apparent to the senses) being all that there is, and the illusion that death is the end of existence. There is the illusion of an

afterlife that is not consistent with the cyclic panorama of cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis.

There are the many illusions of identification, with one's lower self (body, feelings, thought) (sense impressions), with one's family, race, religion, culture, country, etc., with one's job (work) (calling). There is the illusion of being somewhere in time and space. There is the illusion of being someone. There is the illusion of being someone special. There is the illusion of being different. There is the illusion of separateness and all of the implicate illusions thereof. There is the illusion of intellectually understanding something. There is the illusion of knowledge (understanding) (wisdom). There is the illusion of knowing oneself. There is the illusion of feeling, and the illusion of thinking.

Of course all of these things (beliefs) (perceptions) have some basis and therefore some relative truth (value), but much of it is inertial and limiting and fosters further entanglement. Illusions are very convenient, whether they are the widespread illusions inherent in human incarnation, or the self-created illusions of sense perception or the illusions born of ego and its defense. Illusions are quite natural, and arise from whatever need the artificial existence seeks to redress. People perceive according to their desire nature. People believe what they want to, because it is convenient.

† Commentary No. 1205

Illusion 3

One of the more subtle aspects of illusion is the illusion that one can actually ever (ever actually) know anything, that one can actually ever understand anything. Believing that one can know something (believing that one does know something) and believing that one can understand something (believing that one does understand something) are substantial illusions that undermine real progress.

The truth, relatively, is that all knowledge is necessarily partial and misleading, and that all perception of (and) understanding is likewise. Thus, for the spiritual student, the emphasis is upon becoming disentangled from the senses and the ego, embracing harmlessness and honesty and humility, all of which

contribute to the student eventually facing up (out) (in) to the underlying reality, which is that everything is relative and there are no absolutes, that believing in something necessarily limits one's ability to recognize or appreciate some deeper, greater, more noble truth. Thus the spiritual student eventually cultivates tentativeness, of having beliefs (values) which help guide the student through the maze of life, but without being attached to those truths (beliefs) (values), so that the student is able to adapt to increasing and expanding light (depth). Such a student may yet have beliefs, but all the while knowing that they are merely (tentative) beliefs, and subject to change as the deepening progresses. Eventually, the greatest depths are achieved as the student transcends having beliefs altogether. One overcomes being deluded, ultimately, by transcending the existence of illusion.

Another dimension of human nature immersed in the (delusion of the) material world is the sense of what life is all about and what can be accomplished and what can be taken along through death (transition). Some who do not recognize the afterlife might say that they enjoyed life, or that they accomplished something (fame, fortune), but in fact one cannot take "enjoyment" beyond this life, and one cannot take either fame or fortune (or any other worldly achievement) beyond the veil. One cannot even take knowledge or understanding. But one can take character (conscience) (wisdom), for these are real accomplishments, which are assimilated by the soul and carried over to the next lifetime. Nothing else (save unresolved entanglements (karmas) that need to be worked through).

Another illusion is that of having a goal. This may be practical at the developmental (experiential) (expressive) level, but eventually the student transcends having goals. There are no ends. There is only process. Process is itself developmental, but it remains essentially a process. There is evolution in consciousness, and there is purpose implied in manifestation, but the spiritual student must ultimately focus on the process and become the process for evolution in consciousness, without regard for (attachment to) details (which are necessarily limiting). In short, one's goal is to be. Or, more properly, to not be (or to be not). Tao.

The vast majority of humanity are entangled in the senses and the ego, in fact everyone is so entangled to some extent. They are immersed in the process of

entanglement. But the spiritual student is one who becomes more focused on (in) the process of detachment (disentanglement) (liberation). Through progressive and intelligent (constructive) detachment, the student overcomes maya, overcomes glamour, becomes disentangled from the sense, becomes disentangled from the ego and the realm of illusion, and embraces buddhi (the essence of the soul or higher Self).

† Commentary No. 1206

The Value of Science

Most people think that the principal value of science lies in its results, i.e., knowledge and understanding of the physical world and how it can be applied to the apparent benefit of humanity, life, the planet, etc. While this may be of value to some extent and in some cases, the real value of science lies in its process (means rather than ends). The study and practice of science contributes substantially to the training of the concrete mind, and in principle to increasing objectivity.

Material benefits (comforts) notwithstanding, it is how science contributes to the evolution of consciousness that really matters. The actual knowledge obtained through the study and practice of science is necessarily partial, since the focus of science does not yet properly acknowledge the underlying reality (seven planes of consciousness, cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis, etc.). Thus science is limited mainly to the physical and psychological realms, and limited very much by the assumptions implied (i.e., that the apparent physical world, that which is apparent to the senses or to physical plane scientific instruments, is all that exists). The two most substantial limitations of science are the inability to comprehend cause and effect relationships, by virtue of cause and effect being more than just physical or even psychological, and the consequences of implied assumptions about merely apparent cause and effect relationship.

Actual scientific knowledge is almost always simply an emergence into the conventional realm of knowledge and insight that is (and was) more readily obtained through psychic techniques. Those who have evolved before and beyond humanity already know and understand what science is now beginning to know and understand. In fact, virtually all that science embraces is an

(incidentally) induced response to the knowledge and understanding that already exists on higher levels. Scientists are generally able to unconsciously tap into the sources of knowledge on the concrete mental plane, interpret them in the form of ideas and concepts, and then investigate them and develop them accordingly, all the while thinking that it is the scientist that discovers or invents rather than realizing the scientist is merely an instrument.

Scientific progress is also a consequence of overall consciousness. For example, the discovery of an effective medicine to treat a particular disease is primarily a matter of karma (timely discovery), and not generally a matter of true scientific insight. In this sense, scientific discoveries are consequences and not causes. In another sense they can also be causes, e.g., in being able to treat a particular disease, that consequence is also a catalyst for other diseases to emerge (in order to meet the need in consciousness). Thus without appreciating the underlying cause and effect relationships (psychological (karmic) causes for physical plane effects), science is relatively blind. And yet there remain considerable and helpful consequences. The (necessarily transient) alleviation of suffering and the improvement of the apparent quality of life remain noble motives.

But the real value of science is in its methods and processes. Much is developed and learned through the process that science undertakes. In learning to think objectively (or at least as objectively as is practicable), the student has accomplished something. In embracing the quest for knowledge (understanding) the student is eventually led to the quest for the underlying truth and reality (as physical plane understanding is recognized as insufficient and unsatisfying).

Matter

The whole of the universe, or universal manifestation (the whole of the universe in manifestation), consists, in its highest sense, of spirit or energy. At an intermediate level (perspective), the underlying spirit or energy is manifested as consciousness. And at the lowest level (perspective), the underlying consciousness (spirit or energy) is manifested as matter and through material forms.

Matter and energy are perspectives, as one can perceive the non-physical realms to some extent as material (although in the subtle sense), although even this fails above the concrete mental plane. One can more easily (properly) perceive matter as energy, for even at the lowest, densest levels, matter is simply an appearance to the senses. Forms are merely material aggregates, and matter is merely energy constrained (localized) in time and space. It is not that something is either matter or energy, or consciousness, or spirit, but that everything is energy (spirit) and most things are also consciousness, and some things are also matter.

Modern science (physics) has now demonstrated what was long realized in esoteric and exoteric (theosophical) circles, that material particles are simply resonances of energy. The material world is real, to some extent, in the sense that it has some value and implied purpose (facilitating experience and expression in the context of evolution in consciousness). But the material world is not really as it appears to be. Things (objects) (people) (forms) that appear to be distinct in the material perspective are not really so distinct. Forms exist in time and space, but all are distributed, and not merely isolated or distinct in either time or space, which are merely convenient ways to perceive things in the lower world.

The principal quality of matter or material substance is inertia. Each successively lower plane of consciousness is materially denser and the matter of each (lower) level exhibits more inertia. Each level of consciousness (energy) (matter) offers or affords opportunity for experience and expression, as the various lives (lifewaves) pass through the various kingdoms (levels and domains

in consciousness). The densest levels simply offer the most inertial experience. Evolution proceeds through involution and then evolution proper. Involution is the descent of non-self-realized consciousness (life) into matter (ignorance) (evil), the blinding of consciousness to higher levels, while evolution (proper) is the subsequent ascent of eventually-self-realized consciousness (life) back to the source (God) (good). And in the process the human being gradually overcomes the inertia of matter, learns the lessons implied or afforded through material existence, and becomes essentially creative.

What this really means, in practical terms, for the human being in incarnation, is that he (she) is thrust into the lower worlds, immersed in matter, blinded to higher consciousness, very much subject to the inertial forces (mechanicalness), and struggling (unconsciously) to realize the true nature of things. As the human being gradually understands the nature of matter, and the nature of the human being in material form, as the human being gradually apprehends the nature of consciousness and the distinction between consciousness and matter (and how consciousness is absorbed in matter), then the human being is able to gradually overcome these limitations, more consciously learning the afforded lessons, and more intelligently contributing to the evolution of consciousness of the whole.

† Commentary No. 1208

Energy

While matter is inertial and represents limitation (to consciousness), energy is inherently flexible or adaptable and embraces momentum. Everything is energy in one form or another. As the human being evolves, he (she) becomes more and more a worker in the realm of energy, wielding energy (for qualification) and forces (applied energies) more and more intelligently (creatively) (constructively) (sensibly), eventually becoming immersed in the higher flow.

It is essential for the spiritual student to understand and appreciate the limitations of matter, and particularly the limitations conveyed by (through) the human form (and ego). But it is also essential for the spiritual student to understand and appreciate the nature and availability and various types of energy, so that he (she) is able to evoke energy and work with energy for the

good of all. Much of the experience and training implied and conveyed through the spiritual path deals with preparing oneself for working safely and intelligently with energies, learning how to invoke and evoke energies, how to manage them constructively, etc. Indeed, much of life is already (unconsciously) a matter of dealing with energies on various levels (etheric, astral or emotional, and concrete mental).

With proper metaphysical and theosophical (occult) training, the student is simply more consciously able to work effectively with energies. But even without training, without understanding, people are continuously invoking and evoking energies, albeit unconsciously and without realization of the nature of energies and the consequences of their behavior (feelings) (thoughts). The difference then is conscious awareness. The spiritual student learns to be aware of the energy domain, learns the various rules regarding working with energy in its various forms, understands the various dangers, limitations, and safeguards, and is therefore able to work more effectively.

For all practical purposes there is an infinite, unlimited supply of energy. And energy can be readily manipulated or qualified in various ways for various purposes. Wherever there is a (real) need, there is energy of the right kind in the right form and available to responsive consciousness. The mere presence of a human being (any lifeform) attracts (repels) energy according to the character, temperament (dynamics), and values in consciousness. The human being (aura) is essentially magnetic and electric, in accordance with its nature. Much of energy dynamics is unconscious, but as the human being achieves integration and becomes more aware, then the energy dynamics become more conscious and more intelligently qualified. In the meantime, in accordance with the nature of energy, every thought, every feeling, every expression, of every person (lifeform) has an effect or influence on every other life, and particularly those with whom a person is affiliated or linked (e.g., family, friends, people in the immediate environment), but with everyone to some extent (there is no order of difficulty in miracles, meaning there is no essential limit to the range of energy and that everything is interrelated).

Most people are introduced to the energy domain indirectly, through prayer or ritual (or through wishful thinking, etc.). But in understanding the various levels of consciousness and the ways in which energy is manifested on each

level (etheric, astral, concrete mental), the student is able to be more creative and more purposeful (constructive) in his (her) work. Instead of wasting energy through unconscious endeavors, the student more properly evokes energy consciously, economically, and purposefully.

† Commentary No. 1209

Fields

So. What is a field? Fields are relatively more easily defined in terms of some context. There are many different kinds of fields, some real (substantial) and some conceptual (but nonetheless meaningful). In one sense a field is a sphere or domain (area, space, timeframe, media) of operation (application) (existence) (manifestation) of one sort or another. In another sense, a field is "a complex of forces that serve as causative agents in human behavior." In yet another sense, a field is a region or space (domain) in which a given force operates.

More fundamentally, regarding substantive fields, there is a overall field of (universal) manifestation in which and through which all lives (consciousness) (forms) are developed and expressed. There are existent fields, fields associated with each unit of life (expression), and there are relationship fields, fields which relate two or more existent fields. There are energy fields and there are force fields (force in this sense is simply energy applied to some objective or goal or in accordance with some motive or intention). There is a field of spirit (life) and there is a field of consciousness. There are also fields of spirit (life) (energy) and fields of consciousness. There is scalar existence and there is vector existence, all in the context of some field or another (consequently there are scalar fields and there are vector fields). There are fields of behavior (expression) and there is behavior (characteristics) (dynamics) of fields.

There are internal fields and there are external fields. There are fields of activity (endeavor), fields of influence, fields of expression, fields of contemplation. A substantive field is a vibrational field (in matter and/or consciousness), having some associated energy. A non-substantive field (a conceptual field) merely induces a vibrational field. The overall field of manifestation began in response to the existence of a conceptual field, with that conceptual field inducing and qualifying the existent field (overall

manifestation). A field is held in place through tension and an induced field inherently tends to apply force (radiates or otherwise conveys energy) or exhibits tension of its own. There are dynamic (active, expressive) fields and there are static (repressive, inertial) fields. Each sphere of consciousness is a field with a ring-pass-not. Some fields are closed systems, but most fields are open or interactive in some way. The field of manifestation is a closed system only from some transcendental perspective and otherwise it is an (internally) open system.

There is a field of manifestation. Is there a field of non-manifestation? Or is there a non-field of manifestation? Or is it a non-field of non-manifestation? Similarly there are fields of perception (non-perception) (awareness) (non-awareness) (probability) (chaos) (memory) (maya) (glamour) (illusion). But mostly there are fields of activity (endeavor) (expression) (influence) in consciousness, that afford opportunity for experience through interaction with other fields (lives).

Perhaps more than anything else, fields constitute a perspective, a way of viewing and considering the energy that is conveyed through and developed through manifestation. But fields are also the context for energy (life) (consciousness) and fields are very real. They have substance (form). They have characteristics (that need to be appreciated). There are also associated rules (what works, what does not work (what facilitates the evolutionary flow, what impedes or inhibits that flow)).

Energy Fields

Most fields are energy fields. In this sense, a field is a fabric (domain) (reservoir) (pattern) (structure) of (containing) energy. The field is comprised of energy and there is energy in the field (although in some instances there is energy no longer in the field). And most energy fields are also force fields, in the sense that they facilitate the expression or application of energy in the form of some qualifying force.

Without there being an energy field associated with manifestation there would be no means of conveying energy (life) (consciousness) (purpose). Without there being an energy field associated with a human being there would be no means of experience or expression. It is the existence of the field (context) that makes everything else possible. Existent fields allow life to emerge, develop, and express itself. Relational fields allow lives (consciousness) to interact, to change, to grow. Thus much of the panorama of universal manifestation (cosmogogenesis and anthropogenesis) can properly be viewed in terms of the field (manifestation) and the various composite (internal) existent and relational fields.

Each energy field has a range or extent. The energy field of the human being (nominally the aura on the lower levels and the causal body on the higher levels) extends into the immediate (spatial-temporal) environment, but selectively well beyond that environment. The extent of influence of a person (and the extent to which a person is influenced) in consciousness is simply not limited to the immediate space and time. Energy fields tend to be composite and multi-dimensional, relating in different ways on different levels, according to the quality of consciousness embraced by the energy (in manifestation, energy is invariably associated with consciousness (more properly vice versa), even though there is a distinction between them). There is a near-field associated with every dynamic field. And there is a far-field, likewise. The characteristics may vary from near-field to far-field, either in some linear or non-linear but continuous manner, or in some instances in a discontinuous manner, according to need and circumstances.

Once a field is established it can then contain (accommodate) energy that is consistent with its nature (qualification) (intent). Thus can energy enter and leave an energy field. But energy is also generally qualified by the field (and the field is, in turn, qualified by the energy). Since the overall field is teleological, there is purpose implied in and conveyed through every field. Every cycle of activity utilizes the various existent and relational fields, and energy ebbs and flows according to the dance. The field contains the plan and facilitates its working out (fulfillment) (resolution); in this sense, each of the various existent and relational fields is also a karmic field (and there is an overall karmic field). Thus fields are also superimposed, one upon another, each working on its own level(s) and in its own way(s), according to the plan. Each field is imprinted in some manner, according to function and purpose (and ways and means). Each energy field is a system, and each relates in some way or another to every other field (system).

Most energy fields are either electric or magnetic (or both) in some way or another (not necessarily in a physical sense). Some fields are radiative, conveying (sharing) energy readily with the environment. Some fields are more absorptive, attracting and containing energy. Where energy fields are radiative, there tends to be continuous replenishment, a flow of energy from higher (more purposive) levels to lower levels for expression and resolution.

† Commentary No. 1211

Behavior

Behavior is the manner in which a person conducts himself (herself), how a person acts, functions, responds, etc., to the various circumstances of consciousness and experience in the world. Behavior and conduct imply that there are underlying reasons or underlying forces (motivation) which encourage or demand various behavioral expressions.

Much of behavior is a matter of conditioning, through heredity and upbringing (family and cultural environment) as well as through subsequent experience, but there is also the factor of consciousness (quality) and the extent to which a person is actually conscious (awake) to his or her actual circumstances. Much

of behavior (for most people) is based on widespread (collective) conditioning and is mechanical in nature. For a given confluence of external and internal forces, people who are conditioned tend to behave consistently (mechanically) and without thinking. For those (vast majority) who are almost entirely conditioned, even thinking is mechanical and the thoughts embraced are not really one's own.

The astral plane is filled with emotional energies and forces (emotions and feelings) that impinge upon the aura and most people simply react to those energies and forces without being aware of them, and without being aware that they are reacting based upon conditioning and external forcing. Similarly, the concrete mental plane is filled with various energies and forces (thought-forms) that (conditioned) people appropriate without really thinking, i.e., through appropriation one thinks that one is thinking when actually one is simply being reactive and mechanical. This is the basis for the (widespread) manipulation of people's behavior (feelings) (thinking) by those who would influence others for their own ends (sincerely or otherwise) (e.g., some merchants, sales people, politicians, religious leaders, etc.). Of course those who manipulate others are also asleep and proceeding according to their conditioning. Thus for most people, behavior is a matter of mechanicalness and conformity, even while there is or appears to be behavioral diversity. But as people evolve, there is gradually developed more autonomy, more freedom from conditioning, less reactivity (mechanicalness) and more intelligent responsiveness.

Much of conditioning is circumstantial in the sense that the circumstances of one's heredity, and upbringing, the culture in which one is developed as a personality, etc., and so, much of behavior is consequential. One's family, culture, etc., exhibit expectations and one tends to accommodate those expectations non-consciously. Conditioned behavior is essentially passive, even though one may "think" otherwise. But as one emerges from the conditioned state, gradually, one begins to realize the extent of one's own conditioning, the extent to which behavior (and feelings) (and thinking) is conditioned and mechanical (and based in the ego), and then, and only then, one can actually begin to deal with it. This does not mean that one's behavior necessarily changes, only that the basis for behavior changes. Instead of behaving mechanically, one behaves more consciously, more deliberately, taking more conscious responsibility for one's actions on various levels.

And yet, as one passes beyond this stage (conscious and deliberate behavior), one becomes more and more non-active. One does not go back to passive (conditioned) behavior, but one learns to transcend the acquired tendency for active behavior. One then learns to flow with something higher than oneself, rather than flowing unconsciously with mass consciousness (mundane absorption).

† Commentary No. 1212

Esoteric Astrology

Exoteric astrology refers to that part of astrology which is generally known or understood, that which is readily available and generally accepted as true, though it may be frequently misunderstood or misinterpreted. Exoteric astrology deals primarily with the astrology of personality and personality-centeredness, without recourse to the soul or the influence of the soul. Esoteric astrology refers that part of astrology which is occult or hidden, that which deals with the soul and the influence of the soul upon a responsive personality. That which is esoteric becomes exoteric as humanity evolves, growing both in consciousness and in spirit, as people are able to incorporate and apply the new level of understanding.

This is so in regard to all truths. This is so in regard to astrology, that ancient science based on the interaction of cyclic energies within the cosmos. In the solar system, the planets act as focalizing agents for these energies, and it is the reaction or response to this process which astrologers attempt to analyze. As people move upward and onward along the spiral path, it becomes both necessary and possible in the very natural order of the evolution of the soul, for the mind and personality to rise above mundane (personality) astrological aspects in a process referred to by Jesus as "overcoming" and by others, in this age, as "living above it."

While exoteric astrology is the astrology of the (energies and forces that apply to the) personality (and subject to the abuses of the interpreting mind and emotions), esoteric astrology is the astrology of the soul (i.e., the energies and forces of soul qualification). Esoteric astrology might be said to be exoteric

astrology in evolution, or the astrology of those upon the path (but not for the respective personality influences). Just as there are many perspectives on the better-known (exoteric, mundane, widely-abused, greatly misunderstood) astrology, there are also different perspectives or levels of understanding of the more occult or esoteric astrology. Each can provide much material which assists in the understanding of an individual.

In a mundane chart, correctly done, a person (personality) (or more properly, the forces that qualify or influence a personality) can be read in several layers, depending very much upon the intuition of the delineator. In an esoteric chart or reading, this delineation is stepped up and it is possible to recognize the influence of a soul from a rather deep (high) level. It is a better key to understanding the purpose of a present incarnation and holds the secrets of the previous life on earth, plus the accumulated talents that the soul has acquired. It pinpoints much of the karma and also the many relationships which might otherwise remain a mystery within the framework of the usual astrological chart.

On one hand, the exoteric chart applies to the personality of one who is not on the path and who is reactive or responsive to the personality qualifying energies and forces and which is relatively meaningless for one who is on the path and responsive to higher (soul) qualification. On the other hand, the esoteric chart has no meaning for one who is not on the path and pertains primarily to the fully-integrated, spiritually responsive individual who is in some measure in touch with the soul and the energies and forces of the soul. For the properly trained astrologer this distinction is crucial. Applying exoteric interpretations to someone who is living above the personality-centeredness of ordinary humanity is pointless. Likewise, applying esoteric techniques to someone who is living at the personality level.

The Cultivation of Bias

Bias is ultimately a factor that the spiritual student must transcend in order to realistically embrace truth. Because bias is a distortion of perception that leads to limitation in understanding. But as that factor is gradually overcome, one must first overcome the negative bias, and one method that is particularly effective in qualifying the mass consciousness is the cultivation of a more positive bias. Then, eventually, one must overcome positive bias.

The atmosphere is substantially influenced by the character and quality of behavior, feeling, and thinking. And lives are as affected by the atmosphere created through thinking and feeling as much as by behavior. The student is encouraged to consciously cultivate positive-but-realistic thinking. Many of the events taking place in the world influence individual and group thinking. People and the media tend to focus on the unusual and particularly on the negative side of reported experience. This negative focus fosters additional negative focus and compounds the process of restoration of balance. Focusing on positive experiences, instead, encourages more positive experience. The various negative and positive thought-forms that linger on subtle levels are all stimulated and sustained by mass thinking and feeling. People who are passive (conditioned) (as most people are) are generally affected by these thought-forms. Thus considerable motive exists for cultivation and expression of generally positive (but honest and realistic) bias.

Despite the attention being given to some of the more negative aspects of current events, there is some growing publicity for the more positive side. Economic interdependence among groups and nations is leading toward world goodwill and brotherhood. Cultural activities are flourishing, being available to more and larger segments of the world population. Organizations for the alleviation of human suffering abound. Governments are showing concern for their disadvantaged populations and in some instances for those of other nations. Organizations that provide assistance in times of trouble, from the personal to the international level, are plentiful. At all levels it is apparent that man's humanity to man exceeds man's inhumanity to man. Many heads of state and general populations are becoming more sensitive to the enormity of

war. In many cases, nationalism is gradually being transformed into humanitarianism and world brotherhood.

Many metaphysical groups encourage the realization that thoughts are really quite significant factors in human behavior. Even though thoughts eventually disseminate and dissolve, they can have appreciable lifetimes. One's mental outlook upon the events in one's life has a great deal to do with one's health, peace, and happiness. It would seem just as easy to be biased towards a we've-never-had-it-so-good frame of mind as it is towards a civilization-is-going-to-pieces bias. The habit of positive thinking is a most simple deed that one can do for oneself and for the world with very little effort. As one looks for the good in everyone one meets and in the events of this life, one finds that good; and as one finds the good one is also strengthening that quality and reinforcing the positive side of life.

Thus one is encouraged to cultivate a positive bias. And eventually, that bias results in considerable and constructive (progressive) (evolutionary) changes in civilization (culture) (human attitudes and behavior). Eventually, in order to embrace truth and reality, one must transcend bias altogether, and in so doing, one contributes even more, albeit more subjectively.

† Commentary No. 1214

Thinking Clearly

There are three fundamental objectives in concrete mental development, the first being the ability to think clearly, the second being the ability to discern truth, and the third being the ability to respond intelligently to higher impression (intuition). Unfortunately most people, and most spiritual students, (unconsciously and incorrectly) presume that they are thinking clearly, when in practice, virtually all thinking is substantially biased in some way or another.

There is emotional bias (kama manas) where the thought processes are unduly and largely unconsciously distorted or biased by emotional feelings (including desire). Most people think in accordance with their desires, they think what they want to think, without realizing that this compromises the clarity of

thinking that might otherwise be possible. Wherever there is personal interest in something, the thinking in that regard is necessarily distorted by that personal interest. There is also a concrete mental bias based in logic and/or personal interest. Logical thinking is generally merely the illusion of logical thinking, as a person's logic is often (generally) distorted by personal interest. Wanting to believe something necessarily biases the way the mind processes information, so that information that supports the intended belief is more acceptable than information that does not support the belief. And there are more subtle biases in thinking due to the presence of ego.

Thus virtually all thinking is conditioned (mechanical), biased in some way, and filtered by the ego. So. The question then is how to think clearly. The answer is the elimination of bias, the elimination of conditioning factors, and the elimination of the ego in thinking. The process begins with self-observation and honesty. One must strive to be as honest as possible in every regard, else one will not be able to see the bias and conditioning and filtering that affects thinking. The process includes being as objective as one can be, actually cultivating objectivity (which is really just an extension of being honest). Logic has value only to the extent that one is honest and objective and to the extent that one understands the limitations of logic (the existence of assumptions, the tentative nature of all conclusions).

But the real key to thinking clearly lies in overcoming the propensity for having beliefs and opinions. What a person believes constitutes a formidable barrier to the truth of something. When beliefs become opinions (attachments) the problem gets substantially worse. The whole objective of thinking clearly is apprehension of truth and reality. When one has beliefs (opinions) (attachments) (biases) (conditioning) they form barriers to further discernment of truth. There are many beliefs that most people consider self-evident (and therefore do not question) which in fact, while more or less true and valid, nonetheless inhibit, impede, or preclude further realization.

Obviously if a belief is false then that belief is a barrier, but even if a belief is (generally) true, it inhibits the person from seeing (perceiving) (realizing) what else might also be true about something. The problem is that the mind tends to be exclusive in its thinking rather than inclusive. If a person believes that an object has certain attributes or characteristics, then the person (mind) is

inhibited from realizing that the same object might appear otherwise to someone else. People tend to see some truth without seeing the whole truth. There are many (valid) perspectives. The spiritual student needs to understand this and begin to practice inclusiveness in thinking. Being open-minded and inclusive in thinking is a major step forward.

† Commentary No. 1215

Non-Conscious Factors in Perception

One of the problems with perception is that there are so many non-conscious factors, so much of which a person is generally unaware. Most people are not aware that they are biased and conditioned, that their desires and beliefs and opinions directly affect their manner (process) of perceiving and the content of perception. Most people are not aware that they are conditioned and mechanical in their thinking, by all of their experience, by all of what they already believe, by all of what they want to believe.

Most people are completely unaware of the true nature of the physical world and the true nature (object) of the human presence in this world. Most people take for granted whatever it is that appears to them through the senses. Most people see whatever is convenient for them to see. The world appears to be so, therefore (unconsciously) it is presumed to be so. People (groups) (countries) (races) appear to be separate from one another, and therefore people act accordingly. Most people unconsciously embrace only the apparent physical reality, without appreciating the underlying energies and forces, without appreciating the cause and effect relationships that govern experience in this world. And those people who are able to perceive things differently (correctly or otherwise) (with or without understanding) are often shunned, because they threaten the artificial stability (status quo) of things (ego).

The key to overcoming these limitations is for the spiritual student to become conscious, to become consciously aware of limitations, of actuality in thinking and feeling and perceiving, to awaken to the extent and nature of maya (glamour) (illusion). To achieve clarity in thinking is not easy. To become consciously aware of the actuality of things is very difficult, because virtually every force in the external world is inertial and encourages a person to remain

asleep. And much of the personality nature (motivation) (conditioning) contributes directly to creating and sustaining these delusions. Overcoming these non-conscious factors requires consciousness, awareness, realization, based in determination and intelligent preparation.

Much of a person's basis for experience and expression in the lower worlds is based on unconscious and assumptive beliefs. This is fine for ordinary experience and expression, which after all requires that a person be asleep. But for the spiritual student who is nearing the end of experience in the lower sense, it becomes increasingly necessary to wrestle with those unconscious factors, to realize their existence, to recognize their nature, and to overcome their influence through replacing them with more realistic, more qualified factors (i.e., going to sleep at a higher level). Eventually, however, the self-realized spiritual student is able to be directly aware of all of these things, without being compromised by them.

In order to become aware of otherwise non-conscious factors in perception a person must learn to be observant in a wholly detached manner, without judging, without analyzing, without drawing conclusions. Just observing things as they appear to be, without judging, leads eventually to being able to perceive things as they are (what is is necessarily substantially different than what appears to be). Being honest in every sense is absolutely essential. Being open-minded and non-judging likewise. To consider the possibility of things rather than believing things. To act and proceed in accordance with one's values without being attached to those values. To consciously realize that one is growing and deepening and that in this process of growing and deepening one's values necessarily grow and deepen as well.

Human Relationship

Human relationship includes the personality domain and the soul domain. At the personality level, human relationship begins at conception and relates the human being to his or her parents and immediate family and continues through all of the various life circumstances, through family, community, employment, etc. At this level, human relationship encompasses in varying degrees everyone who a person comes in contact with, but with emphasis on those with whom there are karmic or dharmic bonds. And in the broader sense there is relationship with the race as a whole.

Consideration of human relationship at the personality level includes the way people relate to each other, through the head or the heart, with sincere intent, or through ego, etc. Egoistic people tend to be more competitive and only superficially collaborative, being inherently separative. Non-egoistic people tend to be more collaborative and cooperative, being inherently non-separative. Egoistic people tend to look out for themselves at the expense of others (or superficially noble), while non-egoistic people tend to look out for others and live through the reality of goodwill rather than the facade of goodwill. Most people are asleep and relate superficially, mechanically. Others are partially awake and relate more intelligently, more meaningfully. Most people think of themselves as separate people, even if there is intellectual appreciation of unity, while some actually embrace and feel the unity of consciousness and transcend the sense of individuality, of separateness, and become part of everyone (and everyone becomes part of them).

One of the most important factors in human relationship is the extent to which a genuine rapport can be established between people. This depends a great deal on the relative consciousness, i.e., on the level at which the relationship is based. And it depends a great deal on the relative quality of the consciousness, i.e., through character, temperament, and values. There is a matter of being complementary and also a matter of being supplementary. Most relationships are superficial, even marriages and professional partnerships. But as the consciousness grows and deepens, the spiritual student becomes less and less satisfied with superficial relationship, and seeks more depth in relationship.

There is companionship. There is loneliness. There is friendship. There is otherworldliness. There is relationship in the sense of romantic relationship. There is relationship in the sense of inner connections. And there is partnership, both in the worldly sense and in the deeper sense of committed (romantic) relationship. And there is a matter of bonding, of going beyond the superficial rapport to something much more personally and spiritually meaningful. This requires a considerable sense and expression of gentleness, kindness, openness, of honesty and considerateness and faithfulness. And, ultimately, it requires a deeper, spiritual context (service and soul relationship).

At the soul level, human relationship encompasses the soul group, i.e., that particular group of souls to which a soul is intimately connected, as a flame is part of the fire. These relationships, of souls within a soul group, tend to dominate at the personality level only when the personality is well established on the spiritual path and thereby able to respond to the inner relationship. People tend to be attracted to one another, either due to karmic relationship at the personality level, or to dharmic relationship at the soul level. Thus the more meaningful relationships are either karmic or dharmic.

† Commentary No. 1217

Assimilation of Experience

To assimilate something is to take in and appropriate and absorb something, as in nourishment. The assimilation of experience produces knowledge at some level or another, often on unconscious levels. The assimilation of experience is absolutely essential to progress in consciousness.

Experience in the world of human endeavor, in the world of the human personality of physical, emotional, and mental experience and expression, leads to the development of abilities, acquisition of knowledge, and the assimilation of experience, all of which occurs at the personality level (not at the soul level), all of which lead eventually to understanding and ultimately to wisdom. Much of experience is unconsciously assimilated, incidentally in the course of living in the world. What a person learns through experience is assimilated in the form

of knowledge or superficial understanding. If a person is more conscious of experience, if a person is consciously attempting to learn the intended lessons, and if a person is conscious thereby of the process of assimilation of experience, then that process is facilitated and progress occurs more quickly than would otherwise be the case.

The practical purpose of life in this world is experience leading to growth (evolution) in consciousness. Experience is not something that conveys from one lifetime to another, from one incarnation to the next. Even knowledge, the product of assimilation of experience, is not something that conveys. Even understanding, the assimilation of knowledge, is not something that conveys. It is only wisdom, through character and conscience, that actually conveys, and wisdom is produced only through the assimilation of understanding. Thus experience in the world has no real value unless it is assimilated. Knowledge likewise. Understanding as well. What matters is wisdom (conscience), which is something that can be conveyed beyond death, something that can be incorporated in the causal body (of the soul on its level). At death, anything that remains at the personality level is lost. But that which is assimilated, that which the soul can grasp at its level, has considerable value as it contributes to progress in consciousness. The conscience (character) (capacity for understanding) is what matters. It is that assimilated understanding that provides a basis for further experience and expression, through successive lifetimes (incarnations).

So. How does a person assimilate experience? In part, unconsciously, as consciousness absorbs the impressions of experience. In part, consciously, as the person thinks and feels in response to experience. In part, through retrospection, through conscious retrospective consideration of daily experience. In part, through transition (the afterlife), as the experience of the lifetime is reviewed in consciousness. Experience is assimilated at the personality level, consciously and/or unconsciously, deliberately and/or indeliberately, effectively and/or ineffectively, quickly and/or slowly.

Experience leads to the assimilation of experience. The assimilation of experience produces knowledge and leads to understanding. Thus effective assimilation of experience is that which is more conscious, more deliberate, more productive in terms of producing knowledge, and more productive in terms of

leading to understanding, all of which implies responsiveness to experience. If experience is valued as an end in itself, i.e., through indulging the senses, then it really has little (real) value. But if experience is valued as a means to something more, if knowledge (understanding) (wisdom) is truly and consciously appreciated, then assimilation of experience is more effective.

† Commentary No. 1218

Assimilation of Knowledge

Assimilation of experience is more fundamental than assimilation of knowledge, yet both are necessary to produce understanding. Most people go about their lives semi-consciously, mechanically, learning and growing almost incidentally. Experience that is repeated often enough and intensely enough leaves some impression. Knowledge that seems to have some value is generally retained.

But effective assimilation requires a more conscious consideration. The spiritual student is urged to more deliberately consider every experience through daily retrospection. The spiritual student is urged to more deliberately consider the value of whatever knowledge is acquired. And the spiritual student is urged to consciously seek to understand both experience and knowledge, in the broader context of evolution in consciousness. Yet the spiritual student is also urged not to be attached to experience or knowledge. The assimilation of experience and the assimilation of knowledge produce understanding, but assimilation occurs only to the extent that the student is not absorbed or entangled in the experience or attached to the knowledge. Otherwise, experience and knowledge serve to hinder assimilation and therefore tend to preclude understanding.

The student needs to discern the difference between superficial experience, superficial knowledge, and superficial understanding, on the one hand, and real assimilation of experience, knowledge, and understanding on the other. In this sense, understanding is a product. Understanding is produced as a consequence of assimilation of experience and (more properly) as a consequence of assimilation of knowledge. Being entangled in experience means that a person cannot really comprehend the significance or nature of the experience. Being attached to knowledge, having beliefs and opinions, means that a person cannot

really see a broader context, cannot really understand what is known (and more importantly, what is not known). Assimilation occurs when the essence of something is incorporated. Thus, superficial experience and superficial knowledge lead to superficial understanding.

Most people live superficially. The spiritual student is expected to live less superficially and more substantially. Not through intensity of experience or through depth and breadth of knowledge, but through the quality of consciousness that is embraced, that enables the student to more effectively assimilate experience and more effectively assimilate whatever knowledge is acquired. The challenge is to acquire pertinent knowledge without being attached to it, so that the pieces of information can sort themselves into meaningful patterns that can then be assimilated. This means that knowledge is ever partial, ever tentative. The mind (and heart) that embraces knowledge, without being attached, can see how the pieces fit together, can see beyond the apparent contradictions, and can see how each piece and perspective contributes to the whole.

The assimilation of experience means that the essence or real value of the experience has been incorporated in consciousness. It does not mean that the experience is remembered or is even consciously appreciated. Similarly, the assimilation of knowledge means that the essence or real value of the knowledge (information) has been incorporated in consciousness. The details are not important. Remembering is not important. What is important is that the student retains the essence. One knows how to do certain things or how to be, without needing to know how one knows how to do them.

Interpretation

Interpretation is defined as the process of consciously or unconsciously conceiving the meaning or significance of some experience or some information (knowledge). Correct interpretation is vital to understanding, but the process is also fraught with difficulties.

People naturally interpret every sense impression, every aspect of experience, every piece of knowledge or information that they encounter. Much of this is done unconsciously and indeliberately, mechanically subconsciously according to whatever conditioning, biases, prejudices, and values a person may have. Even when interpretation occurs more consciously, more deliberately, it tends to be a mechanical and biased (non-objective) process. Progression in interpretation occurs as a person develops over many lifetimes and matures in consciousness, from unconscious interpretation to more conscious but conditioned and biased (self-serving) interpretation, eventually to more objective (rational, intellectual) interpretation, and ultimately to more subjective (intuitive) interpretation.

Whether consciously or otherwise, people tend to interpret things according to what they know and understand (or according to what they think they know and what they think they understand). A major break-through occurs when a person realizes the extent of his or her conditioning and the extent to which interpretation is colored and the manner in which this happens. When people begin to interpret more objectively, then more (better) understanding is achieved. However, real understanding, based on the whole rather than the isolated experience and knowledge and limited understanding of the intellect (personality), occurs only when the intuition is properly developed and the mind is tempered sufficiently to allow the intuition to play its “understanding” through the mind.

There are also systems of interpretation. The default system (perspective) is based in the illusions of the world, of more or less independent human beings (individualities), of separation of things in the worldly planes of consciousness, i.e., ordinary perspective. As the student progresses he or she takes on a more

holistic view and begins to interpret experience (knowledge) (insight) in accordance with that broader perspective. The value of symbols and patterns is eventually realized, through interpretive (real) (symbolic) systems (perspectives) such as psychology, the seven rays, astrology, the tarot, and the Qabalah. The esoteric philosophy in its various symbolic forms provides a very potent and meaningfully concise system for the interpretation of experience and afforded knowledge. Experience and knowledge (and understanding) are then interpreted more or less in the context of the (deeper, broader, esoteric) system (evolution of consciousness rather than merely worldly experience and expression).

Interpretive systems are both systems (contexts) within which things can be interpreted and systems that convey a considerable amount of knowledge and understanding of things, provided the student has the proper keys to unlock the system and embrace the contents (insight). While the depth and breadth of metaphysical and theosophical material may appear to be quite large, there is a not inconsiderable redundancy. All of the esoteric philosophy can be conveyed relatively simply (concisely and symbolically), through one or another of the interpretative systems. But one must first have an intellectual basis for understanding the system, and then one must transcend that intellectual basis in order to intuitively embrace its quality and content.

† Commentary No. 1220

Assimilation of Understanding

Knowing and understanding that experience and knowledge and understanding cannot be conveyed (directly) from one lifetime to the next, the spiritual student is encouraged to facilitate the assimilation of experience into knowledge, the assimilation of knowledge into understanding, and the assimilation of understanding into wisdom. At the same time, the developed student is encouraged to embark upon a lifetime of service to others, forgoing his or her own further (conscious) development.

Experience requires that a person be in the world (and to some extent engaged with the world), but effective assimilation of experience properly requires non-engagement. Knowledge may be obtained within or without the world and

worldly encounters, but the assimilation of knowledge requires the context of experience (psychology) and the field of manifestation. Thus while experience and knowledge can be embraced (superficially) without a context, their assimilation, and particularly the assimilation of understanding, requires a proper (broader, deeper) context. Thus what really matters is not the experience or knowledge or understanding, but the product of assimilation of understanding, which is wisdom.

Wisdom is that quality or essence that can be conveyed from lifetime to lifetime. It is part of the quality of consciousness at the soul level and is generally manifested (to the extent that it exists and the extent to which a personality is responsive) through conscience and intuition. At a lower level, where a person is not really well-developed, assimilated experience expresses through instinct. But in developed people, assimilated experience (knowledge) (understanding) expresses through inherent abilities and particularly (meaningfully) through the ability to apprehend. Many people err in unconsciously expecting others to perceive things the same way, but people perceive things differently, in part because experience (knowledge) (understanding) is different, but in part because inherent abilities (wisdom) are also different.

When a lesson is really and truly learned, it is a matter of having assimilated the attendant experience and knowledge and understanding. In which case the fruits of that assimilated understanding are readily available through conscience. But where the lesson has not been fully learned (and assimilated), the experience is necessarily repeated in various (and variously more intense) ways until such time as it is really learned. Of course the underlying (evolutionary) force is karma, which encourages assimilation on various levels (experience, knowledge, understanding, wisdom). The typical, self-absorbed but developed person (ego) will naturally attempt to undermine the processes of assimilation, in fear that through assimilation the ego will lose its hold (power) (influence) (domination) on the personality, not that the ego has any understanding of assimilation, but it does operate according to instinct (mainly self-interest and self-preservation).

But for the developed person, there is a problem with knowledge and understanding, and that is the belief that one knows and/or understands. Real

(assimilated) knowledge and real (assimilated) understanding conveys with it the sense that one does not really know or understand anything, but that whatever (insight) is needed will spring necessarily from within (from the deeper, higher, more noble Self). That conveyance is the beginning of wisdom and greatly facilitates and accelerates the overall process of evolution in consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1221

Conscience

Conscience is defined conventionally as “the sense or consciousness of the moral goodness of one’s own conduct, intentions, or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good” and as “a faculty, power, or principle enjoining good acts.” The conventional definition arises from psychology and also serves metaphysically and spiritually, although metaphysics deepens and extends the definition through the provision of understanding where conscience actually comes from and how it is actually manifested.

Conscience is, properly, not really a matter of experience or of knowledge. Simply knowing what is considered proper or good does not convey conscience. Behavior based on experience or knowledge, especially regarding consequences of behavior, is not a matter of conscience, although such experience or knowledge may provide incentive or motivation for behavior. Conscience is also, properly, not really a matter of understanding. Merely understanding what is considered proper or good does not convey conscience. Behavior based on understanding, especially regarding consequences of behavior, is not a matter of conscience, although such understanding (also) may provide incentive or motivation for behavior.

Conscience is, properly, a function of wisdom, of being able to respond to the character and quality of the soul (causal self). It is the expression of inherent wisdom gleaned through assimilation of understanding (gleaned through assimilation of knowledge (gleaned through the assimilation of experience)). It does not have to include conscious awareness, but if there is moral (ethical) (higher behavioral) influence, heeded or otherwise, then there is conscience. And conscience indicates (higher) consciousness. Conscience does not

necessarily require broad development of the personality, i.e., a person may be relatively undeveloped in many ways and yet be able to evoke conscience in some ways. And even broad development of the personality does not necessarily mean that there is (much) conscience. In fact, sometimes in personality (over) development, there is preclusion of manifestation of conscience. The ego serves as an effective barrier to conscience, even while pretending to be the conscience. So while a person may have developed a considerable conscience, through assimilation of understanding, it may or may not be present, depending on the character and extent of responsiveness (qualification) of the personality.

Most people seem to behave, unconsciously (mechanically), according to self-interest or superficial understanding of apparent (anticipated) consequences of behavior, including social and cultural conditioning (expectations). Some people seem to behave more nobly, based more on altruism, which is also a matter of self-interest, but on a more subtle (less conscious (collective)) level. The motives for behavior are really quite significant, as they play a substantive role in karmic determination. There is doing the right thing for the right reasons. There is doing the right thing for the wrong reasons. There is doing the wrong thing for the right reasons. And there is doing the wrong thing for the wrong reasons. All of which affects karma. And of course, what is "right" is a matter both of what a person thinks is right, but also (more properly) a matter of conscience (sense of appropriateness based on inner, higher sense).

In some sense, behavior based on "reasons" is better than behavior based on unconscious conditioning. But on the other hand, behavior in accordance with conscience, based in wisdom, without recourse to reasons, without recourse to judging, is even better.

Catharsis

Catharsis is a process, of purification or purgation, that brings about spiritual renewal or release from tension. While much of the process of purification is gradual and almost incidental to life in the lower worlds, the spiritual student who invokes catharsis accelerates that process. Once a person is genuinely committed to the (spiritual) path, then acceleration of the process (growth in consciousness) is inevitable.

In one sense, catharsis is the process in which a demon (weakness) (limitation), that is otherwise masked by the personality life, is evoked or brought to the surface of conscious awareness so that it can be recognized and resolved, either by release (letting go) or tempering (qualification) or transformation (into its more suitable counterpart). In another, broader sense, catharsis involves self-obstruction in the sense of a person (spiritual student) consciously or unconsciously evoking a phase of experience and expression in which the person is enveloped (psychically) in an etheric-astral cocoon that is substantially inhibiting, yet which eventually produces considerable freedom from limitations as the cocoon is dissolved and the (spiritually-renewed) person passes on the next phase. That process (catharsis) can be rather lengthy, particularly if the person is more-or-less passive to the opportunity. But where a person actively engages the process (self-transformation), it is more intense and relatively brief.

The whole purpose of catharsis is to bring about self-transformation, either through specific catalytic processes or through some more general, broader catalysis. There are many and various limitations to human experience and expression. The spiritual path involves growth in consciousness, a deepening of realization and broadening of awareness, through overcoming or transcending the many and various weaknesses or limitations. To accomplish this (freedom from substantial limitation) is very difficult and generally takes many lifetimes, but through genuine commitment to the spiritual path it is possible to accomplish a great deal in each lifetime. Once invoked, the spiritual path (dharma-karma) will periodically bring about the needed crises that enable catharsis. Then catharsis affords the breakdown of (some) conditioning, the

facing and resolving of (some of) one's own limitations, and consequent advancement (spiritual maturity).

Catharsis may relate to the relatively obvious human limitations (human nature at materialistic and egoistic levels) (e.g., self-centeredness), or to more subtle limitations (e.g., specific beliefs, opinions, attachments, that limit further realization). Catharsis is both a profoundly metaphysical process and a substantially psychological one. It is a matter of facilitation of change, of substantial growth, of adaptation to inner needs. It is a facing of the darkness within, bringing it to the surface, dealing with it, and in so doing, finding the light and love within, that displaces the darkness and transforms human (personality) limitations into spiritual strengths.

Catharsis is often a substantially painful process, leading eventually to joyful renewal and release of tension. If it is painful, it is so because of natural (personality) (ego) resistance to spiritual growth, resistance to discovery (of self-truth). Indeed, it is generally that resistance that obstructs growth in the first place. It is the resistance (inertia) of the lower self (ego) (intellect) (personality-centeredness) (self-absorption) that must be overcome. Catharsis is, in this sense, merely one of a number of processes of self-transformation.

† Commentary No. 1223

Empathy and Sympathy

Empathy is defined in two ways, namely "(1) the imaginative projection of a subjective state into an object so that the object appears to be infused with it and (2) the capacity for participating in another's feelings or ideas." In more metaphysical terms there are (at least) three degrees of empathy, namely (a) imagining how someone feels, (b) feeling what someone actually feels, passively or involuntarily, and (c) feeling what someone actually feels, non-passively but without losing one's own perspective. The first is head-centered and necessarily superficial (and not generally or necessarily real); the second is real, empathy with entanglement; and the third is more real, empathy with non-entanglement.

Head-centered (superficial) empathy is not real. It is simply what a person thinks or imagines how another person feels based upon some observation, conversation, and/or (limited) understanding. A head-centered person doesn't really feel anything, but imagines that he or she does. In the case of empathy with entanglement, there is generally an emotional polarization and passive (involuntary) capacity for empathy. It is real, but it is distorted by one's own feelings, associatively or otherwise. In the case of empathy without entanglement, there is generally heart-centeredness and mental-polarization, and what such a person feels is both real and (not significantly) distorted by his or her own feelings. Such empathy is much more than simply being aware of another's feelings. It is an actual participation and realization.

Sympathy is somewhat different from empathy, and is defined (simultaneously) in a number of ways, as "(1) an affinity, association, or relationship between persons or things wherein whatever affects one similarly affects the other, i.e., mutual or parallel susceptibility, (2) inclination to think or feel alike, i.e., emotional or intellectual accord, (3) the act or capacity of entering into or sharing the feelings or interests of another, and (4) the correlation existing between bodies capable of communicating their vibrational energy to one another through some medium."

In more metaphysical terms, there is (a) superficial sympathy, where through observation or communication there is like or similar thinking or feeling, (b) real but unidirectional sympathy, i.e., where one person is affected (directly or indirectly) by the other's thoughts and/or feelings (but where the other is not), and (c) more real (genuine) sympathy in which two or more people are linked energetically and collectively, i.e., etherically, astrally (emotionally), and/or mentally (intellectually), such that there is both a sharing of energy and necessarily sympathetic response.

Empathetic relationship is more a matter of participating in another's energy field, while sympathetic relationship is more a matter of resonance. The spiritual student who is reasonably developed along heart-centered lines is naturally both empathetic and sympathetic, empathetic in relationship to everyone according to (uncontrived realization of) need, and sympathetic in relationship to whomever one is properly (psychically) associated with. While a head-centered person (occultist) might think of empathy and sympathy in

separative (intellectual) terms (e.g., in terms of vulnerability and weakness), a heart-centered person is more likely to feel empathy and sympathy in terms of inclusiveness and genuine relationship. While a head-centered person tends to separate himself (herself) by virtue of judging, thinking, etc., a heart-centered person tends to embrace others psychically and inclusively, without judging, without imposing, through real empathy.

† Commentary No. 1224

Empathy

The passive empath, like any passive (untrained) psychic, tends to be involuntarily drawn into relationship with another's emotional field (aura), feeling what the other person feels, but not necessarily or generally understanding the process or the context.

The trained (active) empath, on the other hand, is not passive but remains quite poised energetically (etherically, astrally (emotionally), and mentally), but nonetheless feeling through the relationship. The trained empath is stable and has complete control of his (her) faculties. The empath-in-training is generally mentally-polarized with growing heart-centeredness, and proceeds with training and consequential development by exercising self-control, i.e., whether or not to engage empathetically and the extent to which he (she) is engaged empathetically. In this way the person is able to not become entangled in the senses, but to act sensibly-yet-responsively. However, the properly and fully trained empath does not exercise any (direct) control. The proper empath is able to function intuitively and naturally, without thinking and without exercising any conscious discretion. The proper empath naturally engages empathetically wherever there is need, and whether or not there is conscious realization of that need.

The properly trained empath is substantially qualified, i.e., tempered at the personality level and able to function empathetically without personal motive and without having any expectations. The proper empath engages people empathetically as a means of service (healing), taking care not to impose any energy or force, but remaining responsive, providing and sharing (healing) energy through the empathetic relationship, impersonally, to whatever extent

the client is responsive. In a sense, it is a sharing of spiritual strength, an encouragement at the heart level, in a way that the client can respond to sensibly (consciously or otherwise). It is not a matter of taking on someone's karma, but a matter of participation in that karma. It is not (properly) a matter of personal relationship or entanglement, but a matter of heart-centered (yet impersonal) relationship and non-entanglement. It is a matter of sharing through love, unconditionally.

The most effective empaths would seem to be those who become head-centered and mentally-polarized, and then allow the heart to unfold. Provided they are able to temper the head-centered nature, such empaths tend to convey (evoke) considerable strength and poise, even while under apparent duress. The keys are mental polarization and heart-centeredness. Being emotionally-polarized effectively precludes the needed training. Being or remaining head-centered, likewise. The head-centered approach (to empathy) fails necessarily, because head-centeredness is a barrier, thinking is a barrier, judging is a barrier, any sense of superiority or ego is a barrier. Proper empathetic relationship can only occur where the trained empath is actually participating in the energy field of the client, where the empath is actually embracing the inner connection, the divinity that is the same within all lives, rather than differences, where the distinction between empath and client is exceedingly subtle.

Proper empathy is an inherently second ray expression, based upon (in) love-wisdom and its derivative (compassion) (and in semi-conscious collaboration with the deva kingdom). The proper empath is drawn naturally into the empathetic field, intuitively but not passively (yet not actively), through the open heart center and the magnetic expression of that heart.

Sympathy

Sympathetic extent depends on actual participation and the actual sharing of energy. Head-centered sympathy is at best superficial, based on judgment rather than feeling. In heart-centered sympathy there is an actual exchange of energy, a rapport on some level of consciousness.

There are a number of dimensions or aspects to sympathy, including feeling, friendship (respect and appreciation), love, and understanding. Real sympathy requires all of these dimensions or aspects. Without feeling there is no capacity for sympathy. Without friendship there is no real relationship (and friendship in the broader sense is all-inclusive as is relationship). Without love there is no real understanding. Without understanding there is no real sympathy. In short, sympathy is a heart-centered relationship, and, properly, necessarily mutual. False (superficial) sympathy is a head-centered relationship, and may involve pity or feeling sorry for someone (which is necessarily judging and separative), whereas real sympathy is based on inclusiveness.

The real (metaphysical) distinction between empathy and sympathy is that empathy is one-dimensional and sympathy is two-dimensional (mutual). The trained sympath is first a trained empath. The proper spiritual student never imposes, therefore sympathy must rely on responsiveness and cannot be forced. Where there is a sympathetic basis, sympathetic relationship can be evoked, gently, without imposing, on some level. The esoteric student works meditatively and subjectively, at the level of the soul, where all lives experience sympathetic relationship. Then as the student makes contact at the personality level it is a matter of extent of responsiveness. Even where a person is self-absorbed (personality-centered) (egoistic) and therefore unresponsive to the soul (energy) (quality) there remains an inner, deeper, sympathetic relationship. But where a person is responsive at the personality level, there is an exchange of (subtle) energy at that level as well.

There are no inherent barriers to the properly trained empath, for the properly trained empath can participate without imposing and without requiring responsiveness, but there are many potential barriers to sympathetic

relationship. All (barriers) are a matter of ego (personality-centeredness) and unresponsiveness. Unqualified (unrefined) emotional polarization is a barrier that breeds separateness through defensiveness and reactivity. Head-centeredness is a barrier that separates through judgment. Any form of self-centeredness (selfishness, self-absorption) is a barrier that effectively separates one from another. And any form of attachment, likewise (e.g., having opinions, being materialistic).

Sympathy begins with an affinity or similarity in energy (consciousness) (vibration) at some level, based on commonality (e.g., ray nature, quality, culture, etc.), but deepens through actual rapport (which brings complementary aspects). In a sense, sympathy (affinity) (sympathetic relationship) is a basis for rapport. Sympathetic relationship, eventually broadened to all of life, is an essential stepping-stone to higher consciousness, because all lives exist in rapport at the soul level, and the real goal in consciousness at the human level is to be able to reach that soul level in conscious awareness. It is only as a person (spiritual student) can begin to embrace (evoke) the quality of the soul at the personality level that the path is actually engaged. Thus the spiritual student eventually becomes a trained empath, and the properly trained empath eventually becomes an effective sympath.

† Commentary No. 1226

Pedestals

Is it fair and reasonable to place anyone upon a pedestal? Is it realistic or fair to have any expectations of another person? Is it fair and reasonable to hold another person to a standard beyond that to which a person may hold himself (herself)? Is it fair and reasonable to hold anyone else to any standard at all?

It is perhaps only human nature to admire certain people, for whatever reasons (are apparent) or for whatever sense of the person may appear. It is perhaps only human nature to appreciate others on the basis of apparent (superficial) accomplishments and appearances rather than inherence (the divinity that lives within every human being). And it is perhaps only human nature to be disappointed and/or dismayed when these people fail to live in accordance with those (necessarily unreasonable and unrealistic) expectations. People tend to

admire people (and sometimes to envy people) based upon apparent conformity to one's values. This is as true for material and egoistic (worldly) value systems as it is for spiritual value systems. But unless "admiration" is really just appreciation, unless "admiration" is reasonable and without accompanying (non-realistic) expectations, then admiration may lead to envy and ultimately to disappointment (dismay) (resentment) (separative judgment (as all judgment is separative)).

In this sense, spiritual students and spiritually-minded people of all faiths are not significantly different than anyone else (not that they are significantly different in any regard, but may appear so). Spiritual students and spiritually-minded people remain perforce human (until such time as they are able to transcend this world altogether, not ever to return). Although they may excel in some areas, or appear to excel in some areas, they cannot reasonably be expected to excel in all areas, or to appear to excel in all areas, or to excel in some areas all of the time. Having expectations of anyone, placing anyone on a pedestal, is inherently unreasonable and unfair. And judging anyone, likewise. For judging is necessarily separative. Having expectations is necessarily separative. Placing anyone on a pedestal is a necessarily blinding process (the one who places accomplishes self-blinding) (and the one who is placed is doomed to disappointment).

Standards are all well and good, provided they are only applied to oneself, and provided they are fair and reasonable (and not taken too seriously). Standards are in this sense merely facilitators of intermediate goals. But standards applied to others are inherently counter-productive (inconsistent with reality). This is true whether the purported (presumed) standards are positive or negative, e.g., expecting someone to be honest is just as counter-productive as expecting someone to be dishonest.

Is it not better to see the good in everyone, however masked it may be by external (superficial) appearances? Is it not better to appreciate people for who they are (human beings, inherently divine)? Is it not better not to judge anyone at all, recognizing (collectively and generally) that each person has both strengths and weaknesses, and that each person passes through cycles of expression that may evoke either the higher nature or the lower, depending on circumstances? Is it not better to not compare oneself with anyone else, for

appearances may be quite misleading, and the reality of a person may be something else altogether? Is it not better to allow people to be themselves? Is it not better to accept people as they are, and not as they may appear to be? Is it not better to be, rather than to judge?

† Commentary No. 1227

The Divinity Within

Divinity is defined as the state or quality proceeding directly from God. Every human being, indeed every lifeform, is divine. At the highest level, the human monad is that aspect of the human being that remains with God, that does not descend or reflect itself into the lower worlds of endeavor. At the lowest level, that of the human personality, the human being is a reflection of that divine monad. Whether or not a person actively embraces or engages the divinity within, the divinity remains (within).

The divinity within is the basis for human equality (the essential equality of all human beings (a coarse, self-absorbed human being is no less divine than a highly refined spiritual student)) and is the basis for the equality of all lives (an animal is no less divine than a human being). The divinity within is the source of all (energy, life, purpose, consciousness). The divinity within is the reality of the human being, while what merely appears to be human is not so real. The divinity within is the only persistent part of the human being. But, that divinity within can be embraced or engaged in a variety of ways and through various means.

In the lower sense, the human being is a divine expression, and every aspect of lower existence is similarly divine, in some (inner) sense. The personality is a divine instrument. The body, the emotions, and the concrete mind all have an underlying divine nature. Based on this lower sense, many people “embrace the divine” by embracing the lower nature as divine. But without realizing the distinction between the real and the unreal, embracing the divine in this (lower) sense is rather self-deceiving (and self-serving). For while the body (personality) is a divine expression, it is merely an instrument. It is not the substance of divinity. And so to identify with the lower nature under the guise of embracing the divinity within is largely a matter of illusion. Such illusion is often used an

excuse to indulge the senses, effectively blocking out any real insight. The ego (and lower nature) fosters this experience as a way to maintain control and to prevent self-realization. The ego (and lower nature) fosters self-absorption and self-indulgence (if it feels good it must be divine).

But while the lower nature remains a divine expression, and while the human being is a (divine) whole, the only effective way to embrace and engage the divinity within is through realizing the distinction between the true (real) (Self) and the false (not-real) (not-self). One cannot identify with the higher nature unless the lower nature is recognized for what it is, divine but merely instrumental. As long as one is identified with the lower nature or some aspect of the lower nature (body, feeling, thinking) one cannot properly or effectively embrace the higher nature, because such a person (identified with the lower) (necessarily) cannot recognize the higher nature. People can talk about the soul all they want to, and people can deceive themselves into thinking they are participating in the soul energy, but until a person transcends the lower nature and identifies with the higher, in actuality, then the soul (and higher nature) is not engaged.

In engaging the higher nature, one does not reject the lower, but one simply places the lower nature into proper context. The lower nature is a valuable instrument for experience and expression, but it is not an end in itself. Being absorbed in the lower nature, being entangled in the senses, living at the ego (personality-centered) level, has some value, but ultimately must be transcended, as the higher (divine) nature is embraced and engaged.

Gkosw

Gkosw is an artificial or contrived word, an acronym representing a particular combination of heart-centered keywords and associated qualifying energies, namely gentleness, kindness, openness, softness, warmth, and wonderfulness.

Gkosw is also a formula for mantric utilization of these keywords, such as “I am gentle, I am kind, I am open, I am soft, I am warm, I am wonderful” where “I am” is synonymous with the personality consciousness and the association with each keyword evokes envelopment of the personality nature with the energy or qualification associated with the keyword. In this way, for example, the personality nature can be bathed in the energy of gentleness, which in turn encourages a sympathetic response and incorporation of the energy in the personality nature, particularly where the process (formula) is invoked sincerely and with determination. Variations include “I embrace gentleness ...” and “I am gentleness ...” Each variation conveys value.

Gkosw is a particular formula that facilitates the transition between head-centeredness and heart-centeredness. Gentleness is inherently first ray. Although the first ray is properly head-centered, it nonetheless masks several heart-centered qualities, e.g., gentleness and humility, that can be evoked through the first ray, effectively tempering other (more head-centered) aspects of the first ray nature. Kindness is inherently second ray. Although the second ray is more typically engaged (represented) with love and wisdom, kindness (and compassion) is (are) more active, more directly transforming energies that rely on the underlying basis and nature of love. Embracing kindness is, for a head-centered person, substantially transforming. Similarly, openness (and implied acceptance of others) is inherently third ray and tends to temper the fifth ray (critical, judging) nature.

Thus the gko portion of gkosw correlates directly with the three major ray energies and evokes considerable transforming potential (one still needs to be responsive in order for this to actually work (and the head-centered nature is typically substantially unresponsive)). The remainder of the mantra (sw) simply reinforces the evoked qualification, through softness, warmth, and

wonderfulness. The head-centered nature is often hard and inherently separative, and therefore needs to become soft and warm. Wonderfulness is an extension of warmth (in this metaphysical context) and is simply a more embracing energy. The potency of gkosw lies in its combinative formulation. Utilization of one or another of these energies has some value, but utilization of each of these particular energies, in this particular sequence, has considerably more value. Thus gkosw is a second-order (representative) mantra or formula of power.

An intellectual appreciation for these energies is neither necessary nor sufficient. What is needed is openness and responsiveness, a commitment to loosening the head-centered nature sufficiently to afford the balance of head and heart, with the heart-centered nature eventually emerging as a somewhat dominant flavor. The (typical) head-centered nature (first ray, third ray, fifth ray, seventh ray) is not really gentle (or humble), or kind, or open, or soft, or warm, or wonderful (in spiritual context). But a head-centered person who becomes heart-centered in this way (embracing gentleness, kindness, and openness) can transcend many of the barriers that the head-centered nature has created in the course of its development (focus). While "love" is inherently more potent, "gkosw" is inherently more practical, in evoking love (heart).

† Commentary No. 1229

Acting

Acting is the art or practice of representing a character in some performance either for purposes of education or entertainment and/or through subterfuge. Acting or playing a role is in some ways honest and in some ways dishonest.

Acting is honest in the sense and to the extent that the actor actually evokes the character from within his or her own experience (ability) (consciousness). Really good (effective) actors draw upon their own nature, consciously or otherwise, including that which has been experienced in previous lives. A person who "plays" an evil character effectively is one who can evoke the evil from within his or her own nature. A person who "plays" a noble character effectively is one who can evoke that nobility from within. A bad actor, one who

is not convincing or effective in a role, is one who simply does not have or cannot evoke the needed character from within. In this sense, the actor is the character portrayed, to the extent evoked, but the actor is not merely the character portrayed, for there are many lives and many personalities in each person's past.

Who (what) a person is now is generally cumulative in the sense of incorporating the good (learned) from earlier experience. Most people are therefore merely evoking who (what) they are now. But (good) actors tend to go back in time, albeit unconsciously, and evoke much of what they have been before, bringing it to the surface, for a while, and strengthening whatever that character (characterization) may be. Thus, playing an "evil" person is inherently counter-evolutionary in the sense that that aspect is strengthened (although it may be evolutionary in the sense of finally dealing with it). But in any event, acting is potentially dangerous (counter-evolutionary) and often substantially complicates the (current) personality nature, breeding or encouraging instability and incoherence (inconsistency) at the personality level and effectively preventing integration. There is also a matter of egoism, but that is not exclusive to acting.

Acting is also inherently dishonest and deceiving. While a person (actor) is in some sense the character portrayed, the actor is not generally really that character, and so the process (acting) is inherently dishonest in this sense. It is compounded by the audience (witnesses) (participants) unconsciously accepting the delusion, even for entertainment purposes. It is still deception and merely fosters the various delusions of the mundane world and encourages further dishonesty. This is not to say there is anything "wrong" with actors or acting, but it is to say that there are aspects of acting that are counter-evolutionary (as there are aspects of much of everything else that transpires in the mundane world).

Acting is not exclusively a matter of professional endeavor, as many people play roles, continually or intermittently, consciously and deliberately for some intended purpose, or unconsciously and incidentally due to conditioning or passivity (meeting others expectations). Some people resort to subterfuge (which is necessarily substantially dishonest). Some people are consciously deceptive, (falsely) believing that the end justifies the means. But anything,

any behavior, that encourages delusion or evokes deception, is counter-evolutionary (fostering absorption in the mundane world). The spiritual student is encouraged to be honest in all regards, to avoid playing roles (which are necessarily both deceptive and self-deceptive), to avoid identification with roles or worldly factors.

† Commentary No. 1230

Affirmations

Affirmations are verbal (mental or spoken) assertions having some creative or mantric value. Generally, people use affirmations to bring about some (positive) change or to provide some protection from external (internal) forces, but they can also be used negatively.

Affirmations are essentially creative, evoking energy or force corresponding to the conscious or unconscious intent of the affirmation. Through evocation, these creative energies (forces) encourage the actuality of whatever is affirmed. Mental affirmations are creative, but affirmations actually spoken are more so. Affirmation accompanied by suitable (compatible) visualization, i.e., visualization that is consistent with and in support of the affirmation, are even more effective. Affirmations accompanied by proper breathing tend to be more effective, because they tend to be more effectively registered at the unconscious (subconscious) level (where much of the creative process takes place).

Affirmations that are already true (realized in truth) are more potent than affirmations that are intended to bring about changes that are not already realized in truth, e.g., a person who recognizes and affirms his (her) own (inner) divinity strengthens the expression or manifestation of that divinity, while a person who does not consciously realize that divinity, who merely verbalizes the affirmation, accomplishes very little. Even where an affirmation is not (yet) true, there is evocative power, particularly if the affirmer is projecting himself (herself) to the time and circumstances in which the affirmation is true. Yet there are many potentially powerful affirmations that are rendered ineffective through inconsistency or incoherence, through casual or half-hearted (ritual, mechanical) application. But where affirmation is based in truth, where affirmation is based on self-realized truth, affirmation is much more effective.

Affirmations are thus effective to the extent that a person is serious about bringing about the intended change, e.g., a head-centered person affirming heart-centeredness is effective only to the extent that the person is actually serious about becoming heart-centered and is actually responsive to the process (transformation). An occasional affirmation is relatively impotent. To really work, affirmations need to be repeated many times, over a period of time, with evocative determination. As a pattern is established, the affirmation gains strength, provided the practitioner is consciously focused on the content (intent) of the affirmation. If the affirmation is repeated many times but only mechanically, it ceases to be very effective. Many prayers and affirmations in religious ritual have lost their potency simply because the conscious connection between the affirmation and the intent has been lost.

Words (and thoughts (and feelings)) have power. Words conveyed by others have the power of suggestion. The relatively unconscious person (asleep through absorption at the personality level) is at least somewhat passive and substantially affected by atmospheric conditioning (thoughts and feelings), a more conscious person less so, because a more conscious person is more aware of the internal and external factors (forces) and more intelligently dealing with them, i.e., non-passively. Affirmations that are projective (not based on practical truth) require more effort (evocative determination) in order to bring about the intended results. Thus, the non-passive affirmer can evoke considerable changes within the personality nature, through conscious and effective affirmation.

Proselytism

Proselytism is the act or process of proselyting, of encouraging the conversion of encountered people, selected (discriminated) or otherwise (non-discriminated), from whatever their beliefs may be to one's own. Proselytism is a form of imposition.

The basic, lowest level of proselytism is simply sharing one's beliefs (knowledge) (insight) (understanding) with those who may (or may not) be interested. A second level of proselytism involves "making other people walk in the ways of righteousness and truth by means of gentle persuasion" while a third, highest level of proselytism involves more direct use of force or coercion. Perhaps the rationale for proselytism is that "one is right" and that "encouraging or forcing others to embrace one's belief system is for their own good." Perhaps the truth is nearer to one being insecure, that one feels more secure in one's belief system if others share it. "If a majority of people believe something, surely it must be true." Unfortunately for those who believe that, truth is not a democratic process. Was the world indeed flat, until the majority of people decided that it was not so?

No doubt most people who proselytize are sincere in their beliefs that they are right and that proselytizing is also right. One problem with proselytism is that a person may not be "right" about the beliefs being promoted. Another problem with proselytism is that one cannot effectively impose beliefs on other people. For a person to effectively (actually) embrace a belief system (or truth realized), a person must necessarily come to the place in consciousness where he or she actually recognizes, realizes, and understands the truth being "embraced." Unless a truth is self-realized, it is at best only temporarily and partially (ineffectively) embraced. Anyone who "accepts" truth based on others' testimony or authority (or imposition) is not self-realizing that truth. A third problem with proselyting is a matter of ethics (of course those who proselytize believe it is ethical to do so, while those who understand underlying cause and effect relationships (karma) realize that it is generally unethical to impose beliefs or practices (though there are some pragmatic exceptions, e.g., the convention of driving on one (particular) side of the road). The issue (ethics) is a

matter of what is harmful (in the context of evolution in consciousness). And it is generally harmful to impose beliefs or practices on others.

While some religious and spiritual teachers (leaders) encourage proselytism, a more mature (and more effective) approach is simply to encourage people to self-realize the truth. This is accomplished through sharing of "insight" (knowledge, experience, understanding) without imposition, without being persuasive, without proselyting, without offering incentives. Which means sharing only with those who are actually interested, and only to the extent that that interest is demonstrated, and only in the ways that a person is amenable to. Without any claim of authority. Without any claim of rightness. There is, perhaps, a fine line between sharing-encouraging and promoting-proselyting.

Growth occurs through changes in consciousness. And growth occurs most effectively where a person realizes the truth for himself (herself). There is no crisis. There is no urgency. This is a world (school) of experience, a training ground in consciousness. All crises and all urgencies are a matter of limited perception. The (true) spiritual student (teacher) (leader) teaches through consciousness, through living in accordance with spiritual principles, not through promoting one's ideas or imposing on others.

† Commentary No. 1232

Worldliness

There is no problem with worldliness. Worldliness is the condition in consciousness in which people are devoted (largely unconsciously and mechanically) to the ways of the world rather than to religious or spiritual pursuits. It is a natural condition. It is where (how) most people need to be, a place in consciousness that affords (worldly) experience and expression. Worldliness (blindness) is only a problem for those who seek liberation (self-realization) (God). Worldliness is only a problem in contrast.

Most people identify with their bodies and the ways of the world. They are naturally entangled in their (external) senses and cannot see much beyond the maya (condition) (glamour) (illusion) of the world, i.e., the materialism and

egoism of worldly experience. Even most religious and spiritually-minded people are predominantly worldly (i.e., engaged to some extent in spiritual materialism or spiritual egoism). But gradually, as a person (student) embraces spiritual practice and deepens in consciousness, the student begins to discern the subtle distinctions between the worldly and the real, between the ego (personality) and the soul, between worldliness and holiness.

Then it is a matter of more and more fully embracing the real, and allowing that which is not so real (the worldly) to fall away from one's consciousness. The student is then progressively less entangled in the ways of the world, less entangled in materialism and egoism, less entangled in the senses. The voice (sound) (quality) (character) of the soul (higher Self) (God-within) begins to be heard (sensed) and the person naturally becomes more subjective, more other-worldly. And yet without losing one's place in the world. Such a student remains in the world, and remains able to work in the world, yet without being entangled, without being overly conditioned by the world, without compromising one's higher principles. Thus worldliness is transcended, gradually and painfully, through experience, through spiritual practice, through struggling to go beyond the ways of the world. And eventually, through not-struggling (for struggling is ultimately an artifact of the ways of the world).

One of the challenges of the sincere spiritual student in becoming less worldly is in the domain of action. As the heart unfolds, as the light is embraced more so, the student is naturally drawn more and more to humanitarian and (eventually to) spiritual service. Of course one learns and progresses even more readily through service, but service can also be a path to re-absorption in the ways of the world, if the student is not sufficiently wary. Thus one needs to serve without proselyting, without being so caught up in the (ego-judgment) "worthiness" of what one is "doing" that one loses the inner context. The most effective servant is one who remains spiritually poised.

Another challenge in the arena of worldliness is characterization. A person, even a spiritual student, naturally identifies with the body (personality) (ego) rather than the soul, usually mistaking the semblance of spiritual "impression" for the real thing, often proceeding according to (subtle) ego-motivation rather than remaining in harmony (character) with the God within. Thus "work" (action) may seem justified and worthy (and indeed it may be so), while being

largely ego-based. The cure comes from striving (and eventually from not-striving) to embrace the character and quality of the soul, bringing that character and quality as best as one can to the personality levels. Thus, a (truly) spiritually-poised (non-worldly) person cannot be loud, or coarse, or personality-centered. Of course all spiritual students are, to some extent, but the momentum is toward embracing higher character.

† Commentary No. 1233

The Old and the New

The underlying force of evolution in consciousness is quite progressive. It urges growth and deepening through experience and expression, ever onward and upward. But growth is based on assimilation, and how a person approaches assimilation, how a person believes, what a person wants, determines the effectiveness of that assimilation and therefore the effectiveness of growth.

In this process of growth there is a natural struggle between old beliefs and old values and new beliefs and new values. As one grows, old beliefs and old values get challenged by new, broader experience, and new beliefs and new values enter the picture. But this does not mean that all old beliefs and old values are wrong, or that all new beliefs and new values are right. There also needs to be some discrimination, some process of valuation in which the value of a belief or value, and the context of a belief or value, is placed into perspective. More properly, (genuine) new beliefs are more inclusive and allow for the context of old beliefs (and allow those old beliefs that continue to be relevant to continue as part of the belief system).

Much of what is progressive thinking is just a refinement of previously poorly-understood principles. For example, in theosophy there is a basis of knowledge pertaining to root races that has been misunderstood by many to infer racial superiority for the so-called "advanced" races or "advanced" natures. As the issue is more properly understood, there is not (properly) a rejection of the principle of root races, but a refinement of understanding and placing the role and contribution of each race into some broader perspective. Other teachings (and values) depend very much on the place of consciousness of the student, e.g.,

some students need teachers, others are better able to learn and grow without relying on external authorities. Some students are in the ego-building stage and others are in the ego-transcending stage.

But there is also an inherent struggle of ego and the desire of a person and how that desire affects the belief system and determines how a person relates to experience and opportunities. Thus many people who are otherwise metaphysically-minded and/or spiritually-oriented believe things because those beliefs support what they want to believe rather than what they need to believe in order to go beyond their current stage. Sometimes people will reject "old" teachings because the old teachings do not allow them to fully rationalize or justify what they want (e.g., the ego will naturally rationalize and justify anything that it needs to maintain control, and feeling threatened by spiritual practice (discipline) will naturally invent "new" values that allow a person to sustain the desired self-indulgence).

Teachings (knowledge) (principles) (understanding) (values) serve a purpose. Some teachings endure for the entire period of human evolution (e.g., the role and value of "love") while other teachings serve for a while and are then overtaken in significance as a person can understand a broader context (e.g., authoritarian religion is replaced by non-authoritarian (self-centered) "religion" which is subsequently replaced by genuine inner experience). There are no really "new" teachings, but only some that seem new. New teachings may be genuine (progressive) (encouraging evolution in consciousness) or they may be simply whatever is needed to rationalize and justify one's desires (which is counter-evolutionary and inertial even while appearing to be "progressive"). Ignoring claims of external authority, the truly progressive student learns to discern truth for himself (herself), and beliefs and values are embraced according to their actual value in consciousness and context.

Alternative Medicine

Medicine is generally defined as the science and art of preventing, alleviating, or curing disease and injury. It is that practice and process that is concerned about the health of the human being. There is a widespread and long-standing practice of conventional medicine, and a growing practice of so-called "alternative" medicine.

Three fundamental problems of conventional or traditional medicine are (1) the (wrong) belief (premise) that every physical condition is based exclusively in physical reality, i.e., without proper regard for emotional and mental processes (as non-physical), (2) the failure to appreciate the actual cause and effect relationships, i.e., the karmic context, and (3) the inherent inertia of traditional medical practice. Alternative medicine incorporates both progressive medical practices as well as more traditional practices that conventional medicine has apparently ignored. The reason (need) for alternative medicine is simple. Conventional medicine does not always work effectively, and in some instances does not work at all. But the same is also true for alternative medicine. Conventional medicine works in some instances and to some extent. Alternative medicine likewise.

Conventional medical practitioners tend to focus on alleviating the effects rather than dealing with the causes of disease and injury. Much of conventional medicine purports (quite sincerely) to deal with causes, but because causes are seen in terms of limited (physical) reality, what are perceived as causes are really just intermediate effects. And the same is true, to a large extent, for alternative medicine. Alternative medical practitioners tend to be more progressive and more open-minded, but many are simply not well-qualified, i.e., do not really understand the practice that they are attempting to embrace. Where there is an appreciation for the limitations of any medical practice, e.g., the general inability to correctly apprehend cause and effect relationships, then there is more likely to be insight.

In principle, psychology offers a substantial additional dimension to health and healing, through consideration of human consciousness and the effect of

consciousness on physical health. But psychology (and psychologists) also has (have) fundamental limitations, and tend(s) to deal with human consciousness superficially. In principle, metaphysics offers even more. But metaphysics is plagued with limitations also, mainly in the form of the human being who embraces metaphysics without real understanding (i.e., with ego) or without training, and the reluctance of people to accept "truths" that are not self-evident (which is good, because many "truths" are unfounded) (yet even that which is self-evident may not necessarily be true).

But there is hope. Mainly in the form of (alternative) holistic medicine, which treats the whole of a person, in context. Not in the form of what is merely called holistic medicine, but that which actually embraces the human consciousness in the context of psychological and metaphysical reality, e.g., evolution in consciousness, karma, dharma, etc. Without appreciation for cause and effect relationship, without appreciation for current consequences (effects) arising from past, present, and future action (feeling) (thinking), any medical practice will remain substantially limited. Pain and suffering are considerable and valuable signals. Alleviation of pain and suffering can only truly occur where the intended lessons are openly and honestly embraced. While the effects (physical, emotional, mental pain) may need to be treated, one must also deal with the causes, else effects (pain) will recur in other ways.

† Commentary No. 1235

Fear 2

Fear is defined as an unpleasant and often strong emotion evoked by anticipation or awareness or perception of danger on some level of consciousness. There are a number of natural and artificial processes that can evoke fear, and whether real (well-founded) or not, most are inherently self-protective.

The most fundamental fear is the elemental or instinctive fear evoked at the animal (body and emotions) level. This fear is based on the experience of the matter of the body and the collective consciousness of the body, resulting in conditioned (basic) awareness and conditioned response to perceived threats. In

other words, the body is conditioned to avoid danger to itself, to avoid harm, to defend and heal itself (e.g., responding to infection). This fundamental fear is quite natural and unless compounded by higher-order fears, it is generally soundly protective.

At the next level there are fears on emotional and/or mental levels, fear based on insecurities, and fear evoked by (vulnerability to) external influences. These are also natural fears, based on experience and the condition of consciousness. But unlike more fundamental (elemental) (instinctive) fear, fear on emotional and mental levels is prone to compounding, as fear feeds upon itself and evokes secondary reactions, potentially substantially complicating the process. The astral plane is filled with expressed emotions and feelings that are created through fear, that vulnerable people can (unconsciously) embrace and react to. Sometimes these fears coalesce and take on artificial "lives" of their own. At this level there may also be some elemental fear, of the emotional body naturally seeking stimulation (regardless of consequences for the personality as a whole). There may be a significant basis (insecurity) (vulnerability) that needs to be dealt with, but resolving fear at this level is generally a matter of achieving coherence as an integrated personality, where none of the separate elements (physical, etheric, emotional, mental) are allowed to dominate in consciousness. This naturally tempers or moderates the influence of each element and allows the personality consciousness to proceed (respond) more sensibly.

At the next level there is ego-based fear, which is wholly artificial. This fear is based on manipulation of thinking and/or feeling by the ego for its own purposes (self-sustaining) (maintaining (artificial) control). Many times a person's fears are engendered by (ego-based) (conscious or unconscious) rationalization. Where there are more fundamental or more natural fears or insecurities present, it is easy for the ego to build upon those weaknesses and make things even more complicated. Fear naturally (and unnaturally) grows unless moderated in consciousness.

In a sense, all fear is artificial, because all fear arises from the illusion of separateness (if a person is truly one with all lives how can there be any fear of oneself). All fear functions only at the personality level; the soul does not experience or exhibit fear on any level or in any way. The soul is above and beyond fear. With reliance on intuition (and with the ability to discern the

difference between true intuition and merely astral impressions or subtle, ego-based fabrications), real “threats” are perceived and dealt with sensibly (knowing that there are no “real” threats). Fear is, ultimately, simply the allowance of fear, the allowance of fear taking hold and having influence on some level. Rather than embracing (arrogant, egoistic) fearlessness, the student is encouraged to transcend fear.

† Commentary No. 1236

Genetics 1

Genetics is “a branch of biology that deals with the heredity and variation of organisms and with the mechanisms by which these are effected.” Genetics also refers to “the genetic makeup and phenomena of an organism.” The word “genetics” is related to genesis, and implies a sense that while the genetic makeup of an organism is presumed to be the consequence or effect of some evolutionary process, that genetic makeup is the cause of much of whatever physical and psychological attributes may be evoked.

The problem with this sense is that it is based on the underlying (but wrong) assumption that the physical world, the apparent world, is all there is, and the (equally wrong) assumption that attributes and characteristics are largely consequents of genetic makeup, moderated perhaps somewhat by environment and experience. These (wrong) beliefs are quite reasonable, and based upon (limited, unenlightened) experience. There are apparent and obvious causal relationships between genetic makeup and tendencies or propensities manifested through attributes and characteristics, physically and psychologically. However, the actual causal chain is a bit more complicated and not so obvious to the (necessarily superficial) physical scientist. In fact, the genetic makeup of an organism is indeed the product of evolutionary process, but the specific genetic makeup is a consequence of conditions in consciousness, at a level that is more real and therefore less apparent. In other words, a person’s cumulative consciousness, tempered by karma, evokes a particular genetic makeup, and so there is some not inconsiderable consistency between genetic makeup and nominally observable attributes, characteristics, and tendencies.

There is evolution in consciousness, and as consciousness evolves, it evokes corresponding developments (secondary evolution) in the various forms that are inhabited by consciousness. Thus the human body has evolved, genetically, but the underlying driving force for this evolution has been consciousness, and not vice versa. Most physical scientists perceive consciousness as a consequence of form, i.e., that the form is alive and has through the evolutionary process therefore developed consciousness. But in fact, it is consciousness that "lives" and evolves and the body or form is therefore animated (enlivened) by virtue of that higher presence (consciousness).

Similarly, most physical scientists and worldly psychologists fail to discern the distinction between the brain and the mind, where the brain refers to the physical organ and the mind to a higher organ of consciousness that may express itself through the brain. The human being is not the body or the brain. The human being is not even the mind or ego. The human being is a soul that merely lives through the induced (artificial) personality that in turn lives through and expresses itself through the body. But most people identify with their bodies and unconsciously perceive their emotions and thoughts as extensions of the body. Others, with more experience and insight, tend to identify more with the emotions and/or thoughts and not with the body. But the truly enlightened have no such identifications.

Understanding genetics in the conventional, albeit superficial, sense has some value. But understanding genetics in this deeper, more real sense has even more value. Because it conveys the understanding that people are not really limited by their genetic makeup, that their genetic limitations are temporary, and that through evolution in consciousness, the genetic equation can be changed, if not so much in the current lifetime or incarnation, then at least in preparation for the next.

Genetics 2

The real lesson of genetics is that genetic evolution is a consequence of consciousness. If a particular gene or genetic trait (tendency) exists, it exists because the ensouling consciousness has karmically created the circumstances that necessarily result in (demand) that gene being present (there are of course other, more external factors, that provide a broader or collective context for genetic manifestation). For example, if there is a gene or genetic trait associated with heart disease, if a person is prone to heart disease, it is not because of that genetic trait. The genetic trait associated with heart disease, if it exists, exists because the person is prone to heart disease. The various (discerned) laws or principles of genetics exist not as causes but as consequences.

A person who incarnates does so to experience and express consciousness. The soul chooses its circumstances, its genetic makeup, the astrological circumstances, etc. Given the consciousness and the associated karma, a person will be drawn to consistent (karmically allowed) genetic-hereditary circumstances. As the person evolves in consciousness, the circumstances tend to change. Healing can occur on various levels (where the effects of healing are generally expressed on the next lower level, i.e., mental healing evokes effects at the emotional level, emotional healing evokes effects at the etheric or physical level). The genetic framework is simply part of the hereditary conditioning that a person (at the soul level, prior to incarnation) chooses.

The genetic framework does not generally convey absolute limits, but rather the genetic makeup serves as a framework within which, over some range of possibilities (tendencies) (propensities), effects are evoked. Thus as changes occur in consciousness, for apparent good or apparent ill, those changes tend to be within that genetic framework. Although in some (rare) cases, the actual genetic makeup can be changed en route (during incarnation), at least partially, through consciousness. But for the most part, the genetic makeup is created (chosen from available opportunities) prior to incarnation and indicates tendencies and propensities rather than inevitabilities, and it is consciousness (more correctly the quality of consciousness in the karmic context) that

determines whether or not some tendency or propensity will actually manifest itself. Thus, for example, a person with an apparent (genetic) propensity for cancer may or may not evoke cancerous circumstances.

Through genetics, “man” is not playing God, even if “he” thinks he is, any more than medical people save lives. People are merely instruments of consciousness and each person is also an expression of collective (racial, human) consciousness. Genetic research (and medical research in general) may be sincerely motivated (to improve the human “condition”) but it suffers very considerable limitations due to lack of appreciation of the underlying context (consciousness, karma). “Success” comes only where the results are consistent with some collective karma, and to some extent, “success” in medical research breeds new opportunities for “new” diseases and conditions, for where “success” appears to eliminate needed consequences (e.g., a needed disease), then another disease will emerge or reemerge to provide those needed consequences.

Genetic advances (“miracles”) like medical “advances” do not actually solve the problems facing humanity. They (doctors, scientists, engineers) are merely addressing or treating the effects rather than the causes, and are therefore substantially limited. But eventually all of this (research) (medical practice) will pass beyond appearances, and be guided more from higher consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1238

Genetic Cloning

Cloning is a process and phenomenon in which understanding of genetics is applied to the deliberate “creation” of forms that are identical to or similar to those from which they are genetically derived. Some people are opposed to cloning because they perceive cloning to be rightfully beyond the human province, or because they fear the consequences, or because of ethical and/or moral considerations. But there is a fundamental misunderstanding of what cloning is. With an understanding of what cloning really is, although the ethical and moral issues remain, cloning can be placed into a far more meaningful perspective.

The real issue involves the distinction between life and consciousness and the distinction between consciousness and form. The cloning process is merely a matter of bringing forth, albeit with manipulation, a form that would not necessarily otherwise have been "created." But this is not really creation. It is more properly perceived as manipulation of matter and form, which is, to a large extent and subject to ethical and moral considerations, the province of humanity. Modern genetic science and engineering allows for considerable insight into genetic makeup and influence upon subsequent genetic forms. This does not necessarily constitute an interference with the natural order, and is, oftentimes, quite consistent with what needs to be.

Some might suggest that genetic experimentation and genetic engineering, e.g., cloning, interferes with the ability of the soul to incarnate and to express itself properly, or that it somehow circumvents karma. But this is not so. A genetically engineered lifeform, whether identical, similar, "improved" or progressive, or even radical with regard to previous forms, cannot be utilized by any consciousness that is not karmically consistent with the opportunities afforded by that form. In other words, a karmically inconsistent form will fail to "attract" an ensouling entity. As forms "evolve" they attract lives (consciousness) that can effectively utilize them. As forms serve their intended purpose and are abandoned by "higher" lives, they are naturally appropriated by "lower" lives and eventually disappear (usually through the mechanism of infertility, induced by the overshadowing collective consciousness).

Thus a cloned animal form will generally and naturally attract the same animal life (consciousness) that expressed itself through the form from which it was derived. If the form is a sufficiently radical departure, the experiment (process) will naturally fail, or will attract a very different lifeform. Similarly, in terms of human incarnation, a cloned human form offers no more threat to humanity than (unfortunate) practices of indiscriminate procreation.

A human soul chooses to incarnate, based on available opportunities that are consistent with its karma and intended karmic expression. Thus a cloned form, much like forms evoked through artificial insemination or other practices, is not necessarily significantly different from an otherwise naturally evoked form. So, unless it is a radical departure from the natural order, there is no trauma

associated with cloning (there is, however, considerable trauma associated with abortion, where a soul commits to incarnation through a particular form and then “suffers” the destruction of that opportunity prior to birth, even though that is necessarily consistent with that soul’s karma). Thus one should consider prospective abortion of a cloned form in the same moral framework as a natural process. If conception has occurred, naturally or artificially, then a commitment has been made.

† Commentary No. 1239

Mainstream Thinking

In every human culture there is a mainstream of thinking and values that constitutes the prevailing sentiment of the majority of the people. In some cultures mainstream thinking also embraces diversity and some measure of tolerance, while in other cultures mainstream thinking is relatively non-dynamic (static) and intolerant of other perspectives or values.

Mainstream thinking is simply what most people think or believe, and mainstream values are simply those values that most people embrace, consciously or unconsciously. The mainstream is a reflection or indication of the relative (collective) consciousness, and what is considered mainstream (hopefully) grows (rather gradually) as the majority of people progress through experience and expression. A healthy mainstream allows for harmonious (respectful) diversity in thinking and values, for beliefs and practices and values to be (hopefully gently) questioned, so that progress can be attained more readily. But in most cases that progress occurs very slowly and largely unconsciously. But collective thinking does change (progress) and collective (common) values likewise.

For example, there was a time in modern western culture when mainstream thinking fully embraced smoking and uninhibited drinking (alcohol) and eating of flesh foods (meat-fish-fowl). Gradually the mainstream has developed to the point where smoking is discouraged and drinking is somewhat tempered. Vegetarians were in the progressive fringe but are now closer to the mainstream, being perceived by the majority more tolerantly. Eventually the mainstream will include non-smoking, non-drinking, vegetarian values. These changes occur

as more and more people realize for themselves the respective dangers and values. But it is necessarily a gradual process and one that cannot be (effectively) imposed.

Thus within or about the mainstream there are inevitably (and necessarily) two fringes, a progressive fringe and a regressive fringe. The regressive fringe represents attachment to (older mainstream) beliefs and values such that there is some (considerable) inertia, some not inconsiderable resistance to change. The value of the regressive fringe is twofold: it allows people who need to the time they need to assimilate the lessons of those (older mainstream) beliefs and values, and it balances the otherwise unrestrained progressive fringe and tends to prevent that fringe element from going too far too fast. Of course a mature (reasonable) (balanced) mainstream also serves that purpose. Thus progress tends to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

But mainstream thinking is not necessarily an improvement in beliefs and values, and so the regressive fringe may also represent some very meaningful beliefs and values that the majority will eventually return to, as appropriate. And, similarly, the progressive fringe does not generally or necessarily represent the intended evolutionary frontier. In general, the progressive fringe represents a stimulation in "new" thinking without the requisite maturity to assimilate what it really means in some broader context. Thus the real pioneers are not so much in the progressive fringe as they are in the moderate realm between the mainstream and that progressive fringe. While real pioneers are somewhat non-conforming, the real pioneers are not those who are emotionally embracing changes that they do not really understand, promoting their newfound causes and glammers, but those who encourage progress in more subtle ways, without causing fundamental (external) conflicts between value systems, but through gradual changes.

Cults

Fringe thinking is very much a matter of perspective. Some “fringe” thinking is actually quite healthy, while some is decidedly not so. People on the fringe may not perceive themselves as being on the fringe. People who join “cults” generally believe that they are doing the right thing and that the majority of people (i.e., those in the mainstream) are misguided. Sometimes those in the mainstream are indeed misguided; more often, those on the fringes of society are. But some on the fringes are actually very insightful. And some so-called cults can be quite constructive.

The problem is that “cults” covers such a broad spectrum of unconventional thinking, that it is not really fair to use the term prejudicially. Some “cults” are simply minor (incremental) progressions beyond the conventional and mainstream, while others are extreme and dangerous in their thinking and practices. Of course what is perceived to be “dangerous” and “extreme” is also a matter of perspective. People in the mainstream tend to be (feel) threatened by anyone who is unconventional, who embraces “fringe” values. But many of these “fringe” groups have some value, in encouraging progress. And yet many are regressive and many are progressive, in unhealthy ways.

What really matters are the ethics of the various “cult” practices. Those groups who aggressively promote themselves, who aggressively recruit, who intimidate or brainwash or impose ideas, who substantively (non-harmoniously, non-progressively) separate themselves from the mainstream, and/or who wield fear or emotion as weapons, are generally unhealthy and potentially dangerous. And yet those who are victimized by these groups (cults) are sufficiently immature in their thinking, sufficiently vulnerable (not integrated as personalities), that they are naturally attracted to the fringe elements. But other cults, who do not embrace these (unethical, unhealthy) practices, are generally harmless (indeed, may actually be progressive in some sense). But many people in the mainstream are unable to discern the substantive differences between such (fringe) groups, and may label anything unconventional as dangerous. This is a regressive practice but contributes nonetheless to the overall dynamic.

The really valuable “fringe” groups are simply those who encourage honesty in thinking and practice, who allow, indeed encourage, people to question the mainstream values and determine for themselves what is to be valued, without any form of imposition, without coercion or promotion. Healthy “cults” are based on freedom, and allow people to come and go, allow people to believe what they wish, and allow people to progress in their own time and in their own way. Healthy “cults” do not present or impose the “truth” but simply encourage self-discovery. Healthy thinking and healthy practice is based on honesty and harmlessness, with oneself and with others.

One of the keys to resolution (progress) (understanding) is open-mindedness. Open-mindedness allows for the possibility that some “fringe” beliefs and practices may be true and may have value. Reasonableness implies that if a person has one “fantastic” belief, that does not mean that all that person’s unconventional beliefs are fantastic, that some fringe beliefs are indeed without basis in truth, while others are, to some large or small extent, relatively true. Evolution in collective consciousness implies that “new” ideas should be presented in non-threatening ways, allowing people to consider the merits (consciously or unconsciously), allowing people to adapt to the new insights, gradually and comfortably.

† Commentary No. 1241

The Occult Basis of Beliefs 1

One might wonder how various “fringe” (minority) (non-mainstream) (unconventional) beliefs become so convincing for those who embrace them. A person generally believes something that is self-evident or reinforced through culture, that is, substantiated by the senses, through experience, observation, education, conditioning, etc. Beyond that, a person generally believes something that is either appealing or reasonable or both, through wanting something to be true or by rationalizing its truth, particularly if there are (respected) others who embrace that belief. Beyond that, even, a person believes something because it can be discerned as true, or relatively true, through (enlightened) intuition.

But there is also a psychic or occult basis for beliefs. When a person believes something, that "belief" is actually created on non-physical levels, i.e., in substance on the astral (emotional) and concrete mental planes. If it is a strong belief, with emotional attachment or strong rationalization, then it tends to persist, otherwise it will gradually decay and eventually dissolve. If others believe the same thing or similarly, then that "belief" is reinforced in its psychic basis. Any such "belief" is then available to someone who is susceptible (either non-thinking or thinking along similar lines). In other words, there is a resonance.

This is also the way that paranoia works. Fear strengthens itself through attraction of resonant substance from (mainly) astral and (to some (lesser) extent) concrete mental levels. Whenever a thought-form (belief) is vitalized by emotion (e.g., fear) and/or reinforced through some collective embrace (larger numbers of people), then people who are susceptible to that "energy" are naturally attracted to that belief and its associated peoples (cult). People who are well within the mainstream tend not to be susceptible, which also means that the learning experience (open-mindedness) is generally somewhat inhibited (in the mainstream). But people who are alienated in some way, through pain or suffering, through oppression, through emotional or mental illness, etc., from the mainstream, tend to be more amenable to unconventional beliefs because their psychic basis is different, they are more open to external impression, less conditioned by conventional thinking. This (being asleep on some fringe) is not necessarily any more (or less) healthy than being asleep in the mainstream.

Of course the main problems of beliefs are attachment (wanting to believe something) (feeling secure in "popular" beliefs) and lack of objectivity (lack of ability to discern the truth). So it is hard, even for the trained occultist, to discern the underlying truth from within the framework of his or her own conditioning and psychic environment. And there are so many vitalized (emotionalized or rationalized) thought-forms of various "feelings" and "ideas" that prey on the human personality consciousness. And some are actually quite valuable, e.g., the ideas of sexual equality and racial equality have always been "true" but were not widely embraced until their respective thought-forms became sufficiently vitalized so that sufficient numbers of people could "embrace" them comfortably.

But many of the “ideas” floating about the astral plane have no substantive basis, although each has a genesis. For example, there are many cataclysmic thought-forms that susceptible people can inadvertently embrace, that are based on historical events or imaginary events rather than the intended future. The wave of belief in alien contact, etc., similarly, has a basis in fictional (imaginary) accounts mixed up with the reality of deva lives.

† Commentary No. 1242

The Occult Basis of Beliefs 2

Fictional accounts are actually “real” in the sense that they are created substantially and therefore “exist” on the astral and concrete mental planes, and as people read these accounts, or hear the story or watch the film, the astral-psyche basis is reinforced. In other words, there are aliens on the astral plane, but they are artificial creatures, created and vitalized through (human) thought-forms. And devas are real. But most people cannot discern the difference (and people who happen to believe something that is true are not therefore necessarily intelligent, mature, or insightful, and conversely, people who believe in something false are not therefore necessarily unintelligent, immature, or lacking insight) (the new age movement is almost filled with people who are generally (but not necessarily) gullible, inconsistently insightful, and relatively immature).

The problem is compounded by the fact that if someone believes something, even tentatively, then from that point onward there is a tendency to semi-consciously or unconsciously interpret experience and observation in a way that reinforces the belief. Coincidences tend to be over-interpreted, etc. Observations are distorted. That which does not support the belief is conveniently (unconsciously) discounted or ignored. This “halo” effect (and its opposite) or bias is really quite widespread. For example, people who are generally predisposed to see other people as fundamentally “good” will have their beliefs reinforced through experience, and are more likely to be not disappointed in others, while people who are predisposed to be pessimistic will similarly have much of their expectations fulfilled. Bias is inherently and creatively self-fulfilling.

Another problem is that of promotional ideas (e.g., advertising, preaching). Sometimes a company may create a market for its product through advertising, or manipulating the mass thought-form such that people perceive the need or desire for something that they would otherwise not have needed or desired. The promotion (promulgation) of religious or political beliefs (values) can follow the same pattern. Most people are emotionally-polarized and simply do not (much) think for themselves (even while believing that they are thinking for themselves), and so can relatively easily be manipulated into believing something or buying something or embracing some practice or behavior.

This is fundamentally a problem of ethics, and the proper occultist is very averse to engaging in any form of advertising or promotion and (somewhat) averse even to the atmosphere created by advertising or promotion. The proper occultist (spiritual student with sufficient and proper training) is mentally or intuitively polarized, has learned to transcend much of his or her conditioning, and is simply not (very) susceptible to external (artificial) forces (thought-forms).

The solution of course is the cultivation of discernment and objectivity through non-attachment. If one is committed to discerning the truth, and refuses to have opinions, then it becomes progressively easier to see what is real and what is not real. But becoming free from the conditioning of mainstream or conventional "thinking" is not an easy undertaking. There is tremendous inertia in the form of mass (collective) thought-forms. And "waking-up" also constitutes a form of separation from the collective (lower) consciousness, and conveys difficulties in its own right. But there is a thought-form of "waking-up" that conveys a gentle encouragement to those who are susceptible, and it is necessarily growing.

Neo-Christianity

The scope of the Christian faith is considerable, from the traditional mystical dimension to the conventional scope of liberal-moderate-conservative Christianity, to neo-Christianity. Neo-Christianity is actually much closer in scope and content to the traditional mystical dimension (which conventional Christianity seems necessarily to neglect, as conventional religion tends to be focused on cultural needs rather than real union), which means that it is also much closer in scope to the mystical dimension of all the world's great religions.

In a sense, then, neo-Christianity is the mystical tradition, that underlying (more real) Christianity that embraces the inner essence of all those religions, where differences between religions are realized to be merely and actually quite superficial. Neo-Christianity is free from dogma, and free from doctrine. There is nothing to prove. Nothing to impose. There is simply an appreciation for the spiritual path in its pragmatic mystical sense, i.e., the ways and means of achieving communion with God-Christ. As Christ is appreciated as the universal aspect of consciousness, then neo-Christianity is equivalent to neo-Hinduism, neo-Buddhism, etc. In fact, the word "Christ" is not at all essential. What is essential is the realization of that universal aspect of consciousness, the existence of the God-within, by whatever name it is apprehended.

The neo-Christian sees "Christ" as living within all human beings, regardless of their various cultural and racial and religious diversities. The neo-Christian sees "Christ" as living within all lives, human and otherwise. The neo-Christian sees "Christ" in all things, whether alive in the conventional sense or otherwise. For Christ is the essence through which all lives and all things are ultimately and irrevocably linked. Christ is the bridge between matter and spirit. Thus the spiritual path in all religious traditions requires the student to seek union with that God-Christ-soul within, for it is only in embracing that inner God-Self that one can achieve union (communion) and transcend this earthly (worldly) (personality-centered) existence (illusion) (delusion of the senses) (delusion of self-centeredness).

While the outer characteristics of the various religions may be different, while the cultural adaptations and superstitions may differ, the core of each of the world's religions is the same. The God-Self. Even the (essential) process, the methodology of transcendence, of the Buddhist, the Christian, the Hindu, the Muslim, the Taoist, etc., is ultimately the same, regardless of nomenclature or framework. Purifying the outer self. Embracing honesty and harmlessness. Turning within. Embracing the silence. Evoking the higher Self. Allowing the Heart to unfold.

In this sense, the conventional Christian churches may be closer to the mark than the various metaphysical (new age) (more open-minded) churches, where the emphasis tends to be on self-development (personality-centeredness) (self-centeredness) (self-indulgence) (self-esteem) rather than the qualities needed for transcendence (e.g., humility). Clearly they all encourage the development and expression of many needed values, but more so in the outer, cultural sense, than in the more essential, inner sense. Thus the mystical path, the path of neo-Christianity, depends not on the church, or even the fellowship of the church, though these can serve as encouragement (or distraction). Yet the church (conventional or more metaphysical) can serve nonetheless as a meaningful context for inner work.

† Commentary No. 1244

Evolutionary Tendencies

The field of human endeavor, of human experience and expression, is a dynamic confluence of evolutionary and counter-evolutionary energies and forces, evoking a wide range of influences, opportunities, limitations, and tendencies (karma). The balance of forces serves to encourage (ensure) evolution in consciousness, but the contrast and diversity of evolutionary and counter-evolutionary forces allows individual and collective opportunities according to individual and collective needs (karma).

Given the diversity (dynamic range) of human consciousness, a particular energy (force) (influence) (opportunity) (tendency) may be evolutionary for one person yet counter-evolutionary for another (all are ultimately evolutionary). For example, focus (reliance) upon intellectual endeavor (development and

expression) may be (is) evolutionary for most people (who are in the process of transcending immersion in the outer senses), yet counter-evolutionary (regressive) for those who have completed the phase of intellectual development and need to transcend the tendency to rely on the mind (intellect) (reasoning) (needing to learn to rely on the (higher) intuition (in the inner, higher, deeper sense). For each there is a place on the path, and each place evokes some peculiar needs.

Implied in this field of human endeavor is the dharma of the spiritual student, which includes commitment to conscious evolution, to embracing evolutionary forces, to not being aligned with or entangled in counter-evolutionary forces. Thus the spiritual student embraces a spiritual discipline (principles) (values) that is (are) evolutionary and not counter-evolutionary, according to the ability of the student to discern between evolutionary and counter-evolutionary forces (habits) (tendencies). As a student is exposed to that which facilitates evolution in consciousness, to the extent that that student understands that, he (she) is expected to embrace that which facilitates, and not embrace that which is non-facilitative. It is ever a matter of choosing (more properly, in not needing to choose, but simply to discern what is needed).

But most people are entangled in personal and worldly forces, in personal and worldly experience, personality development, ego, etc., which is "evolutionary" only in the sense of gradual evolution in consciousness, where real progress occurs during purgatory (not in real or near-real time), as the experience of a lifetime is retrospectively assimilated. However, conscious (deliberate) evolution requires that the student become less and less entangled in personal and worldly experience and less concerned with personal (personality) development. It also requires that "experience" be assimilated primarily in real time or near-real time rather than primarily retrospectively. Thus anything that distracts the focus of consciousness from inner realization is (for the spiritual student) counter-evolutionary. Yet it is that contrast (with counter-evolutionary forces) that affords the opportunity to discern the way onward and upward.

This does not mean that a student neglects worldly obligations and responsibilities, but it does mean that while those worldly obligations and responsibilities are met, they are met in such a way that the student remains

awake (unentangled) to as large an extent as possible. The result is a balance or equilibrium in various forces, with a fundamental focus in consciousness (being) rather than in having or doing, i.e., rather than being entangled in personal and worldly (materialistic, egoistic) endeavor.

† Commentary No. 1245

Sexual Relations

For human beings in incarnation, sexual relations cover a fairly wide range of sensual and sexual experience and expression, with various import, from the level of the primitive (human) animal to the basic (ordinary) human, to beyond the ordinary (human) levels.

At the level of the human animal there are instinctive (almost involuntary) sexual urges based on the underlying animal qualification (procreation). At the basic human level there is a range from sexual experience and expression based on self-centered pleasure (sensual (sexual) gratification) and/or conscious procreation to an expression of love through pleasure and mutual sexual fulfillment. Beyond these relatively superficial (sensual) levels there is also the possibility of real intimacy and partnership (bonding), with or without physical intercourse, based on the underlying metaphysical reality (real relationship).

It is inherently a matter of consciousness. Sexual relations (propensities) are generally a reflection of consciousness. Those who are physically-polarized are operating predominantly at the level of the (primitive) human animal. For the emotionally-polarized, there is both an animal and a human dimension, and a range of quality of consciousness, from being self-centered and self-absorbed to being relatively selfless (albeit with emotional propensity). For the mentally-polarized there is the possibility of detachment and sexual relations are generally a matter of balance. A head-centered approach is more detached, less intimate. A heart-centered approach is much more effective, with the possibility of real connection. Those who are intuitively-polarized are naturally heart-centered (without losing any emotional or mental abilities). The proper sexual relationship (for the spiritual student) would seem to be wholly uncontrived and a matter of committed partnership.

There is also a not inconsiderable dilemma for some spiritual students, as most people are not naturally celibate, and sexual relations become much more profound at the (higher) spiritual levels (not with regard to sensual experience and expression, but with regard to real (multi-dimensional) (etheric, emotional, mental, spiritual, and telepathic) intimacy). For the spiritual student there are considerable advantages to being celibate, provided it is a natural consequence and not merely self-imposed. Yet there are also considerable advantages to being not celibate, provided there is a committed partnership and provided that partnership is in the context of the spiritual path (spiritual growth and spiritual service) and not merely a matter of sensual experience and expression. There is nothing inherently wrong with sensual (sexual) experience and expression, but the spiritual student needs to be, at some level, relatively free from entanglement in the senses.

In the highest sense, a man and a woman who are properly partnered in the context of the path, i.e., who form a properly qualified and coherent marriage aura, also form (evoke) a creative (gentle) magnetic vortex that facilitates spiritual growth and spiritual service. In such a context, sexual relations are much more subtle and much more meaningful. There is a balancing of energy. There is coherence. There is a sharing of energy that extends beyond the marriage aura. One can achieve some of this without a proper partnership, but there is some consolation (broader safety) in proper partnership. Ultimately, there is meaningful (subtle) sexual relationship even without physical contact, once the connection (partnership) is achieved and once that connection is properly qualified.

The Guild Concept 1

A guild is defined conventionally and historically as “an association of people with kindred pursuits or common interests or aims” and especially as “a medieval association of merchants or craftsmen.” Traditionally guilds arise according to needs and tend to serve the common interests not only of the guild members but also of the community in which the guild is established.

Modern-era labor unions are very distantly related to medieval guilds, where in unions the emphasis is upon the common interests of union members, generally at the expense of others. The fundamental problem of labor unions is the lack of broader context, the pursuit of self-interest without fully appreciating the needs of the community (locally, regionally, nationally, and globally). Labor unions emerged in the first place as a means to address real problems (e.g., abuse of employees), but in many ways have outlived their usefulness and have become and remain more separative and less broadly inclusive than effective. Guilds, properly inspired and properly administered, with full appreciation for the broader context, transcend these limitations and have the potential for leading humanity into an entirely different way of doing business in the world, based on collaboration and a broad sense of what is good for the whole without allowing self-interest or relatively narrow interests to prevail.

In the guild concept, all employment is a matter of guild membership and guild management. Every proper vocation is administered through an associated guild. Each person receives a basic education. Each person then joins a guild based on personal interests and qualifications. The guild provides additional training and specialization (development of skills and refinement of talent) according to the member’s needs (interests) and perceived demand for those skills and talent. The member is paid by the guild. The guild contracts with employers to provide qualified workers. The guild administers performance evaluation and manages the careers of its members. The whole system is based primarily upon merit, secondarily upon needs of members and demands for services. Where individual needs change, requests are made of the guild and the process of change is managed collaboratively between the individual and the guild. Where employer needs change, then reassignment and/or retraining is

also a guild function in collaboration with the affected members and employer(s).

In the guild concept, guilds necessarily collaborate with each other. Instead of defending their own (merely apparent) guild interests, guild leaders (senior, more experienced, more qualified representatives) work together to anticipate changing needs and balance the workforce in terms of skills and placement. Thus new guilds emerge according to needs. And (some) old guilds are dissolved or transformed due to changing needs. To facilitate changes, members are allowed to qualify for and belong to more than one guild, although administratively there is a primary and (potentially) one or more secondary memberships.

In every instance the guild (or association of guilds) manages the balancing of individual needs and interests, guild needs and interests, and employer needs and interests. Of course in this guild concept (context), companies and organizations (and even government units) are all "owned" by guilds or associations of guilds (i.e., this is a guild-centered framework). Governments and companies and other organizations contract with guilds for (guild) employees to provide services, but the government (company) (organization) officials (representatives) who contract with guilds are themselves guild members, employed in their respective capacities.

† Commentary No. 1247

The Guild Concept 2

In other words (in the guild concept), there are senior management guilds where the qualifications include both management and whatever particular application skills are needed (e.g., a hospital administrator would have both senior management training and skills (and experience) as well as expertise in the specific field of hospital administration). To be placed in such a position, he or she would have to qualify in both guild arenas. The whole process of individual training, qualification, assignment, performance (service), advancement, career broadening, occasional reassignment, and retirement would be managed within the system.

In the guild concept, essentially all vocations and all services are within the guild system. Including health care, education, government, recreation, religion, retirement, and vocation) (government is seen as in effect a guild of guilds (guilds being inherently functionally hierarchical as well as adaptive)). Because the guild system is in the highest sense a collective of interdependent guilds relating to each other through respect and consideration for the common good. The guild system tends to promote merit-based outcomes and temper (and eventually eliminate) abuses of capital (e.g., greed (unnecessary accumulation of wealth), wide disparities in income, profit motives). In principle, it also promotes egalitarian values.

But all this requires eventual close coupling of the various dimensions of human society, while simultaneously preserving considerable individual freedom for growth and expression. Indeed, cultural and other diversities can be protected, even nurtured, without diversity being separative. Each individual is seen to contribute directly and indirectly to the whole. And the whole is seen to contribute directly and indirectly the individual. The guild system tends to reduce and eventually eliminate various artificial boundaries, e.g., nation-states. And the guild system tends to eliminate artificial (self-serving) competition. Challenges would remain, but the process of meeting challenges would be managed inherently constructively.

The guild concept is a substantial advance beyond some combination of democratic principles and socialism. Properly administered, guilds evoke a proper balance between individual needs and interests and the needs and interests of the whole. But of course the implementation and effectiveness of a guild system is only as good as the quality of consciousness embraced by those who lead such an effort (and the quality of consciousness of the whole). Thus while the guild system might seem to be unreasonably idealistic, on the whole, with consideration for the resolution of details, holistic “thinking” can (and will eventually) evoke (produce) a pragmatic, effective, and worthwhile system.

The time for guilds in this higher (non-traditional) sense has not yet arrived, for humanity has not matured sufficiently to embrace the guild concept without evoking and involving the ego. And guilds cannot serve the intended purpose unless the people who lead and manage them truly serve the higher purposes,

relatively altruistically and non-egoistically (this human limitation is the fundamental limitation of past and current human “systems”). Thus the guild system requires a substantive advance in overall consciousness. But the guild system is an aspect of the Bermuda Protocol, and the various bridges in consciousness that are needed will eventually emerge. Details (and detailed understanding) are (is) not important; indeed, would be preclusive, as evolution (individual and collective) is not contrived. It is merely sensed. And those who sense merely facilitate.

† Commentary No. 1248

Diversity and Human Value

The human race has very considerable diversity (dynamic range). There is a tremendous range and diversity in consciousness, experience, opportunities, etc. Some (relatively few) people are physically-polarized, some (most) are emotionally-polarized, some (few) are mentally-polarized, and some (very few) are intuitively-polarized. People tend to evolve at different rates and in different ways, so people are experienced and able to express themselves in different measures and in very different ways. And there is a tremendous range in cultural, individual, national, racial, and religious depth (character) and diversity as well. Although all is determined by (individual and collective) karma, that karmic embrace also has considerable dynamic range. The karmic field is relatively complex.

Thus there are many dimensions to this diversity. And yet, fundamentally, each human being has the same value. Each person is an individual within a group (collective) context and each contributes according to his or her (relative illusion of) individualness (individuality). Each human being contributes to the whole. The problem is that people contribute in different ways according to their consciousness, experience, opportunities, etc., and much of that contribution is more subjective (less apparent to the worldly senses) than objectively realized and appreciated. If one looks at this superficially then there are many inequities and some people (seem to) contribute in (perceived to be) relatively more important ways than others. But if one looks at this in the deeper sense, then the subjective and less obvious contributions are no less

important, no less significant (and the whole effort of valuation is transcended in realization of collectiveness).

The problem is that people perceive things and value things according to their own consciousness (without generally realizing that they are doing so (and therefore without realizing that they are biasing their perception)). And the prevailing consciousness is predominantly based on material, sensational, and ego (superficial) values. Money (wealth) (power) (fame and fortune) is (are) inherently artificial as indicative of value (accomplishment). These are artificial measures but very much part of the (conventional) worldly system. But as consciousness grows and matures, so do the values through which people perceive themselves and their surroundings (societal context). And the various financial (and other) inequities are recognized as artificial (artifacts of materialism and egoism).

Eventually these barriers are gradually removed and the "system" of incentives (based on material and ego values) is replaced by one of more collective value, of people more consciously contributing to society (culture) (human welfare), without regard for measuring that contribution in material or ego terms. If the artificial barriers are removed, if the sense of value is broadened and deepened to embrace the more subjective factors (metaphysical import), then the resulting "system" is necessarily more equitable.

This is not to say that the current system is without value, just that it corresponds to a "phase" of evolutionary experience and expression that must eventually be transcended and replaced with something more conducive to the consciousness (and values) of the next (less materialistic, less egoistic, more spiritual) phase. The current emerging awareness of the value of diversity, provided that individuality is not seen as an end in itself, and provided that diversity is not seen as an end in itself, is really quite constructive (evolutionary).

The Quest for Truth

The quest for truth has exemplified the evolution of human consciousness from the very beginning, from the point where a person ceases to be (merely) an animal (merely inhabiting an animal body but wholly immersed in animal consciousness) and becomes (nominally) self-conscious (and therefore human) (still inhabiting an animal body, and even identifying with it, but with growing awareness of humanness).

The quest is underlying and overshadowing. All of the field of consciousness (and all of the field of human endeavor (experience and expression)), at material levels and above, is conditioned by evolutionary forces (purpose). As one evolves casually (gradually) (not consciously or deliberately) one eventually becomes aware of the inherent need to learn, the need to understand, to place life (experience) in some context, and eventually to glean (realize) the meaning of life. There are many guideposts along the way, much in the way of encouragement, and much in the way of challenges in consciousness.

The quest is an adventure, at first where a person more or less unconsciously embraces experience and learns from practical necessity, subsequently (gradually more and more) a matter of more conscious pursuit of knowledge (outer truth) (and the perceived benefits of knowledge), and eventually a matter of self-realization (embracing the truth within) (passing beyond seeking) (embracing true self-consciousness). The quest is a process of experience, assimilation, expression, and unfolding. At first there are unconscious and unrecognized motives, then more conscious, deliberate (self-serving) motives, and finally simply an embracing of the process as an end in itself.

But there are many barriers, distractions, entanglements, hindrances, pitfalls, and stumbling-blocks along the way, not the least of which is the grand illusion (of the substantiality (perceived reality) of the human being as an individual and the substantiality (perceived reality) of the (external) material world). The conditioning effect of the grand illusion, of one being so immersed in material and egoistic existence that one cannot see the underlying reality, is a quite formidable barrier. A person (the mind) tends to be attached to the (apparent)

reality of things that one (it) can see and feel in the outer world, and so realization tends to dawn (emerge) rather gradually. Learning to see beyond the senses, to discern the underlying reality (even to recognize the possibility of an underlying but non-outer-sensual reality) is very difficult. The mind is a great tool, but also a great dynamic-yet-inertial impediment. But somehow there is learning, and growth, and gradual realization of deeper things.

After one passes beyond the obvious, beyond what is merely apparent to the senses, to what is not so apparent, it is like peeling an onion. There are layers and layers of relative truth. Each layer embraced offers new insights as well as new perplexes. The student learns to not be attached to (necessarily relative) truth as it is known or understood, but to remain open to deeper, more inclusive truths for which the preliminaries are merely (ever) superficial. If one holds on to some (perceived) truth, then that holding on is preclusive. But as one learns to navigate along the way, to embrace the journey without attachments, then indeed is more obvious progress achieved. At least until one passes into that realm of non-progress, where one progresses through not-striving and not-seeking.

† Commentary No. 1250

Quiescence

Quiescence is defined as the quality or state of being quiet, at rest, and refers (metaphysically) primarily to the mind. Quiescence in this sense is not a passive state, nor is it an active state, but is a non-active state. The intent of quiescence is progressive disentanglement and awakening leading to self-realization.

Almost everyone in the world is entangled in the world, entangled in sense perceptions, entangled to some extent in materialism and egoism, and/or entangled in thinking, such that there is no (real) awareness of greater truth. People identify with their bodies, with their emotions, with their thinking, such that the reality of who they are is simply not apparent to them. Being entangled in the world is a necessary phase of experience and expression, and leads gradually to assimilation of that experience and growth in consciousness, but ultimately, being entangled in the world precludes growing beyond the worldly

experience. The spiritual student begins to realize this and embarks upon the journey of self-mastery leading to liberation and service, by gradually becoming disentangled.

The body, the emotions, and the mind are instruments of attachment and entanglement (immersion in worldly (predominantly self-centered) experience). These instruments are necessary to intended experience and expression in the lower worlds, and necessary to evolution in consciousness at this level, and should therefore be properly cultivated and cared for. But as the student progresses, these instruments must be tempered and brought under control and not allowed to function independently. They should be respected as instruments and tempered (refined) for greater usefulness, but the student should not identify with them.

Most people are emotionally-polarized and entangled in their senses. The mind can be utilized to temper the emotions, through meditation, so that a person eventually becomes mentally-polarized, but the mind cannot be utilized to temper itself. And so bringing the mind to quiescence is necessary in order to go beyond the mind. But the mind has two natural states, and most people (unconsciously) engage the mind in the lower sense (lower natural state) (monkey mind). The (monkey) mind naturally forms attachments and naturally (actively) embraces experience in consciousness. But the human being is not the mind. And while the experience at the personality level is useful for most people, and while the mind is an important part of that experience, (conscious or unconscious) identification with the mind and with thinking is (ultimately) a great hindrance.

Bringing the mind to quiescence is a very considerable challenge. There are many prerequisites (self-discipline in various levels), without which the effort is daunting and ultimately not possible. But where the (preliminary) work is accomplished, and where the will and determination to achieve quiescence is sufficient, then it becomes a matter of allowing the mind to rest in its (higher) natural state. The mind cannot do this work. The student must "operate" from a higher place, through meditation, so that the mind is not engaged in any conventional sense. In quiescence (proper) the mind simply reflects (clearly) whatever is evoked from higher levels, without filtering or interpreting or biasing the process. In quiescence the mind is simply there, at a point of

tension, neither active nor passive. In quiescence, the connection between lower self (personality) and higher self (soul) is unimpeded, and the higher senses (intuition) flow(s) naturally.

† Commentary No. 1251

Progressive Revelation

One of the many dimensions of religion is that of progressive revelation, (1) in the sense of the process through which the bulk of humanity are exposed to deeper and broader truths and (2) in the sense of the process through which individual seekers realize deeper and broader truths.

Progressive revelation is essentially a matter of progressive self-realization, as the student (seeker) searches for truth and finds the truth that he or she is able to realize and embrace. For most people, truth is a matter of what is taught rather than what is realized. For some people it is a matter of experience and reasoning. And for some (rather few) it is a matter of intuitive insight (mystical experience) (true revelation). As the student grows in the capacity for realization, so does the understanding grow. But this process is limited substantially by conditioning, by what the student has been taught, i.e., by whatever the conventional beliefs and cultural-religious conditioning may be. In addition to conditioning, the process of revelation is limited by the illusions of material existence and the various unconscious assumptions that are made with regard to life in the lower worlds.

Progressive revelation in the sense of the bulk of humanity generally follows far behind that which is realized and embraced by the spiritual students of the world. Most people are comfortable in their materialism and egoism and therefore are not really responsive to insight that is not consistent with what they want to believe. So the masses move slowly in consciousness as the various revelatory thought-forms grow, from individual insights, to broader and broader acceptance by the masses. In the early stages of religion there are religious leaders who "authoritatively" proclaim the truth and impose that truth upon any (most) who are susceptible. This is not bad, for it is what most people generally need and what most people can generally comprehend. But as the race as a whole evolves in consciousness, as people are able to think more clearly for

themselves, it becomes more a matter of individual thinking conditioned by mass consciousness rather than being merely externalized imposed upon. But eventually one breaks free from the mass thought-form and begins to listen to the inner voice rather than relying on the mind (reasoning). And it is this inner voice that actually provides revelation, however effectively it may be sensed and interpreted (or misinterpreted).

But people tend to evolve in consciousness in different ways and at different rates. Consequently, there is a relative diversity of religious teaching, according to the needs of the people and their capacities for understanding. Thus religion (and progressive revelation) tends to have richness in diversity, and each contributes ultimately to the progress of the race as a whole. And the contrast between various religious expressions, e.g., between various conservative (narrow) (unbalanced), fundamental (narrow) (reactive), moderate (balanced), and liberal (unfocused) (unbalanced) expressions, between external (artificial) and internal (real) authorities, and between eastern and western notions of religion (equally valid, but contributing in substantially different ways), provides depth and breadth to the process.

There is also an ebb and flow of progressive revelation in the sense that there are cycles, times in which people are more receptive and responsive to insight and times in which people are relatively more absorbed in materialism (egoism) and therefore less receptive and responsive. The seven rays cycle through the world, conditioning according to their respective natures, with the sixth ray (religion, idealism) ebbing and flowing in various ways.

Holy Orders

In principle, each particular religion contains a meaningful spectrum of expression of religious and spiritual insight and practice, with various religious-spiritual (holy) orders (some in the form of metaphysical-occult schools) emerging within each religion to serve various needs (e.g., the advanced training of spiritual students within the context of particular religion, and with some particular emphasis or focus). Holy orders in turn provide subjective leadership within their respective religions, encouraging the deepening in consciousness and progressive realization of adherents and in some broader sense of non-members (depending on the place of the holy order within the religion). In this sense, a holy order is an order of religious-spiritual adherents, typically ordained in some formal manner, devoted to service to God (and humanity).

Holy orders within a religion tend to work relatively more openly, teaching and encouraging objectively (through activities (service)) as well as subjectively (through prayer and meditation). Holy orders in this sense (of being sanctioned within some religion) are limited only to the extent of the religious context (boundaries of the respective religion) and to the extent of the wisdom (quality (consciousness) (integrity)) of the leaders of the order). Members of holy orders tend to be more properly connected to the source of energy and inspiration, although individual self-realization is not precluded (indeed, the whole (human race) is moving more toward individual self-realization (which of course is not really individual but in some higher group context rather than in some outer group context).

Holy orders are "holy" in the sense that their leaders are ordained (sanctioned) in some higher sense, not holy in any sense of perfection or Godliness. Thus in this sense, holy means sincerely and devotedly religious and spiritual, with consideration for the various limitations of being human. The religious adherent strives toward holiness (religious and/or spiritual perfection) as it is understood, but generally never actually becomes holy. The value (growth, deepening, realization) is in the process rather than in achievement (one is never actually really finished with evolution).

Holy orders generally emphasize the religious-spiritual dimension (context), but there are analogous “orders” in other areas of human endeavor, e.g., theosophical orders which are not religious (sixth ray) per se but are nonetheless spiritual (inspired and subjectively inspiring) (in principle). Thus “religion” in the higher sense is very much broader than its formal (worldly) boundaries, and simply devoted to God, truth, self-realization, and service to God and humanity.

There are also various more subtle, non-denominational (holy) orders, schools of spiritual students where some (many) (most) (all) religions are represented, where the common mystical core of truth is realized and embraced by all adherents, to the extent to which they are capable. While most religious orders are specific to some particular religion and are manifested objectively as well as subjectively, the various (relatively few) non-denominational orders tend to be manifested predominantly subjectively, linking effectively between the various races and nations and religions and cultures, in consciousness, rather than openly. In other words, the objective orders (tend to) function at the personality level, with some measure of devotion and inspiration, while the subjective orders (tend to) function at the soul level, with some quite substantial measure of devotion and inspiration.

† Commentary No. 1253

Ordination

Ordination (ordainment) is defined as the process of being ordained, or invested with ministerial or priestly or sacerdotal or spiritual authority. In principle, one can only be ordained by one who is ordained, and consequently (in principle) there is a continuity (of authoritative presence) from the ancient of times to the present. Many religious traditions, both eastern and western, embrace and to some extent rely upon ordination. But there is also a matter of natural ordination.

In principle ordination conveys spiritual authority in some religious or spiritual context. The basis of ordination rests with the overshadowing (indwelling) divine presence that is contacted (in principle) during the (ceremonial (and inner)) process of ordination, and which then remains to qualify or sanction the

activities (rites) conducted by one who is (so) ordained. Thus one who is (properly) ordained can consciously (and even unconsciously) draw upon that overshadowing (indwelling) energy to qualify whatever noble activities (ceremonies) (sanctions) are undertaken. If one who is ordained is actually conscious of the process, and is actually consciously embracing that (higher) energy, then considerable (noble) energies can be evoked. But even if one is not fully conscious, and even if one is not consciously embracing the higher energy, if one is ordained, then there will still be some evocation of higher energy. Being conscious, being enlightened, simply makes the process much more effective.

But the formal process of ordination, under (within) some auspices, should only be conducted where the candidate is indeed well-qualified, meaning somewhat (substantially) refined, somewhat more-fully conscious, sincerely motivated, properly trained, etc. A religion that allows unqualified ordination risks considerable reduction in the potency and effectiveness of the (ordained) priesthood. In short, it leads to promulgation of lack of qualification. It leads to higher power and truth being replaced by personal (ego-based) power and lack of truth. But where ordination is fully qualified, there remains a core of enlightened leadership and expression.

But formal ordination is not actually required for the spiritual student or lay mystic. In seeking (and in finding) the mystical core within himself (herself) the spiritual student is able to achieve effective self-ordination. In touching the soul and evoking the energy of the soul, one is engulfed in higher energy and that naturally qualifies all of the activities of the student. But this cannot occur if the student is not properly qualified and trained, if the consciousness is not sufficiently refined, if the personality (ego) (intellect) is not sufficiently tempered and transcended. Thus self-ordination (natural ordination) is necessarily qualified, while formal ordination may or may not be qualified.

Self-ordination is actually not a matter of the student seeking ordination, for it is not the lower self (personality) that evokes natural ordination, but it is rather the soul itself that determines (finds) the quality of the lower self to be sufficiently refined and receptive. The same is true for commitment to the spiritual path; it is not a matter of the student seeking, but rather a matter of the soul evoking a response on the part of the (qualified) student. Self-ordination generally follows that commitment, as the student matures and

progresses toward self-realization. The more refined the student, the more qualified the student, the more power (energy) (spiritual force) is naturally evoked and expressed (shared).

† Commentary No. 1254

Shinto 1

Shinto is the ancient native religion and indigenous tradition of Japan, the way of the gods, and the poetic reality of the senses. As a religion, Shinto is relatively diverse and means various things to various peoples at various times. Historically, Shinto would seem to be strongly related to Buddhism, with substantial influences from Taoism and Confucianism. There are also elements of yin-yang, folk religion, and naturalism. And for a while Shinto was also the official (national) religion of Japan.

There are a number of Shinto scriptures, none of which are considered "revealed" scripture but have considerable value nonetheless, e.g., Kokiji (Record of Ancient Things), Nikong (Chronicles of Japan), Yengishiki (Institutes of the Period of Yengi), and Collections of Ten Thousand Leaves. There are approximately 30 million Shinto adherents, mostly in Japan. Many adherents are also Buddhists. Japan (nippon) is the "land of the rising sun" and of course objectively the sun is the source of energy for the whole world and subjectively the inner source as well. There is some emphasis on the sun, e.g., himachi (awaiting for the sun, a tradition of remaining awake all night on certain nights, in ritual devotion).

As a word, Shinto means "gods" or "spirits" in the sense of the way (conduct) (power) of the kami. Kami refers to the underlying energy of something, the sacred, spiritual, living quality of beings and places and things. This underlying sense predates Buddhism and has survived the Buddhist influence, indeed has contributed to Buddhism. Shinto is also sometimes perceived as shen-tao and relates to the way in the same sense of Tao. But more objectively Shinto embraces the concept of kami. In the tradition of Shinto, kami is all and all is kami. Kami is God; kami is the underlying power of creation and sustenance. Kami is life, cause and effect, and oneness. "Space and time, spacelessness and timelessness, all is kami."

Some people think that Shinto is pantheistic, as adherents tend to perceive “gods” almost everywhere, in people, animals, plants, even places. But it is probably more correct to say that Shinto is not pantheistic, and that “kami” is simply the sacredness of all lives and all things. But Shinto does tend to be ritualistic, involving many and various rites, festivals, and shrines. And yet there is little in the way of religious doctrine, theology, or congregational worship. It is a religion of personal practice and practical significance. Some people think that Shinto involves the worship of particular trees, rocks, mountains, and other objects, but it is probably more correct to say that Shinto involves the worship of the (one) sacredness that connects all things and is perceived (particularly) in particular places and things. There is no need for reason, there is simply a flow of kami.

Like most religions, there is a “higher” Shinto and a “lower” Shinto, though most “adherents” would not perceive it in these terms. In the lower sense, there is some emphasis on amulets and ritual celebrations and personal evocations, e.g., for safety and good fortune. In the higher sense, there is simply an embrace (acknowledgement) of the “kami” (the sacredness of God-in-all). While “nature” is important in Shinto, along with purity, sincerity, and tranquillity, it is really the underlying sacredness that matters. The real value of Shinto festivals and rituals is the assimilation of the gods, i.e., the embracing of sacredness in daily life. Shrines are (perceived as) gateways that facilitate that assimilation (embrace). The central role of the sun (God) is to unify all of the manifestations of kami.

Shinto 2

Shinto has three main divisions, (1) state Shinto and (2) domestic Shinto, and (3) sect Shinto, but these are not in any real sense mutually-exclusive. State Shinto simply celebrates or embraces kami in a more nationalistic sense and at times has received funding from the Japanese government. Domestic Shinto simply emphasizes kami in its more personal, private sense, and usually involves a shrine and rituals within one's home.

In sect Shinto there are numerous sects including thirteen ancient sects, each with its own founder, which have obtained relatively more official status. According to *The World's Living Religions*, there are five groups of Shinto sects, (1) three pure Shinto sects, (2) two Confucian sects, (3) three mountain sects, (4) two purification sects, and (5) three faith-healing sects. Each contributes substantially to Shinto as a whole. The pure Shinto sects are Shinto Kyo (Shinto Sect), Shinri Kyo (Divine Reason Sect), and Taishu Kyo (Great Shrine Sect). The Confucian sects are Shusei Ha (Improving and Consolidating Branch) and Taisei Kyo (Great Achievement Sect). The mountain sects are Jikko Kyo (Practical Conduct Sect), Fuso Kyo (Sacred Guardian Sect), and Ontake Kyo (Great Mountain Sect). The purification sects are Shinshu Kyo (Divine Learning Sect) and Misogi Kyo (Purification Sect). The faith-healing sects are Kurozumi Kyo, Konko Kyo (Glorious Unity Sect), and Tenri Kyo.

In the higher sense, Shinto is a very mystical religion, with emphasis on the sacredness of the universe and the process (facilitation) of the adherent's attunement to that sacredness, embracing the presence of the gods (God) and the flow of (sacred) (natural) energy. The process of attunement (communion) involves truthfulness and purification (refinement) such that a person's material nature can be overcome or transcended and the inherent divine nature revealed. Thus much of the ritual of Shinto involves honoring the presence of God. And because (where) Shinto is also embraced in the practical sense, the more common divisions of worldly and spiritual are not so much in evidence.

There are many and various Shinto concepts and notions with broader spiritual (not merely religious) value (see *A Popular Dictionary of Shinto*). Akaki suggests purity and cheerfulness of heart. Junrei suggests religious pilgrimage. Kakuriyo suggests the hidden world of kami and spirits. Kami-gakari suggests the descent of the kami, or the inspiration-revelation of inner spirit. Kami-mukae suggests the evocation of the kami. Kigan suggests prayer or supplication. Kotodama suggests "spirits residing in words" or words having mantric value (words embodying spiritual power). Majinai suggests magic. Makoto suggests true-heartedness (sincerity) (wholeheartedness) (conscientiousness) (loyalty). Misogi-harai suggests the process of purification and spiritual discipline.

O-kiyome suggests spiritual healing and more abstract purification. Sankei suggests pilgrimage (visiting a shrine). Seimei suggests purity and brightness (cheerfulness of heart). Sengu suggests the transference of kami from one shrine to another (i.e., qualification). Shinbatsu suggests (bad) karma (i.e., perceived (improperly) as divine retribution). Shin'en suggests a sacred garden or precincts of a shrine. Shingaku suggests heart-learning. Shinmei suggests sacred brightness (kami). Shintoku suggests divine virtue or the influence (benefits) of kami. Shojiki suggests honesty (uprightness) (veracity) (frankness). Shojin suggests diligence (devotion) (making spiritual progress). Shusin suggests ethics. Tsumi suggests pollution (sin) (destructive action). And tsutsushimi suggests an attitude of propriety.

† Commentary No. 1256

Religious Tolerance

One of the common characteristics of a relatively primitive (ego-based) (personality-centered) (exclusive) (separative) religion is intolerance of other religions or belief systems or practices by other people that are inconsistent with that (primitive) religion. And, conversely, one of the characteristics of an "advanced" religion is its encouragement of expression of respect and appreciation (more than tolerance) for other religions.

Religious intolerance (and intolerance in general) is often based in fear and insecurity. Some people feel threatened by beliefs and practices that they do not

understand, and/or which appear to be in conflict with their own, and/or which cause them to wonder about the validity of their own beliefs. Intolerance is a form of closed-mindedness to truth. It does not mean necessarily that others' beliefs are more true or valid, just that with open-mindedness there is consideration for the possibility of learning from others, of growing or deepening in one's own beliefs and understanding. Some people (unconsciously) believe that their beliefs are validated by numbers of people who share those beliefs. But truth is not a democratic principle. Something is not true because a majority of people believe it. Or false because only a few believe it. But with maturity (growth in consciousness) people become more reasonable, less insecure in their beliefs (without being self-righteous), and more open to learning from others.

Religious intolerance is also sometimes based in personality-centeredness (personal power (personal insecurity)) (national or ethnic pride (national or ethnic insecurity)). Sometimes a religious context is used (deliberately or otherwise) to express personal power. It is usually ego-based and the (egoistic) person lacks awareness of that. Thus personal power, egoism, and religious intolerance often go together along with sincerity. Also there is sometimes historical conditioning, e.g., unconscious memory of (past) religious oppression leading to (present) over-eager demonstration of one's religious freedom (e.g., attempting to impose one's beliefs on others)).

Religious tolerance usually comes with personal maturity and that leads to being more open-minded and therefore being more amenable to learning. With experience, one begins to understand that each religion (each perspective, each point of view, each belief system) contributes something worthwhile to the whole. Some (usually considerable) truth can be found in each religion and in each sect or denomination. There is a common core of truth, and a diversity of ways of embracing and expressing that truth. What appears to be in conflict, what appears contradictory, is either not really important or simply a matter of not seeing the whole (context) in which there is consistency. Often the conflicts arise in adapting to some cultural context, in details that are imposed for some particular purpose, which are not generally applicable. Arguing over such details is futile. Focusing on differences likewise.

But where one focuses on similarities, e.g., higher principles and values, then one begins to touch the inner core and one then begins to more fully appreciate that even the (apparent) differences contribute to the whole. In the higher sense, being a religious student is not a matter of belonging to one religion or another. It is a matter of becoming attuned to God's presence in whatever ways one is able. In the higher sense, one can "belong" to more than one religion. And one can be eclectic, drawing whatever truth and comfort one can from one or more religions. As more people mature, then "religions" tend to respect one another and work together constructively for the common good.

† Commentary No. 1257

Shrines

A shrine is defined as "a place in which devotion is paid to a saint or deity" and a "place or object hallowed by its associations." Most of the world's major religions allow or encourage the establishment and utilization of shrines, of some form or another, either formally or informally or in both regards. In the broadest sense, any room or building used for religious prayer or meditation is a shrine. Thus churches, synagogues, and temples are all shrines in this sense. In most religions these buildings for worship and devotion (prayer, meditation) play a fairly central role. In some religions, each adherent is (also) encouraged to establish a shrine in his or her home, to facilitate daily (frequent) devotional and spiritual practices.

There are two keys to the effective establishment and utilization of a shrine. The first is that the shrine must be qualified or consecrated in some manner, or in other words, imbued with (energy) association. The second is that adherents must continue to qualify the sanctity or effectiveness of the shrine (church) (temple) through frequent if not ritualized devotions. Consecration can take place either through some process of investiture, in which the priest or minister (or qualified lay person) transfers some essence from a shrine already established to a new one (without in any way diminishing the qualification of the source). Or it can take place simply by devotional association with some qualified source.

The whole actual purpose of a shrine is to facilitate the inner connection between God and the adherent (spiritual student). In this sense, a shrine is not absolutely necessary, but it is both convenient and potentially much more effective than not utilizing a shrine. Wherever there is a properly consecrated shrine, and wherever there is a pattern of meaningful prayer, meditation, and/or devotion, then that inner connection is enriched and expanded in quality and energy. The benefit is that the student (adherent) becomes increasingly more responsive to the inner quality (energy). It is simply easier (less resistive) to pray and meditate in a sanctuary or shrine than it is in any worldly-encumbered place.

Of course the student must be both sincere and conscientious, or the benefits and contributions will be substantially limited. If the ritual or spiritual practice is allowed to become superficial, i.e., simply going through the motions without one actually being consciously devout, then there is little benefit or contribution. The most effective practice would seem to be where there is a combination of daily, personal devotion (prayer) (meditation), reinforced by frequent, periodic services or practices in the context of some religious (and hopefully spiritual) community (e.g., weekly church services, group meditation). And the least effective practice would seem to be where the focus of one's devotions is upon (presumed, desired) personal benefit rather than strengthening and deepening one's inner (divine) connection.

In addition to the symbolic associative value of a shrine (and objects within a shrine), there is additional value by virtue of objective magnetization, e.g., of some statue or artistic-symbolic object having substantial mineral content. Certain mineral objects can store and reveal very substantial power for encouragement, spiritual stimulation, and/or self-transformation. Thus, in a very real sense, even (many) modern religious institutions engage in the work of magic, either deliberately-consciously or otherwise, simply by virtue of the various ceremonial and consecrative activities.

Education

Education is the human context of the fifth ray and is involved in the three purposes of incarnation or experience and expression in the lower worlds, namely (1) evolution, in the fundamental sense of learning and growing in consciousness, (2) equity, in the sense of restoring (more properly maintaining) the balance (i.e., the fulfillment of karma), and (3) service, in the sense of noble expression, expressing oneself in various and meaningful ways in support of the whole (collective consciousness).

Education is defined conventionally as “the field of study that deals mainly with methods of teaching and learning in schools” and the actions and processes of actual teaching and learning. Education in the formal sense involves course work and schools, students and teachers. Education in the broader sense involves all of the experience and expression of life in the objective world and how to assimilate experience such that one grows in consciousness and contributes more effectively to the overall growth in consciousness of the whole. In the formal sense there are students and there are teachers. In the informal sense all people are both students and teachers. In the formal sense education is intended (conventionally) to prepare the student for a life and career in the world, while in the broader (non-conventional or relatively more metaphysical) sense, education is simply intended to expand the student’s capacity for learning and growing and serving.

While conventional education emphasizes knowledge and the development of needed skills, there is also a need for understanding and comprehension as a basis for cultivation of wisdom. While conventional education presumes a world that is superficial (materialistic and egoistic), the world is actually multi-dimensional and much more than merely physical; thus education in the broader sense needs to also embrace cause and effect relationships among the various levels and dimensions. So while conventional education supports the needs of the majority (those who are more or less asleep in materialism and egoism (self-centeredness, personality-centeredness), who simply accept the world at face (superficial) value), the minority (those who are more aware of the underlying

nature of reality and the purpose of life) need to be more deliberate in opening themselves to learning on more levels and in a broader sense.

Conventional education more or less satisfies the needs of most people, in preparing them for conventional (worldly) lives. And those (conventional) people who are more effective in their (worldly) lives are those who more actively learn from their experiences and adapt to their circumstances. But spiritual students tend to be more focused on understanding than learning knowledge, and increasingly focused on principles (wisdom) than even understanding.

The educational process very much involves karma. The student's capacity for learning (and the student's relative intelligence) is a consequence of karma (previous experience) (quality of consciousness). But the experience of life is inherently karmic, as the student attracts the lessons and opportunities (for karmic fulfillment) that the student needs. The student's attitude toward learning, the student's genuineness, the student's openness, all make a big difference. The student needs to be open to assimilation of experience in order to more effectively grow (learn), to more effectively maintain the balance, and to more effectively serve humanity (the common cause). Which ultimately means transcending materialism and egoism (separateness and separativeness), which tend to serve as barriers.

† Commentary No. 1259

Education and Intelligence

In conventional thinking there would seem to be a relatively high correlation between higher education and intelligence. If a person is highly educated, then that person is (sometimes wrongly) presumed to be relatively intelligent, and if a person is not so highly educated, then that person is (sometimes wrongly) presumed to be not so relatively intelligent. But in fact there is no real (absolute) correlation between (formal) education and actual intelligence. Some intelligence is required in order for one to succeed in higher education, but lack of formal education does not imply a lack of intelligence. While most well-educated people are nominally (relatively) intelligent, and while some highly educated people are very intelligent, some poorly educated people are also very intelligent.

The problem, in part, is in the conventional understanding of intelligence. Intelligence is defined conventionally in academic terms, in terms of reasoning abilities, in terms of knowledge and the ability to apply knowledge in conventional ways, with a strong presumption that formal education and knowledge are important ingredients. But while formal education has considerable (potential) relative value and provides credentials and opportunities that might not otherwise be realized, real intelligence is not so much a matter of knowledge or training, or even of understanding and comprehension, as it is a matter of awareness and perception and wisdom, i.e., quality of consciousness and the capacity for learning and applying that understanding wisely. Thus a relatively uneducated person may sense things that a highly educated (and more nominally intelligent) person might not perceive or understand.

In a sense, formal education provides tools, much like the intellect and its training are tools, but in many ways education also limits the perceptive process, through conditioning and the introduction of presumptions and biases. Since intelligence is really the capacity for learning, many intelligent people are largely self-educated. And truly intelligent people continue to learn substantially throughout the lifetime and well beyond the boundaries of their formal education. And the very truly intelligent people simply very effectively apply whatever understanding and wisdom is realized. The key is to learn without being encumbered by knowledge. To think of knowledge as relative rather than absolute. To see things in a broader, deeper context than most formal educational institutions can provide.

Another dimension of intelligence is conscience and discretion (intuitive insight). A self-absorbed person is simply limited by personal focus, and unable to perceive things (very) clearly, being largely unable to discern the more subtle (and more meaningful) aspects of truth and reality. A person of conscience, i.e., who senses the inner wisdom and lives in accord with it, tends to be relatively more insightful and therefore relatively more effective in dealing with the challenges of life in the lower worlds.

And of course the final factor in intelligently embracing experience and expression is the (lack of) ego. The ego is substantially preclusive. It tends to

filter out what is inconsistent with its own interests. The truly wise person does not allow the ego or intellect to be (so) preclusive. The truly wise person transcends the limitations of ego and intellect and allows the conscience (higher consciousness) (intuition and insight) to manifest naturally. In the final analysis, it is not education and training and knowledge that matters, though these all have some value. What really matters is awareness and perception and conscience.

† Commentary No. 1260

Egobase

A person's egobase (ego base) is the extent to which the ego dominates the (outer) life and waking-consciousness. Most people are almost (if not) completely unaware of their own identification with the ego, or that that ego is an artificial entity, i.e., that they are identifying themselves with something artificial and superficial. Most people are also almost (if not) completely unaware that the "normal" human being is egobased, i.e., that what they take for granted as themselves and other people is in fact based in ego rather than something more substantial.

The great awakening of the spiritual student, however, is the realization of this egobase, its existence, its nature, and the manner of its transcendence. But this awakening must be true, and not merely an intellectual understanding compromised by noble self-deception. Some (many) talk about the ego and humility and the noble (higher) Self yet continue to identify in practice (actuality) almost completely with the ego (i.e., where the ego is simply masquerading as something more noble). The (egobased) student tends to want to believe this and so does.

But until the student realizes the distinction between Self and not-self, it is impossible to transcend the ego. Those who say we must integrate the self, i.e., the whole self, higher and lower, are really just rationalizing their continuance as egobased human beings, even while it is true that ultimately there needs to be an integration. But it is only the higher (true) Self that can integrate the lower. The lower simply cannot integrate anything higher than itself. And since the ego is artificial and superficial, however it may seem to be, it is simply not an

integrating force except (in principle) for the lower nature (physical, emotional, and concrete mental).

The ego base is natural in the sense that it is evoked through experience in the lower worlds and it serves a purpose. In these senses there is no need for most people to even attempt transcendence. There is for most people simply a need to temper the ego sufficiently to preclude self-absorption. But for the spiritual student, who needs to embrace a higher order and higher energies, there is great need to temper the ego, to weaken its hold on the lower self (intellect) (personality), to bring the ego to the point where it serves the higher Self rather than continuing to promote its own (artificial) existence. The ego is by nature (naturally) relatively insecure. It tends to defend and promote itself by all means available. The spiritual student must become the astute observer of the (lower) self, to witness the thinking and feeling and behavior and tendencies of the lower nature, without identifying with them. And in that realization of the "nature" of the lower nature, begin the process of reorientation in consciousness that results in transcending the lower nature.

But this overcoming the egobase is a tremendously difficult undertaking, because the egobase tends to be strong (at least by the time one even begins to realize the need for the undertaking), because virtually everything in the outer world supports the grand illusion of material existence (and ego existence (human being as ego)) as an end in itself and therefore all of the outer (external) forces impel the student toward strengthening the ego rather than tempering it. Thus almost all of the worldly and psychological forces are counter-evolutionary in this context (ego transcendence) (while being evolutionary in the sense of promoting experience and expression in the lower worlds). Yet somehow the inner forces gradually and eventually emerge into the waking-consciousness. And the egobase is properly subordinated.

The Ten Pillars of Buddhism

The Ten Pillars of Buddhism is the title of a book by Sangharakshita (Dennis Lingwood) that describes the ten pillars or precepts or ethical principles of Buddhism, namely (1) love, the principle of abstention from killing living beings, (2) generosity, the principle of abstention from taking the not-given, (3) contentment, the principle of abstention from sexual misconduct, (4) truthfulness, the principle of abstention from false speech, (5) kindly speech, the principle of abstention from harsh speech, (6) meaningful speech, the principle of abstention from frivolous speech, (7) harmonious speech, the principle of abstention from slanderous speech, (8) tranquility, the principle of abstention from covetousness, (9) compassion, the principle of abstention from hatred, and (10) wisdom, the principle of abstention from false views.

Each principle can be considered as akusala-dharma in the sense of undertaking-to-refrain from some (negative, destructive, harmful, counter-evolutionary) action, attitude, or behavior, or as kusala-dharma in the sense of undertaking to observe the respective positive. Taken collectively, embracing the ten pillars or precepts is a matter of spiritual practice that equates, in part, to “going deeper and broader” into the wisdom, or to taking refuge in the Buddha, or going for refuge, which is “the fundamental Buddhist act.” This fundamental act or commitment, is in one sense or dimension embracing the three refuges or jewels, namely (1) the Buddha or the ideal of enlightenment, (2) the dharma or the teaching of the way to enlightenment, and (3) sangha or spiritual community (fellowship); in another it is embracing (1) the ten precepts, (2) meditation, and (3) wisdom.

The spiritual student (Buddhist or otherwise) is encouraged to embrace or undertake each of these principles in the daily life (along with whatever other principles the student has encountered that are meaningful in the context of the student’s path). One doesn’t need to “be” a Buddhist in order to embrace these precepts, one simply needs to recognize and appreciate their value. There are number of collections of precepts, some comprehensive, some not as comprehensive, but a comprehensive set of principles such as this, properly embraced, serves as a formula or mantra for deepening, for progressive self-

transformation, of progressively embracing higher and deeper and simply, more meaningful truths.

It is, for the spiritual student, a refining of the personal mandala or how one lives one's life, what is important, what values are embraced. In this process (embracing principles, undertaking self-transformation) one revisits both interests and activities, encouraging those which support and engender the process of enlightenment (learning, growing, serving) and discouraging those which detract from that process. Or in other words, embracing that which is recognized to be constructive, healthy, and evolutionary, and not embracing that which is recognized to be destructive, unhealthy, or counter-evolutionary. This is what happens, properly, when one truly commits to a spiritual life.

In the Christian vernacular, it is "being saved" and making a commitment to living a Christian life (the principles of the Christian faith); in the Buddhist tradition, it is making this commitment to the three jewels. These two respective "commitments" are essentially equivalent, and also to those of other faiths. Each such (genuine) commitment properly evokes a quickening of the path and subsequently progressive spiritual deepening. So these pillars or principles are not simply a matter for intellectual consideration, but are, much more properly, a matter of commitment and embracing the path.

† Commentary No. 1262

Noble Work

The spiritual student is encouraged not only to be continually engaged in the processes of learning and growing, all the while (gradually) deepening in consciousness, but also to be continually engaged in some sort of noble or magnanimous work or undertaking. Not noble in the sense of glamorous or "important" but noble in the sense of being worthwhile, of contributing in some way to the welfare of others, of being a legitimate expression of the higher nature, allowing one's higher energies and faculties to be expressed effectively (subtly) in the (ordinary) world.

For some the noble work and professional undertakings are synonymous, as the work itself may be inherently positively encouraging to others' welfare. For some the noble work is primarily through volunteer work of one sort or another rather than professionally. For others it may be simply a matter of living one's higher values through the context of some (otherwise not necessarily so obviously noble) undertaking. For some it is all of these things. What matters is that the higher consciousness be allowed to be expressed effectively, and this cannot occur when the person is absorbed in mundane affairs, in materialism or egoism, or entangled in the senses. So part of the undertaking is to be "doing" noble work, but another part of the undertaking is to ensure that one is effective in that work by not being so personality-centered.

One should not be overly concerned with apparent results or measurable impacts (which may be misleading and/or englamouring), but rather one should be concerned with the process of ennobling one's work. It is the flow of energy, the qualification of one's atmosphere and surroundings, the goodwill evoked, the encouragement provided, that really matters. To perform one's work graciously, magnanimously, is more important than what one actually does (provided that what one does is not inherently destructive or counter-evolutionary). The real role of the spiritual student is to facilitate evolution in consciousness, not by contriving to do so, but primarily by living a spiritual life and engaging in noble work.

So what is ignoble? Anything that demonstrates the lower nature or encourages something (some practice that is) counter-evolutionary. Anything that is imposed on others. Anything that demonstrates or encourages lack of respect for others. Anything that demonstrates or encourages practices that are inherently unhealthy (e.g., smoking, drinking alcohol, eating flesh foods, taking drugs). A lack of good will, or lack of patience, lack of gentleness, lack of kindness, etc.

So what is noble? Anything that demonstrates the higher nature, through character, morals, ethics, principles, and values. Not in any imposing manner, but simply by virtue of how one lives one's life. So whatever work is engaged, it should not encourage anything counter-evolutionary, but encourage (primarily by example) learning and growing. Work that is inherently constructive. Work that has some value or worth in human consciousness. Not work that is merely

worldly, although worldly work engaged in a noble manner can be noble, provided the work does not encourage anything counter-evolutionary. One should realize that most people are where they need to be, and that one's noble work is simply a matter of planting-seeds-by-example (and by encouragement-of-energy). Thus what is evolutionary for the spiritual student may be not what is evolutionary for most people. The student should not worry about what is or what is not evolutionary for others, but simply realize that one's sense of what is evolutionary should not be imposed.

† Commentary No. 1263

Intervention 1

Intervention is defined as the process through which a person or group of people attempt to interfere in another person's affairs, sincerely or otherwise, with purported or genuine intent to "help" that person in dealing with some sort of perceived or adjudged crisis or illness. Intervention, in the sense of psychological intervention, is rarely a matter of love or caring, though it is often purported to be. Friends listen, learn, understand, and offer to help. Friends do not impose.

The intent of a (psychological) intervention may be to hinder or alter some action or behavior or simply to "remedy" some perceived condition (attitude, behavior, (physical, emotional, mental) illness or disease). Intervention implies and usually involves imposition, in the sense that the "client" or "victim" of intervention is generally unwilling to do or to be as the intervener (or group) intends. Perhaps the client (victim) is incapable of sensible action. Perhaps the client is capable but simply chooses not to do what others would have him (her) do or be. And perhaps (actually, necessarily) the intervener(s) simply made a judgment, speciously or otherwise, and are acting upon that judgment. Generally, intervention involves the use or threat of use of some coercive force, to entice the client (victim) to be more receptive. But in any event, whether sincere and genuine or gratuitously self-serving, any intervention is necessarily a matter of imposition. And, generally unless it involves a minor child or genuinely incapacitated adult, it is a crime in consciousness.

To constructively and with sincerity assist someone who is open and responsive to being helped is a noble effort. To “intervene” in some obvious or apparent injustice is likewise noble, provided that the intervention is welcomed (in which case it would be an “assistance” and not an intervention). Genuinely caring for someone means listening and understanding and offering encouragement, without judging and without imposing. In the “best” case of intervention, there is gentleness and kindness. In the worst case of intervention, it is a matter of psychic violence (psychological rape). Any expression of criticism or judgment is an expression of (necessarily harmful) violence.

There is of course a dynamic range to intervention, from casual (less imposing) to formal (more imposing). From singular to collective. From genuine and sincere to self-serving. From legitimate in the sense of there being a true basis to illegitimate in the sense that the purported basis is unfounded or based on (specious) judgment or is self-serving in some manner. The ethics of “intervention” are relatively clear. No one has the right to impose on another, except where there is direct responsibility, as in a legitimate and sincerely founded parent-child relationship. And almost every “basis” for intervention is a matter of judgment, and judgment is never infallible, and rarely is judgment a matter of understanding the whole truth of anything.

So while there may be (a few) instances of legitimate and helpful intervention, the vast preponderance of “interventions” are merely attempts to impose one’s views on another, without real appreciation or respect for the victim’s thoughts or feelings or values, without any real consideration for the victim at all. Indeed, most interventions are abject failures, even (and perhaps especially) where the “intended” changes are brought about. They are failures because they damage the psyche of the client (victim). They are failures because the whole process is adversarial (contentious) (impositional) (separative) (head-centered).

Intervention 2

No matter how sincere the interveners purport or believe themselves to be. No matter how heart-centered they perceive themselves to be (one is not heart-centered “because” one “thinks” that one is, or “because” all of one’s actions appear to be noble (the head is notoriously capable and clever, able to provide whatever rationalizations are needed for self-deception)). Intervention is (necessarily) ego-based. It is based on judgment. It is not based on realization. It is based on imposition. It is not (truly) based on caring. It comes from the head, not from the heart.

To truly care for someone is to respect them, to listen and learn about their feelings, thoughts, and values, to accept them as they are, to support them as they choose to be, not as one would (foolishly) have them be. It matters not if the intervention is “based” in the (worldly) legal system, or if it is based on some democratic process (a majority of (or even all) people believing something to be true (or warranted) does not in itself mean that it is true (or warranted)). Intervention is, still, in almost every instance, a wrongful imposition. It is fine (perhaps even helpful) to express one’s concerns, to share one’s insights, but without the intent to change or influence another person’s attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, principles, temperament, or values.

One might argue that the “victim” is deserving, otherwise it would not happen. And, given an understanding of karma, this may indeed be true. But to “think” that the victim is deserving is judgmental and therefore psychically and psychologically violent (harmful). And to act on that judgment, through attempted intervention, is therefore unconscionable. One might also argue that if one is sincere, if one believes that the “action” is warranted, that the end justifies the means, etc., it is okay. But it is not. Sincerity is not an acceptable excuse for unconscionable behavior (not that there is ever any acceptable excuse). Moreover, “sincerity” is often a matter of self-deception, in which the (necessarily self-serving) ego drives the behavior (intervention). Even “knowledge” is never sufficient, for one can never really know the whole truth of a situation. This is why any form of judgment is necessarily limited. One can

make assumptions or presumptions, but one can never really know anything (sufficiently) about another person.

Thus there are a number of substantive fallacies associated with the “conventional psychological” notion and process of intervention, (1) that a person can ever know enough to make a proper judgment or truly know what another person needs (in fact, one can never really know the whole truth of anything), (2) that any person can ever be truly influenced (in fact, externally-imposed behavior “modification” is simply another form of conditioning, it is not a matter of learning or a matter of growth in consciousness, and therefore it is at best transient, at worst long-lived (in the sense that it inhibits the truly needed self-realization)), and (3) that sincere imposition is not harmful (in fact, the very act of judging someone is harmful, to both the judge and the judged (likewise criticism is never constructive)).

On the other hand, there are legitimate techniques and processes for helping people. Without judging. Without imposing. Without intervention. Through listening and learning. By working with people, through gentle (kind) encouragement rather than judgment. By respecting people and allowing them to be who and how they are, rather than expecting them to conform to some (one’s own or collective) value system.

† Commentary No. 1265

Inner and Outer Religion 1

Religion is properly God-centered and not personality-centered, and is actually a matter of religious and spiritual principles (which relate the human being to God and to living a spiritual life). But there are two extensions of religion, one in the outer dimension, one in the inner dimension, that greatly expand the scope and import of those religious and spiritual principles and which also pose some not immodest difficulties.

The outer dimension is the one most people are familiar with. It begins with some fundamental or basic religious and/or spiritual context, clothed in some sort of cultural and social framework. It is potentially quite “evolutionary” in the sense that the religious-spiritual principles, teachings, and values are placed

in a more worldly, more practical context. But the problem is that much of the “outer” framework is cultural and social rather than genuinely or actually religious or spiritual. When spiritual principles are tailored to some (necessarily artificial) cultural or social context, there is an inevitable lessening of value (clarity, quality). Thus “going to church” is not the same as embracing the (actual) values of the religion (indeed one can embrace the actual pertinent principles and values without submitting to the cultural and social “demands” although the cultural and social context (e.g., participating in services) can be nonetheless encouraging). The outer context tends to be conditioned and superficial (as people tend to be conditioned and superficial), a matter more of personal-social convenience than spiritual import.

Another problem of the outer context is that people tend to be concerned about the cultural contextual details rather than the actual spiritual principles, and it is (unfortunately) only human nature to seek to impose “understanding” on others. Religions provide a suite of behavioral ethics, principles, and values to guide life-in-this-world. But those are for each to embrace to the extent that they are understood and appreciated. What is important is living an ethical, principled life. And developing (and sustaining) a genuine (heart-felt and conscious) relationship with God. The various rituals of a religion are not important in themselves, but have value primarily to the extent that they encourage and facilitate that heart-felt and conscious relationship.

Yet another problem is exclusivity. Religions that exclude or belittle “non-believers” in any way are not (truly) God-centered religions but are simply personality-centered (ego-based) derivatives-of-religion. There is no exclusive path to God or to salvation. All truly spiritual paths inherently lead the student toward God and toward salvation (graduation from this worldly experience). The heathen is no less a creature of God. The truly religious adherent ((spiritual) student) embraces all lives as lives-of-God. And respects and appreciates that each person sees things differently and that there is great value in every avenue or approach to God.

There are no favored (or unfavored) people, not as individuals, not as groups, races, or nations. Individuals, groups, races, and nations all have some karmic context, but over time there is always-ultimately balance and equity in the process. In order to graduate from this world each person must do essentially

the same “work” and obtain the same relative place in consciousness. There are no special means available to anyone or to any group. There are no shortcuts. Each person is afforded the opportunities consistent with his or her current relative place in consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1266

Inner and Outer Religion 2

There are unfortunately many glammers and illusions associated with conventional (outer) religion. But as one deepens in consciousness, as one gathers experience and begins to consciously assimilate that experience, then one begins, progressively, to see through the various glammers and illusions. Of course (many) people see only what they want to see, and think that there are shortcuts or favored status. But there are no such paths-of-shortness. And all are equally favored.

The inner dimension is one of which relatively few people are aware. It is the mystical dimension that links all of the various religions and spiritual approaches together. As one approaches God in consciousness, the various paths coalesce and become one and the same path. Each outer religion is simply a portal or gateway through which one can progressively and gradually approach the divine source. The outer religion is necessarily personality-centered and worldly. The inner religion is necessarily centered in the higher self and decidedly non-worldly. Thus the real process involves simply moving toward the center of consciousness.

The spiritual path is a path of hastened evolution in consciousness. Not a shortcut, but an investment in doing the “work” in some hastened sense, through greater intensity of “work” in consciousness over a relatively shorter period of time. But if one takes the “long and winding road” one ends up doing the same amount of “work” and achieves the same place in consciousness as one who moves forward more intently-quickly. But the hastened path is not a matter of simply choosing. It is rather a calling, from the soul, which then encourages the personality-ego to reorient itself toward the (hastened) path. But those who take the “shorter” path are no more favored or unfavored than those who take the more gradual, more normal path.

But the realm of the hastened (spiritual) path is the same as the inner dimension of religion, although it needs not the framework of any particular religion (or any religion at all). The religious framework is simply helpful in placing a person in the circumstances that allow the hastened path to be embraced. One is simply drawn to the inner teachings, to prayer and meditation, to progressive communion, with the soul, with Christ (or whatever one calls the principle of divine consciousness), and with God. As one progresses in this inner sense, the outer life and consciousness is naturally transformed, as one embraces the quality and energy of the inner life, it is reflected in the life and circumstances (demeanor) of the outer person.

In order to do this, the religious context is merely helpful, but not necessary. One does not need, necessarily, to be of certain lineage, for lineage is simply not important (lineage only pertains to the body, and not to the indwelling consciousness). Nor does one need to have a spiritual teacher, for all are teachers and all are students (though some teachers can be quite helpful and insightful, in providing encouragement (but the student must ever exercise discretion, and it is the student who is responsible for the outcome, not the teacher)). Similarly, one does not need, necessarily, a particular religion, for all (God-centered religions) lead to the same place (if only one is predisposed to look in the right ways (as one progresses, one simply senses where and how to look (the insight (intuition) is simply-naturally evoked))). But what one does need, necessarily, is a refined nature, e.g., a healthy body, clear emotions, and a quiet mind. And (necessarily) a suitably tempered personality (ego).

Religious Abuse

Like most areas of human endeavour, the practical realm of religion is not without some potential for abuse. All God-centered religions are fundamentally sound, if not perfect, but wherever human personalities are involved, there is likely to be some matters of interpretation and some matters of practice which may not be entirely (if at all) consistent with the basic teachings of the religion, despite what the practicers may believe in justifying their actions. Thus one should not blame any (proper, God-centered) religion itself, but realize that abuses are just a matter of human nature.

There are a number of areas of potential abuse, including disagreements in interpretation (which are (all) really (and necessarily) not important), imposing one's individual or collective views upon others (proselytizing, criticizing, judging) (instead of encouraging others to think for themselves and reach their own conclusions), presuming authority in religious matters, behaving separatively (as if one's religion and (presumed) associated values is superior in some sense to another), and (ultimately) fostering violent confrontations based on (necessarily superficial) interpretive or value differences (it doesn't matter what the "reasons" are, there is never any legitimate excuse for religious strife). Religions are not abusive, but people can be.

For example, all God-centered religions in principle engender respect for others, harmlessness (peace) (harmony), etc., yet in historical practice, there have been wars, conflicts, violence, etc., in the name of religion, when in fact none of this has to do with religion, per se, it has to do with personalities (egos) (and self-justified and self-serving rationalizations) and not living in accordance with the principles and practices of the religion. Conflicts between peoples of different religions, between peoples of various Christian denominations, between Catholics and Protestants, between Christians and Jews and Muslims, between peoples of various Buddhist or Muslim sects, etc., are really not ideological conflicts, and certainly not noble conflicts, but are conflicts between personalities and attachments to interpretations, or a matter of more personal conditioning, and involve failures to honor the basic teachings. It seems so easy to focus on differences, and not respect people who are different, much harder to

appreciate the similarities (inherent goodness of all peoples). And most “religious” despots are nonetheless sincere (although often deluded). Genuine charlatans are relatively rare.

Many abuses draw upon (wrong) interpretations of scripture. While religious scriptures are generally “inspired” texts, they are still subject to the human mind in how the “inspiration” is translated into words, and words can be changed through human intervention (sincerely or otherwise), and words are always subject to interpretation (sincerely or otherwise, rightly or not so rightly). But most abuses (and most interpretations) are more a matter of self-serving beliefs and imposing those beliefs on others. Many people are insecure in their faith, and need others to believe as they do. Some people use “religion” as a means to bring about or sustain self-serving societal or cultural conditions. Many people presume to “speak for God” (sincerely or otherwise, when in fact no one speaks for God. God speaks to all, if only a person would care to listen.

All of these abuses, potential and real, constitute a disservice to humanity, serving to discourage many people from embracing religion, from learning associated ethics and principles and values, from the supportive fellowship that most God-centered religions engender. Yet religions remain a valuable source and means of spiritual encouragement to many.

† Commentary No. 1268

Religious Differences

The differences between the various (God-centered) religions are not really important. They are convenient in the sense of facilitating the religious-spiritual principles being tailored to some cultural context, but they are not important as ends-in-themselves.

The basic (inherently valuable) teachings of all religions are more or less similar. The basic teachings encourage and facilitate evolution in consciousness by encouraging and facilitating the adherent’s developing and deepening relationship to God. The outer aspects of religion, where all of the (necessarily non-essential) differences occur, are simply not important. The concept of Christ-consciousness is relatively important. But Christ-consciousness is not

exclusive to the Christian faith, and it is known by various other names. The “name” of God, the “name” of the principle of higher consciousness (e.g., Christ), are simply not important except that one needs some name to facilitate the association and relationship. Thus conceptually and practically, Christ and Buddha and Krishna (and others) are all important, but none is particularly important, and all relate in some meaningful way to the same principles (to God and higher consciousness). In most instances, these are simply different ways of saying (teaching) the same underlying principles.

Too often what seem to be essential differences are simply non-essential differences in interpretation and understanding. To many Christians “being saved” is important, but the common interpretation of this phenomenon is really quite far afield from its true import. The actual import of “being saved” is simply waking up to a higher reality (and embracing higher values), which is common to all God-centered religions (of course most people who are “saved” in this sense are not actually saved, because they simply don’t understand the process, they embrace the outer circumstances rather than the inner meaning, but even a limited (superficial) understanding can be of value).

The Holy Bible is a valuable, indeed substantially inspired resource (scripture), as is the Koran and the various scriptures of Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religions. But none are infallible, as no human being is infallible. And each has a cultural context. And each has been interpreted by (necessarily fallible) human beings (sincerely or otherwise). The underlying divine inspiration is there, in each scripture, but one must feel it in the heart and not worry so much about (head-centered, cultural) details. In fact, the differences are actually merely superficial. If one looks beyond (within) the words, to the energy and content of the words, rather than “at” the words-as-words, then the differences fade away and the underlying content (value) emerges.

Many Christians have problems appreciating in other religions what appears-to-them to be polytheism, but this is based on presumption and misunderstanding. There is but one God, and even the Christian God is a trinity. The Gods of other religions are not fundamentally different. One God living through many forms and in various ways is no less monotheistic. But when a person is “taught” various religious principles without a broader, deeper context, there is bound to be misunderstanding. But many people are insecure

in their faith, they fear the teachings of others, which they imagine to be counter to their own, instead of learning of the value of other religions and realizing that they are inherently complementary (radical-fundamentalistic interpretations notwithstanding). Thus the student is encouraged to study each of the various religions, and appreciate that each has value.

† Commentary No. 1269

If Then

One of the most common assumptive errors involves the use of the “If X then Y” reasoning. Something is (actually) logically correct only if (1) the assumptions upon which it is based are actually true and (2) the conclusion necessarily follows. The problem with assumptions is that they are (merely) assumptions, and may or may not be true. But even if a premise is actually true, i.e., factual and not merely an assumption, the conclusion may not follow (necessarily) for any one of a number of reasons.

For example, the if-then statement (argument) “If he loves me, then he would send me flowers” is patently illogical in a number of ways (and the further conclusion of “He didn’t send flowers, therefore he doesn’t love me” is even worse). The problem is that there is not necessarily any correlation (at all) between the premise (loving someone) and the conclusive action (sending flowers or not). A person may love another and send flowers. A person may love another and not send flowers. A person may even not love someone and send flowers (anyway). And of course a person may not love someone and not send flowers. Thus all four possibilities are fair and reasonable, but no action necessarily follows the validity or invalidity of the original premise.

The invalidity and unreasonableness of reliance on the if-then “reasoning” process is compound. A person may or may not love another (particular) person. That person may or may not send flowers. The problem is inherently one of not really understanding each other, of not really communicating, compounded by the invalidity of the reasoning process. For example, there are many ways of expressing love, and loving someone does not mean that a person must necessarily express himself or herself in any particular way. Indeed, one can love another and not even be expressive. It is all about conditioning. People are

conditioned differently, according to heritage and culture, according to experience, according to opportunities, according to (varying) (personal) nature. Some are more conventional, others less so. Some are inherently honest and open with their feelings, others less so. Love cannot be measured (in any way). It simply is. And people participate in love (and its outward expressions) according to their capacities and conditioning and natures.

The if-then assumption is actually fallacious (specious) in other ways as well. People have different natures and different values. The if-then assumption is compounded by the implied additional assumption that both parties have the same nature and values, which is rarely entirely so. And of course it is compounded by the tendency of someone relying on the if-then to not be aware that there is any wrong assumption or illogic in the first place. And further compounded where there is some inherent lack of communication or trust. There is even an if-then hypocrisy, where a person relies on the if-then, believing that he (or she) (himself or herself) would act in accord with the if-then, and apply it to another person, when indeed such a person (himself or herself) may not even (actually) "act" the same way as he (or she) expects another.

And of course the "giving of flowers" may be simply meeting someone's expectations and not be a genuine expression of feelings in any regard. The solution to these problems would seem to be (a) realizing the inherent fallacy of the if-then and (b) cultivating a genuine communicative rapport with someone, so that there is real and mutual understanding of how people feel and how they are comfortable expressing themselves. To rely on "signals" may work in some superficial sense (many people prefer to live assumptively and delusionally), but the spiritual student should be more concerned about the truth of things.

Meekness

In the context of (metaphysical-theosophical) spirituality, meekness is the quality or condition of being enduring, patient, strong in spirit, non-violent, mild and moderate in the ways of personality and the world. In the more worldly vernacular, being meek suggests being deficient in spirit and courage, being passive or submissive, being weak in personality. But in the deeper, more profound sense of meekness, it is a matter of spiritual strength, without lack of courage, without being passive or submissive, even while the worldly may not be able to recognize these strengths in one who is meek. This is because the meek (in this spiritual sense) do not entertain the worldly, do not embrace worldly (materialistic and egoistic) ways.

Some worldly folk would seek to “take advantage” of those who are meek, who appear to the worldly to be weak or passive. But the truly (spiritually) meek person is not gullible nor easily manipulated by people or circumstances, but simply exercises a quiet discretion in his or her worldly experience. The word “meek” actually means or suggests gentleness and moderation and sensible humility. This non-passive meekness is actually a wonderful place, where one is non-passively accepting of one’s nature and circumstances and quietly, gently progressing along the way.

“The meek shall inherit the earth” ... suggests this inner strength that allows the spiritual student to “endure injury with patience and without resentment.” It suggests that strength of personality (i.e., over-developed ego) is a barrier in consciousness that impedes or inhibits the process of conscious reunion with God. That it is only through refined consciousness that one can truly find the God within. That those who find themselves (God within) are reborn in a higher place, and endure, while those who do not find themselves are fated to return again and again to the lower worlds, until the work of evolution in consciousness (for this stage) is actually accomplished.

In this spiritual context, meekness is equivalent to having a well-tempered personality, so that worldly materialism and egoism not longer have a strong hold on the personality, so that the student is no longer predominantly

separative or self-serving. If by this nature of his or her embracing spirituality (through harmlessness, honesty, humility (meekness)), the student should be misunderstood by the worldly, then so be it. The wise man is not one who proclaims his (presumed) wisdom. The wise man is not one who seeks to be recognized or entertained by others. The wise man is simply one who sees and hears and feels from an inner place, necessarily quietly, with subtlety. It is not passivity nor is it contrived indifference to the world. But it is a natural (higher) condition of being unattached to worldly things and worldly ways, of being not absorbed in the senses or the intellect or the ego. It is living in the world gently, learning and growing and serving, without much in the way of worldly distractions or impediments.

The key to understanding meekness, indeed to understanding true spirituality, is the realization that things in this world are not actually as they appear to be, that most people experience life in this world superficially, who think and feel and behave and perceive and know and understand things superficially. In seeing things only on the surface, most people judge based on appearances, and think according to their conditioning. But those who walk gently through the trials and tribulations of this world are progressively able to see beyond the surface, to progressively deeper levels of reality, and embrace progressively deeper levels of spirituality.

† Commentary No. 1271

Drugs

Drugs are defined as biological and/or chemical substances, including food and drink, ingested in some way, and deliberately or indeliberately utilized for medicinal, incidental, and/or recreational purposes. In the broader sense, a drug is anything ingested or injected or otherwise brought into the body, for whatever purpose, including sustenance. Medicinal drugs are typically used to relieve uncomfortable symptoms or to treat infections or to stimulate healing. Incidental drugs are typically drugs that people generally don't think of as drugs per se, e.g., alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, flesh foods. Recreational drugs are typically used to stimulate the lower nature in some way, by inducing the illusion of enhancement of the senses.

Some drugs are quite natural, being produced naturally, either in the body or elsewhere in nature. Most vitamins occur naturally. Some drugs are artificial, being cultivated or designed for some specific purposes. Some drugs are inherently harmful or poisonous, even in small amounts, e.g., arsenic. Some drugs are inherently superficially helpful, e.g., some vitamins and minerals. Some drugs are habit-forming or addictive, either psychologically or chemically. Some drugs are relatively non-addictive. But all drugs have some effects and consequences, substantial or otherwise, intended or otherwise, consciously realized or not, on the body and in consciousness.

Part of the problem of drugs is that drugs work to some extent differently in different people or under different circumstances, and therefore the effects and consequences cannot necessarily be easily or completely anticipated or predicted. Part of the problem with drugs is that drugs work differently in different amounts or in different combinations, too much of anything can be harmful, and even a small amount of something may be quite harmful, depending on the circumstances, even if the effects are not generally or readily apparent. Drugs taken for medicinal purposes, in moderation, may or may not be substantially harmful. Likewise drugs taken incidentally. But drugs taken for recreational purposes, deliberately or otherwise, are almost necessarily harmful in some ways. And many drugs (food and drink) are harmful in the sense that they undermine the clarity of thinking and feeling in subtle ways.

But the biggest problem with drugs would seem to be the conditioning factor in consciousness. Such that drugs taken for apparently medicinal or incidental purposes have effects and consequences that weaken the clarity and stability of consciousness. Mood-altering drugs, even if the "taker" is unaware of the mood-alteration, undermine the ability of a person to see and feel and think clearly. Drugs tend (substantially) to strengthen the hold of the body on consciousness and weaken the ability of consciousness to guide the body effectively. Most drugs, even those taken incidentally and in small or occasional quantities, especially medicines and alcohol and flesh foods, tend to weaken the inner connections in consciousness and strengthen the presence of the personality (lower nature) (ego). Minimizing if not naturally avoiding all non-essential drugs is crucial to the gradual deepening of the spiritual student.

The spiritual student is encouraged (a) wherever practicable, to rely primarily on methods in consciousness rather than reliance on medicinal drugs, (b) to minimize the utilization of medicines, minerals, and vitamins, (c) to abstain from any recreational drugs, including tobacco and alcohol, and (d) to (eventually) abstain from consuming any flesh foods (meat, fish, and fowl). The objective is to become and remain healthy physically, emotionally, and mentally, meaning to become and remain relatively free from any conditioning effects.

† Commentary No. 1272

The Ten Pillars 2

There are a number of reasons why embracing principles like the ten precepts of Buddhism are so effective. Embracing each (positive) precept strengthens (good) character, refining the mind, while embracing the converse weakens the (good) character, and coarsens the mind. Embracing the ten precepts collectively (comprehensively) (conscientiously) evokes considerable power for good, more so than ten times the value of the individual precepts, as there is a reinforcement (catalysis) through synergism. And by focusing on all three of the human "triad" (body, speech, and mind) there is balance.

Of course there is a difference of effectiveness in embracing the precepts for peoples of different initial conditions. Someone who is very coarse, who embraces the ten precepts, will if conscientious likely emerge substantially transformed. Someone relatively refined, who embraces the ten precepts to the same extent, will likely be only moderately transformed. But someone relatively refined, who goes deeper into the precepts, will likely be thereby substantially transformed. It is not simply a matter of embracing "some" precepts, but by embracing a sufficiently meaningful collection of precepts, that collectively enable multi-dimensional transformation, i.e., refining one's physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual nature. Some precepts or principles may be helpful or constructive in some way, e.g., the golden rule, but without sufficient depth and breadth (guidance, encouragement, understanding), progress would be limited. For example, many people simply don't realize how harmful words can be, yet through the ten precepts (and similarly meaningful collections) one begins to

understand, through firsthand experience, the consequences of all of our actions (and inactions).

The ten pillars or precepts may be considered as rules, principles, guidelines, laws, depending on one's perspective and circumstances. But the import of this dharma is all of these things. These ten precepts (silas) (siksapadas) (kusala-karma-pathas) are fundamental truths not limited to a merely Buddhist context or tradition. They are as much about moral duty as they are karmic guidelines. Ethics of course can be rationalized in any way that one chooses, but these fundamental truths with ethical implications persist nonetheless. In some sense it is about embracing the expertise of the way. In understanding the spiritual context embracing the ten precepts comes more and more naturally.

It may begin with more personal motivation (artificial (superficial) rewards in consciousness (happiness, knowledge, freedom) but eventually it becomes simply a matter of what needs to be. There is great value in living an ethical life, but even greater value when one actually understands the context of living an ethical life. It is not really about avoiding (negative) karma, nor in producing (positive) karma. It is really about achieving balance. And how one treats the body and how one speaks and how one thinks has great effect on that balance. Especially in the sense of how one relates to other people and other loves (through behavior, speech, feeling, thinking).

As principles of ethics the ten precepts are not detailed rules to be followed, but general principles to be embraced which in turn (with conscience) evoke behavioral (feeling, thinking) details (i.e., rules are derived from principles and apply to specific circumstances). As one progresses, one's behavior improves according to the quality of consciousness achieved, which is a function of relative refinement, knowledge and understanding, and evoked wisdom (conscience).

The Ten Pillars 3

The ten precepts may be effectively embraced either formally in the context of training with some teacher or educational process, and/or informally in the context of individual study, meditation, and practice. The ten precepts may be embraced loosely, in the sense of being without vows or commitment until such time as they are genuinely understood or accepted into practice, or more properly, in the sense of one making an actual commitment to embrace them to the best one's ability and understanding. Conventional religion tends to emphasize what are considered absolutes, and tends to emphasize formal commitments and religious rituals as a way of strengthening the embrace of the spiritual path and spiritual ways, but merely formal commitments are simply not sufficient, for merely religious ways tend toward ritualized without real (conscious) understanding. And while a formal teacher may be helpful, indeed necessary for some, a formal teacher is not necessary (and may not even be helpful) for others. It all depends on where the student is upon the path and what the student actually needs (obedience to imposed discipline and practices have less value in the long run than obedience to discipline and practices based upon understood principles).

In the context of the ten pillars, both commitment and lifestyle are important, indeed one follows naturally from the other. With a true commitment, one's lifestyle necessarily changes to suit the deepening spiritual temperament and principles and values. Then "one's lifestyle is an expression of one's observation of the ten precepts" just as observation of the ten precepts is an expression of one's commitment (understanding).

Genuine commitment is important because it energizes and focuses the whole personality nature. Without commitment, one is not likely to be conscientious in embracing the ten precepts (or any other spiritual discipline). Without conscientiousness (and consistency) there is no effectiveness. Indeed one who embraces what one thinks of as a spiritual lifestyle without any real commitment to understood underlying principles is simply dabbling and the consequences are not particularly fruitful or significant (except in the sense of eventually having to face the consequences of one's self-deception). One cannot

pick and choose what is suitable in spiritual matters, or to embrace spiritual principles sometimes and not at other times, and expect to make any real progress, because the very act of picking and choosing is self-serving in the lower sense (of merely entertaining the personality).

The proper lifestyle is also important because it reinforces one's commitment and embracing of values. If one's lifestyle is inconsistent with one's principles then it will naturally undermine one's effectiveness and spiritual progress. And of course there is great sustained pressure from the world (and people of the world (worldly ways)) to draw the student from the spiritual path and back into the lower worlds of self-serving experience and expression.

The real message here is that the spiritual path requires a holistic approach. It (the student's placement on the spiritual path) properly embraces one's ethics, one's principles, one's values, one's commitment, one's precepts, one's lifestyle. Not in bits and pieces, but in the all of it. It doesn't mean that one is no longer human or able to express oneself in human terms, it simply means that the spiritual path is the most important factor in life and that everything else follows accordingly. One doesn't neglect one's family or worldly duties, one simply embraces them in a higher (spiritual) context.

† Commentary No. 1274

Ordinary Intelligence

Conventional definitions of (ordinary) intelligence are based on an ordinary, worldly and intellectual perspective, where "values" relate primarily to the world and to living in the world and "succeeding" in accordance with the expectations of the world (and given the presumption that living in the world (based on materialism and egoism) is an end in itself). It is based on the (necessary but transient) delusion of life in the material world and is therefore necessarily quite superficial (however useful it may be to living the world and solving worldly (and academic) problems).

Consequently, ordinary intelligence is instinctive and intellectual intelligence. Having mental capacity in ordinary (logical) (rational) (reasonable) "thinking"

and having insight into and understanding of the ways of the world that allows a person to more effectively cope with the world. Cleverness, quick-wittedness, objectivity, etc. are all descriptive of ordinary (academic) (limited) (superficial) (ego-based) (personality-centered) (self-centered) (lower) intelligence. The problem is, that although ordinary intelligence is a necessary development in human intelligence, as it facilitates experience in the (lower) world, it is necessarily limited and limiting, because it does not facilitate or even allow deepening in the greater sense of true perception and higher awareness.

Ordinary intelligence is also fundamentally separative, as it is head-centered and individualistic. It is based in the delusion of separateness and fosters that delusion. It is fundamentally based on instinct for survival and worldly "progress" at the individual level. People at ordinary levels tend to view themselves as distinct entities, being relatively independent of others and involved to some extent in self-determination. People tend to value ordinary intelligence because that is consistent with their life-in-the-world perception, but if one is absorbed in the pursuit of worldly experience, knowledge, and understanding, then one is not able to be responsive to some higher calling. This is because the mind, in its separative role, tends to be self-absorbed and therefore unable to accept "information" that challenges its self-perception. Also because the mind tends to be attached to what is "known" and is not naturally open-minded or amenable to any depth or breadth of learning. Those who are of ordinary (intellectual) intelligence, but focused on learning, tend to be more intelligent and more open-minded, perhaps even more objective in thinking, but still largely limited by the capacity of the mind to function in comfortable patterns.

Ordinary intelligence involves the brain and the mind, the body and the intellect, rather than consciousness per se. Ordinary intelligence is thus rather material in its workings, mechanical in its nature, and subject to conditioning. If the brain is damaged or impaired, then the ability to function intellectually tends also to be impaired. Similarly if the brain is sound but the mind is damaged or impaired. Indeed, ordinary intelligence requires an effective link between mind and brain. Ordinary intelligence is also an outgrowth from animal instinct, being similar but on a higher level.

Intelligence is not consciousness. Consciousness is a higher quality that simply utilizes whatever intelligence there is. Primitive human beings rely primarily on the intelligence conveyed by their animal instinct. More developed human beings have developed the mind to the point where intelligence is primarily intellectual and not instinctive. But beyond (normal) (ordinary) (intellectual) intelligence, is intelligence based on the intuition.

† Commentary No. 1275

Extraordinary Intelligence

Extraordinary intelligence is defined as intelligence substantially beyond the merely intellectual or mindful and not simply a larger measure of intellectual intelligence or “great” ordinary (intellectual) intelligence. In this context, extraordinary intelligence includes substantial lower (instinctive and intellectual) intelligence, tempered by higher consciousness, and enhanced through reliance upon intuition.

While ordinary intelligence is limited and limiting, and grows only in the academic and intellectual (and personal) dimension, extraordinary intelligence is multi-dimensional and holistic. It includes instinctive intelligence (the animal intelligence of the physical body), emotional intelligence (the animal intelligence or “lower intuition” of the astral body), intellectual intelligence (the “human” intelligence of the concrete mind or mental body), and intuitive intelligence (the superhuman intelligence of buddhi). But it is the intuitive dimension that makes extraordinary intelligence special (substantially extraordinary), because it is the intuition (buddhi) that provides true (unbiased) (clear) perceptiveness and awareness and insight in ways uncluttered by knowledge and beliefs and bias and prejudice and conditioning and habits. In ways uncluttered by the lower self, by personality-centeredness (ego) and self-centeredness.

So the key to developing, more properly the key to allowing to unfold, extraordinary intelligence, is the tempering of the ego (mind) (personality) and the cultivation of the (higher, buddhic) intuition, none of which can actually be accomplished until the mind is sufficiently developed, meaning that sufficient ordinary (intellectual) intelligence is a prerequisite, and that too much ordinary intelligence (complete reliance on intellect, a overarching sense of the separated

self, undermines or precludes the emergence of intuition. Indeed, even where there is an intellectual appreciation of these truths, the mind will tend to fabricate what seems to be intuitive insight, where in fact it is most likely and generally merely subconscious (ego-based) intellect at work. But while ordinary intelligence is developed primarily through effort and assimilation of experience, extraordinary intelligence is not really developed but cultivated, allowed to emerge through the tempering of that which impedes the higher consciousness. The ego cannot do that. It can only be brought about through listening and becoming responsive to something higher (and deeper) than the ordinary consciousness.

By extraordinary, in this context, it is not meant abnormal or supernormal in the sense of being an extension of the normal, but simply remarkable and exceptional in the sense of it being so rare and requiring so much preparatory work, and being so misunderstood as to be not even recognized by most people. The truly perceptive, intuitively insightful person is almost invariably recognized (wrongly) as having (merely) an exceptionally keen intellect, when in fact the intellect has been tempered and qualified, held in quiescence, in order to allow the intuition to emerge, utilizing the intellect only as a vehicle of transmission and not as a vehicle of apprehension.

There is another real difference between ordinary and extraordinary intelligence, and that is that ordinary intelligence is based in the body, on material levels (the physical, emotional, and mental bodies) and utilized by consciousness, while extraordinary intelligence is based in consciousness and utilized by something higher than consciousness (the soul). Thus extraordinary intelligence only emerges during the relatively later stages of the path.

Fundamental Insecurity

One of the consequences of inherently inertial materialism, living in the world, (falsely) believing that one is living separately if not entirely independently from other lives, is that a person tends to be attached to what is comfortable. A person has beliefs and a perspective on the world, conscious and unconscious values. One then tends to “think” consistently with those beliefs, that perspective, those values. And anything that challenges those beliefs, perspective, values, evokes feelings of discomfort, even if one does not recognize or acknowledge (consciously or otherwise) those feelings. This seems to evoke or engender a fundamental insecurity within the (typical) human being.

The actual underlying source of this is the insecurity inherent in the body or personality. The body is simply a vehicle, used for a period of time and then discarded. The personality likewise. But over the course of many lives (evolution) the body has developed survival instincts. And so has the personality (ego) as an artificial entity. Thus both the body and the personality tend to grasp that which appears to sustain them, to attach to whatever habits and patterns maintain the status quo or comfort level. But underlying and pervading the body and the personality is a higher consciousness. And so, on some, largely unconscious level, the body and the personality “understand” their transience, and simultaneously accept and deny the truth of this.

Consequently there is a natural and simultaneously contradictory insecurity. This insecurity is then naturally reinforced by the world of appearances, as people are born and die there is realization of transience. Yet lower “consciousness” (body and personality) seeks to sustain itself as itself, and attaches to whatever it can to substantiate its existence and endurance. Unfortunately, much of this attachment and reinforcement (self-justification) occurs subconsciously and is relatively difficult to identify and work through, even if one were willing and interested in doing so.

Fundamental insecurity manifests itself in a number of ways, variously according to the individual and his or her conditioning and experience and abilities in consciousness (relative awareness). For many people there is need

for comforting superficial solutions to various fundamental and psychological insecurities. In conventional religion, for example, assurances of life after death if one belongs to the right church or performs the right rituals or has the right birth circumstances. To a very large extent the ego arises as a means of salving the basic insecurities of life in this world. The ego tends to believe what it wants to believe, what it needs to believe in order to sustain itself. And most people are not able to discern the difference between themselves and their egos, and so unconsciously accept the underlying, largely subconscious dictations of ego as their own.

Somehow “accomplishments” in the lower world appear to satisfy the ego to some extent, strengthening the role of ego in its central place in ordinary human consciousness. When in fact the only accomplishments that really matter of accomplishments in consciousness, i.e., improvements in character and temperament and values, that can be assimilated and taken on to the next level or the next life. But eventually even the ego is forced to acknowledge its artificiality, its transience, and gradually the ego begins to support the person to some extent (and its inertial activities become more subtle and to some extent less impeding). As a person truly and effectively embraces the God within, so is there evoked into the waking consciousness genuine security.

† Commentary No. 1277

Rules

Life is not a game, but there are rules. Some are artificially (but mostly purposively) imposed by various (artificial (worldly)) authorities. Some are more natural, underlying the evolutionary process and facilitating progress. The natural rules are tailored to consciousness in the sense that the rules differ according to consciousness.

For example it is not inherently harmful for a relatively crude human being to eat meat (fish) (fowl), because eating meat is consistent with the relatively coarse (animalistic) consciousness. Consequently, there are no real consequences (penalties). But for a more evolved person, who seeks to progress (evolve) spiritually, to refine the consciousness and achieve communion, eating

meat is really quite harmful because it inhibits (indeed, effectively precludes) the process of refinement in consciousness. So the rules are different. And karma (the mechanism of action and consequence) functions differently in these two cases. The consequences for the spiritual student are substantially more severe than those for someone who is relatively crude or coarse. The spiritual path involves a narrowing of the rules and an intensification and quickening of consequences. When a relatively crude person commits murder the consequences may be relatively mild (even though murder is still “wrong,” but when a refined person commits murder the consequences tend to be much more immediate and more intense.

All of the (natural) “rules” are induced by evolutionary qualification and are intended to encourage and facilitate evolution in consciousness. There is a great underlying and uncontrived wisdom in the rules of the way. But they are uncontrived in the sense that no one thinks them up and sets them into place. God (the Logos) simply qualifies evolution within the Logos field of consciousness, and that qualification naturally induces various rules and laws associated with manifestation and evolution. The whole process is natural, albeit divinely inspired, but not manipulated (or manipulatable) in any sense. There is great, higher intention, but the details of manifestation and the rules that guide progress are left to be induced by the process. They (rules) are nonetheless meaningful and nonetheless serious.

Various “authorities” religious and secular provide “encouragement” in the form of “rules” ... most of which are sincerely intended for the greater good and based upon the (necessarily limited) consciousness (understanding, wisdom) of the authorities. But the problem of artificial rules is that they need to apply in the same ways to everyone, regardless of quality of consciousness. Consequently they may be helpful in some generalized way, but not necessarily and not generally in all the ways that one needs. They are geared to those for whom evolutionary is a very gradual process, and not to those who move more quickly (gently) (subtly) along the spiritual path.

One of the rules that is not so easy to understand is that the (natural) rules cannot actually be conveyed externally, but each person must gradually and progressively realize what the rules are (for oneself) (based on first-hand experience and growth in consciousness). In the early stages there are

externally-imposed rules (e.g., the golden rule, the ten commandments, the ten pillars of Buddhism) such that those who embrace them are rewarded with progress in consciousness even if the underlying realization of the meaning, truth, and value (of the rules) is not there, but for the most part one must genuinely realize the meaning, truth, and value in order to effectively embrace them. And as one does so, greater insight (realization) is evoked.

† Commentary No. 1278

Non-Correlative Expression 1

For the vast majority and preponderance of people, the way a person thinks and feels and behaves is primarily a matter of conditioning, of the habits born of being absorbed in the world and worldly experience, of being entangled unconsciously in the ways of the world (personality-centered consciousness) (the delusion of materiality and delusion of ego). For the vast majority and preponderance of people, life in the world is really quite superficial in the sense that there is little if any realization of the world as it is, just a matter of seeing and thinking and feeling in accordance with the appearance of things.

Unfortunately, while superficiality dominates life in the lower worlds, there is little or no actual realization of this fact. People who are shallow or superficial have no conscious realization that they are, indeed, shallow or superficial. Because (almost) everyone else is also shallow or superficial.

But while the vast majority and preponderance of people are simply where they need to be to enable the needed experience (afforded by absorption in the lower worlds), the spiritual student needs to gradually and progressively awaken from the habits of being so conditioned, from thinking and feeling and behaving mechanically, even while thinking and feeling that one is thinking and feeling acting independently and without being conditioned (i.e., one who is conditioned is generally unaware of the fact that one is conditioned). So the spiritual student needs to break free from these habits, and begin thinking and feeling and behaving in accordance with the inner, unconditioned senses (intuition). Much of the discipline and practices of the spiritual path are intended to assist or encourage the student in this awakening process.

But one of the most perverse factors (from a metaphysical perspective) is the tendency of the mind to correlate, i.e., to think and judge and analyze. Granted that most people don't think effectively and need to learn how to think properly (logically and objectively), the spiritual student who has already accomplished this (i.e., a well-developed but not overly-developed mind), needs rather to learn how to not think, which also means to learn not to unconsciously or automatically (mechanically) think correlatively, analytically, or even logically. It is of course okay to deliberately think correlatively, analytically, logically, and objectively, but not so indeliberately. The key is to be able to maintain awareness of higher, inner senses instead of being absorbed in the (mechanical) thinking process.

One of the aids to breaking these lesser habits is the cultivation of the habit of thinking non-correlatively, which is also to think non-superficially or to not-think in a creative (intuitive) manner, allowing the deeper understanding and wisdom to emerge rather than being unconsciously engulfed by the habits of superficiality. The undeveloped mind tends to respond or react passively to stimulation. The developed-but-untempered mind tends to respond or react to the superficial content of stimulation. To such a mind, words, behavior, other superficial indicators, all trigger conditioned and correlative responses or reactions. Most people engage in conditioned (mechanical) conversation. Words trigger correlative responses or reactions. But for one who embraces not-thinking, reversion to non-correlative expression is a wonderful and relatively unconditioning practice, a means of becoming less superficial, less mechanical.

It is not a matter of frivolity or unresponsiveness, it is a matter of being conscious. Allowing responses to emerge naturally, uncontrivedly. So when someone says "How are you?" perhaps a suitable response would be "Sheffield Wednesday" or "Serious Moonlight" ...

Non-Correlative Expression 2

But in responding non-correlatively, i.e., where the response does not naturally correlate with the stimulus, one should not be flippant or unresponsive. One must also be careful not to allow the non-correlative process to become mechanical, i.e., to become correlative in its non-correlativeness. On the other hand, one should not think about it. And eventually even the habit of non-correlative expression becomes an impediment to something even deeper in consciousness.

Part of the problem (of mechanistic thinking) is that people generally live according to their expectations (delusions) and do not really listen to what other people are saying, and do not really see what is actually happening. And when they do listen, they tend to react to the words rather than the energy (quality) and underlying content. The mind tends to (intellectually and mechanically-reactively) “read into” things without any real (intuitive, insightful) appreciation for what is actually intended or conveyed. Even when confronted with the unusual, the mind will endeavor, successfully or otherwise, to fit the observations into something more familiar (comfortable) and comprehensible in terms of previous experience and conditioning. Thus most people are conditioned in their thinking and conditioned in their expressions (and this does to some (large) extent inhibit the realization of truth). Conventions (and conventional thinking) have some value, for most people, but intelligent non-conformity (where one lives according to some higher calling) is perhaps of much more value to some people.

The mind naturally tends to presumptively correlate observations (words, experience) with its previous experience, habits, beliefs, values, and expectations (often even if there is no real correlations). The challenge is to not allow one's previous experience or knowledge to bias how one responds to words, observed behavior, circumstances, etc. The fact that most people have certain characteristics does not mean that all people have the same characteristics. And people do not generally have all of the same values and conditioning. In some regards there are many similarities among people, in some regards there are few similarities. But in other regards there may be a

great variety. It is about truth, about being able to see clearly, rather than according to our conditioning and our expectations. To relate to people as they are and not as we would preferentially perceive them to be.

But most people are not really comfortable with non-correlative thinking, because it stretches the mind, takes it out of its more comfortable (inertial) patterns. People tend to be comfortable with the knowledge and experience that they have acquired and do not want to be challenged by observations that do not fit into the comfortable patterns. The spiritual student may not be too outwardly eccentric or non-conforming, but in consciousness, in how the student thinks and feels, it is decidedly (constructively) unconventional. It is uncontrived leadership (by example and without intention).

The real objectives of non-correlative expression are open-mindedness, increased perceptiveness, and increased awareness, leading to deeper understanding and wisdom. Non-correlative expression is an expression of intelligent non-conformity. It is not a matter of separateness, but a matter of becoming free from the conditioned conformity of life in the lower worlds. Indeed, graciously and sincerely embraced non-correlative expression contributes to increasing freedom from materialism and egoism, ultimately to true communion, with humanity as a lifewave, with all lives, and with God.

† Commentary No. 1280

Non-Correlative Expression 3

Correlative expression is a matter of expressing something through words or otherwise that correlates in some intellectually or comprehensibly meaningful way, meaning that there is, in principle, a comprehensible and well-defined (reproducible) relationship between the question and response or for whatever the interaction may be, even if there is miscommunication due to presumption or bias. But while most people function mechanically, and think mechanically, there is nonetheless an intelligent correlation in most (correlative) expression. But in non-correlative expression there is no less meaningfulness, indeed there is more. And freedom from much of the ordinary (conventional) conditioning.

In proper non-correlative expression, there is actually significant (meaningful in some higher sense) content conveyed. It just doesn't correlate at an intellectual level. If one asks "How are you?" and the response is, genuinely, "Looking for Lester" then that is an actual (sincere, valid) expression of how one feels and information (energy) (quality) is actually conveyed. If the non-correlative expression is genuinely uncontrived (i.e., spontaneous and intuitive) and if the recipient-observer is likewise genuinely-sincerely listening (intuitively), then there is mutual realization and real communication. Indeed much more meaningfully so than through ordinary (contrived) (correlative) (intellect-based) (personality-centered) (ego-based) communication.

But one can never genuinely (properly) say the same thing in response to the same question, even if one genuinely feels the same (though the mind will no doubt attempt (independently) to establish a correlative pattern). This is because while the energy (quality) content (feeling) (sense) may be the same as before, the non-correlative expression is decidedly different (i.e., it does not (cannot naturally) correlate with the previous non-correlation). It is simply a matter of there being a language of non-correlation that transcends the intellectual abilities and requires intuitive insight for comprehension. It transcends (normal) language. Zen koans are some (almost conventional) examples of non-correlativeness.

But the practical advantage of non-correlative expression is that it transcends the limitations of language. The mind tends to be attached to words and is comfortable with correlation ((and with anti-correlation) but not with non-correlation). But the mind also tends to interpret based upon words rather than energy or quality. The mind also tends to "read into" what is said by interpreting (properly or otherwise) (consciously or unconsciously) presumed-to-be-associated factors (such as body language) which may or may not be consistent with the intended content. Much of the "interpretation" occurs unconsciously and so constitutes a bias that the person is not generally aware of. And of course words mean different things to different people. Conventional language is, to a considerable extent, limited in its ability to convey any real depth. But in non-correlative expression, the mind is discouraged from making attachments and from making interpretations, which allows the intuition to emerge and provide genuine insight.

While non-correlative expression is much less likely to become mechanical than conventional expression, there is nonetheless a danger, of one becoming enamoured in the process of non-correlative expression. It is not a game. It is not in itself frivolous. It is light-hearted. It is gentle. It does convey something meaningful. But it is not an end in itself.

† Commentary No. 1281

The First Precept

The first precept is the principle of abstention from killing living beings, or love. While the precept focuses on abstention from killing, in the broader sense it includes abstention from causing injury (ahimsa). Most people understand that killing or hurting other people is generally “wrong” and a few even understand that the same is true for killing or hurting animals. But few people truly understand this.

The killing or injuring of any creature is inherently counter-evolutionary in the sense that it is a grave imposition, the deprivation or limiting of existence and experience in this world, and in the sense that since all lives are interconnected one is simply killing or injuring oneself in the process, and there are (grave) consequences. One might argue that it was the victim’s karma to be killed or injured, and this would be true, but only in the victim’s framework, and the act itself would still be wrong in the actor’s framework or perspective. Any act of violence or imposition upon another life is generally and inherently wrong. There may be extenuating circumstances, which make it a matter of necessity, on some intellectualized-moral basis, and the temptation may exist to rationalize killing or harming in order to serve one’s own (merely apparent, deluded sense of) self-interest. But it is still wrong.

Each person is responsible for his or her own circumstances. Thus any situation in which one is tempted to rationalize one’s actions as unavoidable is nonetheless a consequence of one’s actions. Thus if one is “forced” to kill, then one is not any less responsible. Many argue that “animal” life is inferior or that animals are here for human exploitation, neither of which is actually true. Animals are simply different. They have different consciousness, different characteristics and methods and means of evolution, but they are no less worthy

than human beings for existence (experience and expression) in this world. Some may argue killing animals (or human beings) is a matter of self-defense, failing to realize that “threatening” animals (or human beings) are only attracted to us as a consequence of our consciousness and actions. No human beings and no animal lives are “here” to provide sport for or sustenance to others at the expense of their own lives or freedom of expression. Granted the karma of humanity and the karma of animal lives are complicated, and have led to current circumstances, but the principles of ahimsa (non-violence) remain valid. Especially for the spiritual student.

One might be tempted to rationalize ahimsa on the basis of avoidance of consequences, i.e., that to kill or injure another life (human or animal) eventually brings about grave consequences and suffering to the doer, but pure action (ahimsa) needs no such self-serving motive. While the karma of human lives and animal lives does not include provision of sustenance, and while the karma of plant life does include provision of sustenance, one should nonetheless express love in one’s relationship to the plant kingdom, affording whatever opportunities there need to be for “plant life” existence, experience, and expression, even while cultivating and harvesting the contributions in sustenance (e.g., food, oxygen, shelter).

But fundamentally, it is a matter of the “practice of equality of self and others” or paratmasamata). All lives are interrelated. All are connected. Love is the energy and quality and principle that reveals and actively expresses this connection. One who lives from the heart simply cannot kill or injure another life, through thought, feeling, or behavior. With love, one simply does what is right to do, non-separatively.

The Second Precept

The second precept is the principle of abstention from taking the not-given, or generosity. There are of course fundamental issues of ownership, rightful ownership, apparent ownership, collective ownership, non-ownership, respect for others and others' rights, and theft, all of which become secondary to one's sense of generosity (and transcending the sense of materialism and egoism that pervade ordinary human relationships).

In the deeper sense one does not ever really own anything. Ownership is therefore merely apparent. This world and the "things" in this world do not belong to anyone, nor to everyone, but to God. Collective ownership is a step in the right direction (of understanding and respecting things in the world of appearances), but even collective ownership is merely apparent. Bigger problems are simply attachment to things (possessiveness) and individuality in the sense of separateness. The relatively unevolved tend to be attached to things, to be "possessive" of things and to (unconsciously if not consciously) exercise "individual" rights, which gives rise to competition, theft (stealing) (grasping), violence, etc. But as one evolves in consciousness, the student tends to be less attached to things, to think (and feel (and behave) less separatively, to be more gracious and to be more generous. To embrace goodwill as an end in itself.

But in the more pragmatic and worldly sense, there is apparent ownership of things, and the spiritual student should endeavour to respect other people and their apparent property and their apparent property rights. People are more correctly stewards of property (and money). Apparent "possession" conveys responsibility for proper utilization of that property or financial resource. And in not being attached to "one's own" property, and in looking more toward some greater perceived good, the evolving student becomes increasingly charitable and generous (and more gracious in human relationships). And since there is no real ownership (and no real limit to energy or substance), being generous tends to evoke more resources to be utilized for the good of all.

But this second precept has actually a much broader context than merely respecting the (apparent) property rights of others, being much more than simply a discouragement from stealing what appears to belong to others (i.e., wrong appropriation). It is really about not taking from others what is not freely given. So "ownership" (and apparent ownership) is not the real issue. Taking what is not freely given is a form of violence. And it matters not that in the world there maybe a majority of people who look out for themselves at others' apparent expense, the preclusions from violence and from hurting others in any way still hold. The spiritual student lives according to higher values. And loses nothing in doing so. There is no real advantage that one person has over another. That is all a matter of worldly perspective, seeing things superficially, according to appearances, rather than according to the underlying truth and reality.

In some sense the second precept follows as an extension of the first, as (true) love naturally begets generosity as is essentially incompatible with "ownership" and other separatively individualistic notions. Indeed, in the higher sense there is no distinction between the giver, the gift, and the recipient. And in the broader sense, generosity includes not "taking" someone's time or energy (vitality), it includes faithfully honoring all of one's debts and obligations to others, and it includes being generous and gracious without regard to the existence of graciousness and gratitude in others.

† Commentary No. 1283

The Third Precept

The third precept is the principle of abstention from sexual misconduct, or contentment. There are actually two dimensions to this precept, one concerned with avoiding or transcending sexual misconduct in the normal sense and the other, relatively more noble, concerned with transcending (absolute) identification with one's sexual state. In either case, the intended and inferred result is contentment.

Sexual misconduct means different things to different peoples and varies according to diverse cultural and national and racial and religious contexts. But fundamentally, sexual misconduct refers to physically and emotionally and

mentally unhealthy sexual practices, i.e., practices (perverted and otherwise) that undermine spiritual growth (primarily through over-identification with the body and over-indulgence in the pleasures of bodily experience). This does not preclude healthy sexual relationship, but it does discourage any sexual extremes that become ends-in-themselves (attachments) (obsessions) and it discourages any sexual practice which is harmful in any way to the participants and/or to others. For example, infidelity (in marriage or in committed relationship) is substantially harmful, to the participants, to the associated non-participants, and to the marriage or relationship itself. It is harmful primarily because it is separative, it undermines the energy and quality of the relationship, the connectedness of the partners. Similarly, sexual experience as an end in itself is substantially harmful. It tends to keep a person at the material level and undermines growth in consciousness. Thus the more obvious sense of abstinence from sexual misconduct is the facilitation of harmlessness and opportunities for spiritual growth. It matters not that it may appear that no one is (obviously) hurt; much of the harm from sexual misconduct occurs on more subtle levels.

But the less obvious sense has to do with identification (or non-identification) with one's sexual state. And the intent is to encourage spiritual students to not identify (absolutely) with being male or female, but to appreciate that on a higher level (the soul) people are androgynous, that sexual dimorphism only exists superficially and in the lower worlds of human endeavor, and not in the higher worlds. Thus to identify with being male or female, without appreciation for the "other" half of one's own being, is misguided to some extent. This is not to deny that one is male or female on some practical level, with associated instincts and needs, and naturally heterogeneously sexual, but to focus more on being a more complete person, without identifying so completely or absolutely with one or the other sex.

Again the keyword is non-separativeness. Identifying with being male or female is inherently separative. In realizing that one is both male and female, with one predominating on this level, and that one is non-sexual at the soul level and beyond, one can begin to transcend the separative nature and touch more clearly the higher common energies. In principle, there is a natural "progression from a state of biological and psychological sexual dimorphism to a state of spiritual androgyny." But this progression should not be (indeed,

cannot be) forced. It simply happens as it needs to, based on overall progress in consciousness. And “spiritual androgyny” does not necessarily mean that one ceases to function as a male or as a female, but it does imply that one no longer identifies exclusively with being one or the other.

In sexual dimorphism there is an underlying tension between the sexes. In true communion (of male and female, in partnership and within oneself) there is only contentment.

† Commentary No. 1284

Karma and Disparagement

The efficacy of karma notwithstanding, one’s understanding of karma should be tempered with compassion and consideration for those who appear to be less fortunate in any way. In understanding that consequences follow actions and that consequences may appear disparately in time, there should not ever be any “judgment” or sense of disparagement for anyone who is facing karmic consequences.

Everyone is subject to karma, the law of cause and effect, action and consequence, even those who don’t believe in karma. Every action, behavior, comment, feeling, and thought is subject to karma. Everyone has strengths and everyone has weaknesses. The strengths, weaknesses, talents, limitations, opportunities, etc., that a person faces at the moment or for a given lifetime, are all a matter of karma. And all is consequential in some sense or another. Everyone is currently facing the consequences of actions. And those unresolved consequences are cumulative, from a wide variety of personal causes and times. But it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to accurately assess specific cause and effect relationships. And karmic consequences emerge not in any form of punishment but in terms of conditions that inherently encourage growth in consciousness.

Perhaps the biggest mistake that someone can make, who believes in karma, but does not actually understand karma, is to judge that particular conditions or circumstances makes a person any greater or lesser than anyone else. One who understands karma would never think so. For in understanding karma, one

realizes that all things are interrelated and that wisdom underlies all that seems to occur in this world. Apparently wonderful opportunities (e.g., health, wealth) may not be all they appear to be, and indeed may be (and are generally) part of something much more subtle. Similarly, apparently less-than-wonderful circumstances (e.g., physical or mental disability, poverty) may mask something (opportunity) quite meaningful and valuable. So one should not (ever) judge based upon appearances, for there are underlying factors that may not be generally apparent.

Even where current consequences are related to previous (current) (future) "sins" there should be no less compassion or consideration. Indeed, the apparently less fortunate should be admired for their ability to evoke such consequences and for the courage to face up to them, while others take on less intense karmic measures (for the time being). Moreover, the whole concept of "sin" is somewhat inherently prejudicial and judgmental; there are no sins, per se. There is simply "action" that evokes learning opportunities through consequences. But in addition to "personal" actions and consequences, there is also collective actions and consequences, and it is difficult (virtually impossible) to discern the difference between what is personal and what is collective but manifesting personally. Thus one who is "unfortunate" may simply be (nobly) undertaking some collective karma.

All peoples (and spiritual students in particular) should rise above all tendencies to judge others, which is quite separative (inherently harmful). Likewise, all peoples (and especially spiritual students) should rise above all tendencies toward disparagement. All actions, behaviors, comments, feelings, and thoughts should be tempered by compassion, considerateness, discretion, gentleness, kindness, etc. If one truly lives from the heart, if one truly embraces the bond that exists between all lives, then it is simply not possible for one to be harmful or disparaging.

Changing Consensus Values

As people gain experience and develop in terms of relative intelligence, awareness, and consciousness, that experience and development is reflected in the ethics and principles and values that are consciously or not-so-consciously embraced. The same is true for collective consciousness.

People tend to change their outlooks, perspectives, and values according to their conscious or unconscious realizations. For example, a person who truly realizes that smoking is not healthy will simply not smoke. If the person doesn't truly realize that, then the person will simply make excuses for continuing the habit of smoking. The fact of addictiveness notwithstanding. Something is addictive only to the extent that the person truly allows it to be so. Consciousness can (and in many cases does) transcend the (addictive) tendencies of the lower nature (protestations of the body or the emotions) (and assorted concrete mental attachments). But for a person to actually realize something, e.g., that drinking alcohol is inherently undermining consciousness, there must be true (conscious) assimilation of experience resulting in the courage to embrace the new value(s) even if contrary to the consensus (thinking) (of ordinary humanity).

But while personal values change not very quickly, because it generally takes time to truly assimilate experience, values held collectively sometimes change very (very) slowly and sometimes relatively more quickly than is the case for some people individually. Indeed, many people change values incidentally, because collective or consensus values have changed, rather than because there is any true realization at the individual level. For example, many people today realize that "smoking" is harmful, because the collective or consensus realization has changed. Even while pioneers (in consciousness and values) came to this realization more directly and substantially in advance of the majority or consensus. Yet it is the "thinking" of the pioneers that precurse the changing consensus values, and the "idea" that smoking is harmful simply grows gradually in the collective consciousness until there is some critical mass, at which time there is (in some sense) a growing contagion of passive realization. Eventually this will occur also for use of alcohol (and other drugs)

(i.e., that they are inherently harmful (counter-evolutionary)) and ultimately (likewise) for consumption of meat, fish, and fowl.

But there is of course great inertia, resistance to change. Habits (addictions) abound, on physical, emotional, and concrete mental levels. People are consciously and/or unconsciously quite comfortable with the ways things are and relatively uncomfortable with changes that they do not really understand. And real progress in consciousness comes not from passively embracing collective values, but through conscious individual realization.

And sometimes there is an ebb and flow of consensus values (i.e., where values are not quite broadly consensual), as in the case of (relatively unpopular prohibition (of alcohol)). But there is encouragement in the sense that there are active debates (considerations) of most poignant issues, e.g., abortion, alcohol (even if only in the context of driving while intoxicated), animal rights, children's rights, drug use (abuse), human rights, respect for cultural and racial and religious differences, etc. It is this framework of open consideration of values that stimulates growth in collective values. It is not about legislation or imposition. It is about experience and understanding and realization and (then) embracing the needed values (doing the right thing for the right reasons).

† Commentary No. 1286

Delusion and Denial

Delusion is defined as the state of being deluded about something or in some way, believing something falsely and acting as if it were not false, especially in the sense of false beliefs regarding oneself or others that persists despite factual or objective evidence. Delusion "implies self-deception concerning facts or situations" that is relatively uncommon and/or not shared by others in general, while illusion "implies an ascription of truth or reality to something that seems to normal perception to be true or real but in fact is not." Thus while many people suffer the illusion that the physical world is real, relatively few are actually deluded about their place in the world. Delusion, then, is a more serious matter than illusion.

There are many illusions inherent in living in the objective world, wherein people tend to see things as they appear to be rather than as they are actually. Conditioning tends to strengthen these basic illusions. But as a person grows and deepens with experience and assimilation of experience, over the course of a lifetime and over the course of a succession of lifetimes, there is a gradual and progressive awakening to the illusionary nature of this world. The slightly more "enlightened" person simply sees things a bit more clearly, a bit more closer to reality, a bit less unencumbered by appearances and unconscious assumptions and presumptions about the world and a person's place in the world (and the nature of experience (and the nature of being)). But "delusion" is a bit more special than illusion, because it is inherently more personal, more individual, more a matter of personal perception than (more collective) illusion. Most delusion is a matter of uncommon (personally-oriented) beliefs that are simply false, but there are some cases where most people are deluded, sort of an extension and personalization of illusion, while some (fewer) people can see (relatively more) clearly and correctly. And of course there is also the case where a majority of people think that "someone" is deluded when in actuality it is not so.

One of the most prevalent delusions is that of believing oneself to be happy or unhappy. This is a delusion compounded and engendered by wrong identification, of (the illusion of) identifying oneself with the body and feelings rather than with the (actual) indwelling (higher) consciousness). Less prevalent, but more serious, is the delusion that one is "happy" when indeed one is, at the level of appearances, actually not so. This is a modest form of denial, of simply denying the relative (practical) truth about oneself that is more readily apparent to others.

Denial compounds and goes beyond merely being deluded. Denial is an actual (conscious) "refusal to admit the truth or reality" of something. Thus being deluded is not a matter of awareness (indeed, is a matter of not being aware), while being in denial is a matter of consciously believing something for which there is substantial evidence to the contrary. But people tend to perceive and to believe what they want to, what sustains the illusion (perhaps even delusion) of (therefore unthreatened) comfortableness (illusion of security), what is consistent with their world view (the way they view the external world) and/or their personal view (the way they perceive themselves).

But many self-perceptions are simply convenient (and wrong). If a person's self-perception is substantially at variance with how another person perceives him (her), there is delusion (by one or the other or both), depending on what is actually true). Thus the spiritual student should strive to be open and honest about oneself and about one's external perceptions.

† Commentary No. 1287

New Age Delusions

There is a great deal of underlying, uncommon truth associated with new age metaphysics, but there is also widespread delusion (in many or most new age practitioners) based on limited understanding of those truths and based on unrealistic self-perception.

One of the "truths" of new age metaphysics is that each person is a living God or Goddess, when in fact the actual truth is that God lives within each person, that there is an underlying divine nature, and that a person can in principle tap into that underlying divine nature and evoke changes or expressions of that divine nature in the daily life. But if the outer, superficial self (personality) assumes that "it" (oneself in the sense of the waking-personality or personality consciousness) is the indwelling God, then one is very definitely deluded. Because the ego (personality) is simply an artificial entity that is utilized by the underlying divine nature (soul) (higher consciousness) (monad). Most people who study metaphysics simply very wrongly confuse the ego and the higher self. The problem is compounded by the "new age" emphasis on self-esteem (even while healthy (modest) self-esteem is constructive for most people).

Another great metaphysical "truth" is that one can change one's circumstances, create one's future, in accordance with whatever is desired. Indeed, creatively having expectation does evoke energy and forces toward fulfillment of that expectation, but there is also a matter of karma (and practicality) that is often conveniently ignored by the new age practitioner. And indeed, one can bring about changes, but only to the extent that those changes are consistent with one's karma, i.e., what one actually needs and deserves. One of the greatest

new age delusions is the belief that "God wants me to be happy" which tends to justify whatever behavior evokes (artificial) feelings of happiness. The problem is that "God" does not "want" anything. God provides the creative evolutionary framework, but does not get involved in the details of manifestation or evolution (and does not get involved in "individual" lives or circumstances). Happiness and sadness are necessarily superficial. God is not.

Positive thinking can be a real boon to one's day-to-day life experience, and yet unbalanced, unrealistic, positive thinking is delusional. A broad framework of positive thinking (feeling) is healthy, but where positive thinking is applied to details of personal matters, there is some measure of delusion (inconsistency between what is expected and what is actual). And to continue to believe something that is unrealistic is also the beginnings of delusion compounded by denial, especially if one is entangled in day-to-day life and personal (artificial) circumstances (desires, expectations, reactions to circumstances).

Any emphasis on being "beautiful" or being prosperous or having great self-esteem or "taking charge of one's life" (another great metaphysical delusion) necessarily takes the person away from an emphasis on truth and reality. There may be needed lessons in new age metaphysical delusional experiences, but the spiritual student rather needs to cultivate humility and a dedication to truth that allows the truth to be seen or perceived relatively more clearly despite whatever tendencies there may be to the contrary. Indeed, if one focuses on being open to truth, embracing truth, and living the truth as best one can, than one will naturally tend to be "beautiful" and prosperous and not lacking in self-esteem, but without the otherwise attendant delusions.

Control

There is a nominal trendiness associated with “taking charge” or “being in control” of one’s life. While there is some merit or value in this notion, for some people, there are also a number of associated caveats and delusions.

First of all, many people believe or perceive themselves (as egos and personalities) to be in control (of the lower life, of their own destiny) or to need to be in control, when in fact the ego or personality is never actually in control (in any real (non-superficial) sense). Neither are God or the soul. God (and the soul) provide encouragement and qualification to the extent that the lower self (ego) (personality) is receptive and responsive, but they do not control the lower life or circumstances in any direct sense. The waking-consciousness (ego) (personality-consciousness) (lower self) is nominally “in charge” but not really. But there are controlling factors. These controlling factors are the evolutionary principles (evoking evolutionary forces (in manifestation)) that underlay and overshadow all of life in the lower worlds, e.g., karma and dharma. So only in the karmic sense of “actions beget consequences” is any lower self (personality) “in charge” of the lower life. Yet even consequences do not generally follow (or precede) specific actions. Indeed, consequences generally follow (or precede) cumulative actions.

But there is for many people a need to engage (lower) (worldly) life in a more active, head-centered sense. This is where a person is entangled in life in the lower worlds and needs to evoke personal, worldly, experience and expression in order to learn and grow, to actively engage the world and one’s circumstances. But while this is an active engagement, one is still not actually in control of anything (while there may be the delusion of being in control), one is simply more actively engaged. This active stage follows the largely passive and instinctive stage and precurses the subsequent non-active (non-passive) stage of simply being aware of life in this world and “doing” whatever needs to be done, intuitively (non-passively, non-actively, non-willfully) rather than (passively, non-willfully) instinctively or (actively, willfully) intellectually.

The need to be in control of one's own life is necessarily ego-based. While the underlying (higher, non-conscious) purpose is evolutionary experience, the ego is simply attempting to substantiate its role as the (primary) interface between the waking-consciousness and the outer world. The problem is that this process (delusion) occurs only if a person identifies with the lower self (ego, personality, body) rather than with higher consciousness (and it hardly matters that the person "thinks" or "believes" that he or she is indeed identifying with something higher. But almost everyone identifies with the lower self, without realizing that it is so. Even most spiritual students. Learning to discern the differences between the ego pretending to be the soul and the soul itself is a very challenging process. And one that does not (need to) concern most people.

There is also a notion of the controlling personality, one who is perceived to be controlling or unduly influencing others (especially in petty ways). It is generally inherently wrong to impose on others, physically, emotionally, or intellectually, and so the controlling personal is one who is simply not appreciating or respecting the needs of others. But some are perceived as controlling when in fact they are not; where in fact others are simply passive (and yet always responsible for their own actions or reactions) but resentful. Thus one should simply live according to one's own conscience and not worry about what others would have one do or be.

† Commentary No. 1289

Profanity and Vulgarity

The use of profanity and/or vulgarity is necessarily a reflection of coarseness in consciousness, compounded or not by the momentum of it being a matter of personal habits. Those who resort (consciously or more generally unconsciously) to profanity or vulgarity are generally not aware that it is a matter of coarseness and are not generally aware of the consequences of their profanity or vulgarity.

The problem of materiality is endemic to life in this (lower, objective) world. Being immersed in the material world, without conscious appreciation of the fact that one is so immersed, means that it is only natural to embrace worldly and material conditions. Thus almost everything in the lower worlds (of

physical, emotional, and intellectual experience) tends to engage a person as if this (lower, outer) world was real and substantial, when indeed this (lower) world is not real and is merely transient. Material energy tends to be quite “low” or coarse in vibration. Thus those who identify with their bodies or with bodily experience tend to be at a lower (more coarse) vibration in consciousness than those whose experience is more emotionally-based (and similarly, those who identify with their emotional state tend to be at a lower vibration in consciousness than those who identify more with the intellect (and similarly, those who identify with the intellect or with “thinking” tend to be at a lower vibration than those who (actually) identify with the higher self (soul) and the intuitional being)).

In this sense, it is how a person actually identifies that matters more, not so much what a person “thinks” or believes he or she is identified with (e.g., most spiritual students are emotionally-polarized and head-centered but perceive themselves (wrongly) to be mentally-polarized or intuitively polarized and heart-centered, and it is how they are that primarily affects consciousness, not so much where they “think” they are). Although one can creatively affect the balance in consciousness through identification with higher consciousness.

In any event, there are various practices in “life” that detract from or inhibit spiritual growth or deepening, and various practices that enhance or encourage spiritual growth. The most basic of these practices is the extent to which one is actively engaged in refining one’s consciousness. A person engaged in profanity and/or vulgarity is necessarily lowering one’s natural vibration, engaging coarseness and inviting that coarseness to dominate the aura (etheric and astral and mental bodies). Being coarse inhibits refinement. Engaging in coarse practices likewise. Conversely, avoiding coarse practices facilitates refinement. There are very valuable “refinement” exercises in meditation. Avoiding profanity and vulgarity is helpful (and (gently, non-separatively) insulating oneself from (the effects of) profane and vulgar people, likewise).

But it is not simply a matter of how profanity and vulgarity affect oneself, it is also a matter of how these practices affect others. Coarseness tends to attract and encourage coarseness (as refined consciousness tends to attract and encourage refinement in consciousness (in oneself and others)). Thus in avoiding the practices (habits) (coarseness) of profanity and vulgarity, one is

“acting” in a more evolutionary manner and allowing the higher (more refined) consciousness to more effectively emerge and be expressed in the lower self. The spiritual student should take care to be aware of one’s tendencies toward materiality (profanity, vulgarity) and through proper meditative exercise and focus, gradually refine the consciousness so that these tendencies no longer apply.

† Commentary No. 1290

Spiritual Frameworks

In addition to the complementary distinctions between psychological and metaphysical frameworks, there is a matter of depth and breadth and inclusivity of various religious or spiritual frameworks.

In the religious and spiritual context, a person is generally found in a place of relative psychological comfort. The religion or spiritual philosophy that one embraces is generally consistent with one’s experience, with one’s intelligence and consciousness, and with one’s religious and spiritual needs. In such a (comfortable) place, the framework is broad enough and deep enough to be spiritually and psychologically satisfying. All of one’s life’s experiences, ethics, principles, understanding, values, etc., can fit nicely enough within that spiritual framework. Thus, for example, to a fundamentalist Baptist-Christian there is great comfort in one’s faith and one’s faith is broad enough and deep enough to be all-inclusive, there being no need for anything beyond that framework. Indeed that framework provides a considerable opportunity for growth and deepening and service.

But eventually the student grows beyond the boundaries of that basic framework. With experience, with deepening, come new realizations, and one becomes dissatisfied with the “old” framework (which has nonetheless served its purpose). One then looks for and generally finds a new framework that is simply more comfortable, more comforting, more satisfying, more amenable to the growth and deepening that is needed. This does not in any real sense invalidate the truth and value of the previous framework. The new framework is not “better” in any absolute sense, but it is “better” in the sense of being what the person needs, for the time being. The new framework is then naturally seen

(consciously or unconsciously) as broader, deeper, more inclusive than the previous framework. Someone who embraces the framework of the "Unity Church" for example, may see the former, more conventional faith as a small part of some much larger, much broader, much deeper, much more meaningful framework (at least for now, and at least for that person).

The principles of the earlier faith can then be seen in a broader, deeper sense, even though this could not be apprehended at the time one was embracing the former framework. The "old" can be interpreted in a "new" light. And progress (experience, broadening, deepening, spiritual growth) is facilitated. Thus spiritual growth really involves a continual broadening and deepening of perspective or framework. For example, one who is a Christian may undergo a number of periods of reframing, perhaps even over the course of several lifetimes, until Christianity is seen as a small part of some even broader framework. Because of the limitations and constraints inherent in "religion" many people move beyond religion in their quest for truth, sometimes losing something in the process. While others simply embrace a more spiritual (less religious) perspective while remaining within a comfortable religious-spiritual framework. Yet the tendency remains to see one's framework (Baptist, Unity, whatever) as all-inclusive, even while it is actually just a small part of something yet-to-be-apprehended.

In any event, as one progresses in this matter, as the framework gets broader and deeper, one begins to realize that all God-centered religions and spiritual philosophies are leading pretty much to the same place in consciousness. The barriers between various religions and spiritual philosophies are recognized as artificial, and the deeper essence of one is seen, undiminished, in all.

Eugenics

Eugenics is the “science” that deals with the presumed “improvement of hereditary qualities of a race or breed” and evokes a number of ethical and metaphysical considerations. Eugenics is based in principle with noble intent, but in practice it is based on a number of questionable assumptions, e.g., that human intervention can actually change something, that genetic factors are causes rather than consequences, and that the implied objectives of eugenics are actually noble and reasonable.

Action certainly evokes consequence, individually and collectively. There is free will. And there is karma. “Selective breeding” appears to have consequences. But there is a bigger picture, a panorama of individual and collective evolution in consciousness in which artificial interventions are simply (primarily or substantively) effects rather than causes. The notion of improving the opportunities for survival (or prosperity) (or intellectual advancement) and improving the quality of life through genetic manipulation may seem noble enough, but these things happen naturally, according to natural law, and according to need rather than willful intent or manipulation of the gene pool. Furthermore, there are many “souls” whose karma is consistent with the relatively limited “bodies” that are relatively commonplace. Genetic makeup, vulnerability to disease, etc., are all karmic consequences. And only those people whose karma allows advancement-in-form can actually “take advantage of” improved forms.

While there may be some (modest) value in eugenics, in principle, the real issue in eugenics is in the ethics of imposition and the “abuse” of eugenic principles and practices (e.g., ethnic cleansing). Although perhaps not as popular these days, eugenics has in the past been strongly linked to imposed sterilizations and other attempts to prevent “inferior” peoples from breeding. And even today eugenics is sometimes a (fallacious) basis for (necessarily unfounded) racial and ethnic discrimination. This includes rather callous assumptions (illusions)/(self-serving rationalizations) that “inferior” people (i.e., people sufficiently “different” from those who are presumed to be “proper”) do not enjoy a sufficient quality of life, that they do not contribute sufficiently to society, or

that somehow the “superior” people and their offspring benefit from eugenics. But all of these assumptions are unfounded and unreasonable, being based on intellectualizations rather than genuine understanding.

First of all, there are no “inferior” or “superior” people. People simply exhibit various attributes and characteristics that are perceived as various strengths and weaknesses. But the person-in-manifestation is not the real person. The real “person” is the soul. And given karma, a person may chose to incarnate with various limitations in order to better embrace learning opportunities. And people who seem not to be living in the “normal” ways may indeed nonetheless be living valuable lives-in-consciousness. But eugenics leads sometimes to callous disregard for human rights and (necessarily unfounded) discrimination against peoples whose appearances are misleading (e.g., people with perceived physical limitations, people of perceived “limited” intelligence, etc.).

Eugenics only really makes sense in some hopelessly superficial (artificial) sense. If the broader perspective is realized, then the focus is necessarily on compassion and consideration for others rather than manipulation of superficial circumstances.

† Commentary No. 1292

Concision

Throughout history there have been numerous attempts, some successful, some less so, to simplify religious and/or spiritual philosophy (theosophy) and practice into something relatively more concise and relatively easy (for most people) to apprehend. In most instances this process of concision is undertaken by one who does not fully comprehend the material (philosophy) (principles) (theosophy) sufficiently to avoid losing substance and focus in the process, and the result is relatively limited in its import to some cultural context. But in some cases there is inspiration and viable consequence (broader import).

Thus there have been a number of really quite successful concisions. Most are relatively concise on more than one level, i.e., a superficial concision for common practice and a more subtle (esoteric) (more symbolic) framework for those who have the proper keys (i.e., who are suitable prepared through previous experience

(conscience) (education and training) and who have a well-developed intuitive sense) and can go deeper into the material (without being burdened by detail or by superfluous words). Some poignant examples are the ten commandments (Christian), the ten precepts (Buddhist), the entire Bhagavad Gita (Hindu), and the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

Clearly some of these efforts are more concise than others, and some are relatively more natural and relatively more “inspired” than others. But what matters is the quality of the content and the relative simplicity of the teaching. A spiritual teaching that embraces many procedures and rituals and rules is more likely to be relatively ineffective, and the student is relatively more likely to get lost in the relatively superficial details, e.g., performing a ritual without really appreciating the context and purpose and import, or focusing on some practice to the exclusion of other (needed and meaningful) practices. Similarly, the depth and breadth of detailed theosophical teachings, while potentially conveying great value and potentially evoking much insight, is vastly more than one generally and really needs. At the other extreme, if one were to suggest that focusing on (God’s) love should suffice, as love is all-embracing, even though true, the ordinary student is not likely to see much beyond the superficial element of love to love in its higher, deeper sense. Thus focusing on love is necessary but not sufficient. And (comprehending) theosophy in its entirety is potentially sufficient but not necessary.

The golden rule, the ten commandants, and/or the ten precepts would seem to suffice for most people, while the Yoga Sutras (or something comparable) would seem to suffice for most deeper students. This is not to say that one concision necessarily works equally well for all students, but some are relatively more potent than others (for some people and circumstances), and some are relatively more generally potent than others. But anything (concision) that is relatively clear and concise is thereby relatively potent, and if the formula is both concise and comprehensive then so much the better.

There are of course both concisions (collections of precepts or aphorisms) and frameworks. Some frameworks are relatively natural than others, some are relatively compact, some are relatively comprehensive. Of the more natural, more concise, more comprehensive frameworks is that of the seven rays. There is a depth and breadth to the seven rays, but there is also a fundamental (and

fundamentally concise) quality to the seven rays. And concisions naturally derived within the seven rays framework are relatively more potent than others, especially if there is correlation with the three primary rays rather than with the seven rays in their broader context.

† Commentary No. 1293

Three Gates

One of the more potent concisions is based on the framework of three primary rays (i.e., in realization that there are three fundamental rays or energies in the universe and that all things belong to one or another of the three (seven) rays). The concision called "three gates" acknowledges and demonstrates what is ultimately necessary and sufficient to reach self-realization and communion (with the God-Christ (soul) within). Of course it is concise and simple only (and truly) in principle. In practice there is a lot of work (undertaking) to be realized within the three gates.

In a sense, all paths of evolution in consciousness lead ultimately to the same place, by various means and passages (methods and experiences), but generally embrace one or another of the three gates, for a while sufficient to achieve progress in that dimension, and ultimately through all three. Thus the three gates are in fact three dimensions or aspects, to be embraced sufficiently individually and (ultimately) collectively. It hardly matters in which order these are embraced or undertaken, as long as they are embraced and undertaken conscientiously and sufficiently. One must be earnest. Otherwise there will be only the appearance of progress and no real substance to the progress achieved. And while a student may resonate with one or another of the three rays (gates), the student must necessarily ultimately master all three.

The first gate is humility and refers to the conquering of the ego. This process (effort) takes many lifetimes and is not even undertaken until the ego and intellect have been developed sufficiently to become a hindrance to further development. So while it is the first gate it is generally the last practice to be mastered. It is relatively more subtle than the other two gates, and much more difficult in undertaking. Generally one must first have some considerable

insight into the nature of ego and the courage (and ability) to be honest with oneself about one's own nature.

The second gate is honesty and refers to the commitment to truth that is necessary for self-realization. This too takes many lifetimes, and is complicated by the (self-interest of the) ego and the various deceptions and self-deceptions inherent in experience and expression in the lower worlds. It is not so easy for people to appreciate that being dishonest at any level is actually harmful, to oneself and to others. And that embracing honesty conscientiously is necessary in order to be able to comprehend the truth (in its deeper aspects). Not being honest places and sustains barriers to learning and comprehension of lessons. If a person is not wholly open and honest, then there are substantial limitations.

The third gate is harmlessness and refers to the fundamental behavioral dimension (precept) (ideal) of not harming anyone or any living creature. While it is the third gate it is generally the first practice to be undertaken and mastered, because it is the more readily straightforward to understand and embrace. Therefore most "religions" readily incorporate principles of harmlessness (e.g., the golden rule) and various associated ethics and morals. But the fundamental lesson (intended to be) conveyed is that hurting anyone else is hurting oneself. It is moderately helpful for one to embrace harmlessness. But it is especially helpful for one to embrace harmlessness with the depth and breadth of understanding that this dimension actually represents. Thus the process is developmental and the understanding is progressive. And many lives are required as one finally restores the balance (individually and collectively) (through fulfillment of karma).

The Fourth Precept

The fourth precept is the principle of abstention from false speech, or truthfulness. It is the first of four precepts nominally concerning speech. Speech is one of four modes or means of action (thinking, feeling, speaking, and doing) and each of these four precepts embraces all four modes to some extent. These precepts, in the context of each of the four modes of action, are all a matter of harmlessness. Doing something physically is most obviously an action with potential consequences. Speaking is also physical and evokes consequences on two levels, the import of the words in waking-consciousness, i.e., what they actually mean to oneself or to someone else, and the import of the words in some higher sense. Feeling and thinking are less physically obvious, but nonetheless convey (more subtle) energy that has import.

Truthfulness is important in at least two regards, namely in the sense that thinking, feeling, speaking, or doing other than truthfully and honestly is harmful to others, directly (in ways relatively obvious) and indirectly (in less obvious, more subtle ways), and in the sense that thinking, feeling, speaking, or doing other than truthfully is harmful to oneself, i.e., in undermining the ability to discern the truth. Conversely, speaking (thinking) (feeling) truthfully, honestly (and kindly) is not harmful. Being honest (sincerely embracing what is believed to be true) is essential to being truthful (actually embracing actual truth). Thoughts, feelings, spoken words all have potentially tangible effects in the world. Truthful expressions are inherently harmless or constructive (evolutionary). Untruthful expressions are inherently harmful or destructive (counter-evolutionary).

Much of speech (as much of action) is based on conditioning, on habits various and cultural constraints in the context of some perceptive framework. And one's relative truthfulness likewise. Thus one should endeavor to break whatever conditioning there is, whatever mechanicalness, so that one can proceed more consciously and responsibly, as honestly and as truthfully (and as kindly) as one can. The single biggest hindrance to progress in consciousness is the relative inability to discern and embrace the truth. The mind is so filled with conditioned thoughts, and speaking so filled with conditioned speech, that

these inhibit the ability to see and hear and feel and sense any deeper, broader truth. So the student is first exhorted to be increasingly and more objectively self-observant, that one's tendencies in thinking and feeling and speaking can be recognized, and then in recognizing the habits there is encouragement (exhortation) to improve one's embrace of worldly experience and expression by more and more consciously engaging the truth as it is understood.

One of the hindrances to this process is the tendency for a person to unconsciously identify with what is thought, felt, or spoken, rather than to realize that much (if not all) of this emerges from the lower self, more or less independently of the (higher) consciousness. As long as the ego is primarily engaged in the process, then progress will be tempered. Embracing truthfulness allows the higher consciousness to (gradually) emerge into the waking-consciousness. Truthfulness encourages communication and understanding. Truthfulness means minimizing and eventually eliminating bias (exaggeration or discounting, exercising "favor" rather than being objective).

Being sincerely harmless is relatively easy (being actually harmless is much more difficult (because of the relative lack of awareness or realization of what is harmful)). Speaking honestly (being honest) and speaking truthfully (being truthful) is relatively more difficult.

† Commentary No. 1295

The Fifth Precept

The fifth precept is the principle of abstention from harsh speech, or embracing kindly speech. Keeping in mind that what is true for speech is also largely true for thinking and feeling and doing, speaking harshly (crudely) (profanely) (loudly) (unkindly) (critically) (judgmentally) literally poisons the atmosphere and so the import is not merely in how another person reacts to the words or the context of the words, but also to the atmosphere engendered by the words. And while speech, per se, may be brief, the atmosphere charged by harsh words is substantially more persisting. Conversely, an atmosphere charged by kindly words also persists and much more constructively encourages communication and understanding (and good (healthy) (constructive) human relationships).

But harsh speech is not merely that which is crude or profane. It is also anything that is unkindly, obviously (apparent to most senses) and not-so-obviously (what is not so apparent to the senses). Thus critical (thinking) (feeling) speech is unkindly and harmful. And non-critical (thinking) (feeling) speech is potentially kindly and helpful (if also true or at least honest). honest, kindly speech purifies, raises the quality and vibration of the atmosphere. Untruthful, not-so-kindly speech poisons the atmosphere and lowers the quality and vibration. And of course what is conveyed to others through (the energy of) thinking, feeling, speaking, and doing is also simultaneously conveyed to oneself. If one speaks unkindly of or to others, then that (unkind) energy enfolds the speaker as well.

Kindly speech includes being truthful and being gentle and being considerate and being courteous and being polite. Kindly speech comes in two forms, a lower form of that which is spoken kindly from the head or intellect (i.e., what is contrived) and a higher form of that which is spoken kindly from the heart (i.r., what is uncontrived and non-mechanical, what flows naturally from the heart). Thus the student who embraces kindly speech (should) also be embracing the unfolding of the heart and the tempering of the head-centered nature. For it is (only) the head-centered nature that can be harsh or critical or judging. And (only) the heart-centered nature that is uncontrivedly (naturally) kindly and gentle.

Kindly speech is an aspect of harmlessness and a refinement of truthfulness in speech. In effect, truth is kindly. If one speaks unkindly then one is not embracing the truth (and likewise, if one speaks untruthfully then one is not speaking kindly). Those who “embrace” truth in the (merely) head-centered sense are missing a great deal. Those who think, feel, speak, or behave separatively likewise. For truth and kindness and gentleness and courtesy promote rapport, while the lack of truth and/or the lack of kindness and/or the lack of gentleness and/or the lack of courtesy are inherently separative. Those who think and feel and speak and behave independently or without regard for the collective context are separating themselves from themselves. On the other hand one must also be free to think and feel and speak and behave according to conscience rather than mechanically according to the unconscious and conscious expectations of the masses. And realizing that withholding harsh speech is not

sufficient, for harsh thinking and harsh feeling are also quite consequential, and care must be taken to examine that which is thought and felt but not spoken.

But speaking kindly (embracing kindness) is not merely a matter of relating to other human beings but also to other lives (e.g., animal, plant, mineral). All things and all lives (and all actions) are interrelated.

† Commentary No. 1296

Radical Consciousness 1

Radical means relating to a fundamental and considerable (extreme) departure from the usual or traditional. But there is “ordinary” radical and there is “radical” radical.

Ordinary radical consciousness is simply consciousness that exists on the outer fringe of “normal” consciousness and relates to people who seem to be substantially different from the mainstream of human consciousness (i.e., through thinking and feeling, and through observable behavior), especially with regard to people who are attempting to influence society (the mainstream). This includes people who simply don’t fit into the mainstream values or who do not care to fit into the mainstream. This (lower) form of radical consciousness is ego-based, i.e., centered in the personality, and may or may not have some value with regard to influence.

But true radical consciousness (radical radical) is something else entirely. It is not generally observable with the ordinary, superficial senses. And it is so “radical” that it is incomprehensible to those who are not there in consciousness. But it does not matter that it is incomprehensible because it is not even really observable by non-radical people. Truly radical people appear to be relatively normal, but their thinking and their feeling and their basis for action are substantially, radically different from that of the mainstream. Anyone who thinks he or she is himself or herself “radical” is merely (maybe) radical in the ordinary sense and not in the true (higher) sense. Because truly radical consciousness does not involve thinking at all. The senses, the perception, the awareness, of a truly radical person are all so different, not in

some substantially incremental sense, but in some revolutionary sense. Truly radical consciousness is not merely an extreme range of ordinary consciousness. It is radically different and simply not extensive at all.

Depending on the philosophical framework, ordinary human consciousness (and ordinary radical consciousness) is typically four-dimensional (although sometimes there are a few artificial dimensions (extensions) thrown into the mix). Things are perceived in terms of three spatial dimensions and temporally, i.e., through space-time. Thinking and feeling and behavior are all (normally) conditioned by this arguably four-dimensional focus and perspective. But truly radical consciousness is truly of a higher dimensionality, in which the four normal dimensions are simply not important in themselves. Compare ordinary human consciousness to the perceived (presumed) consciousness of an ant. The ant perceives the universe as a flat planar surface. There is distance (although there is questionably awareness of distance). There may even be a sense of time (but doubtfully so). There are simply conditioned instincts and there is extremely limited awareness of the surrounding "space" ...

Compared with the circumstances in consciousness of the typical ant, the ordinary human being has a vastly, fundamentally (radically) different perspective in consciousness. But the typical ant and the ordinary human being have similar consciousness compared to that of a truly radical human being. The perspective of the true radical is so substantially different it is as if he or she is living entirely in another realm altogether (not in the sense of being tuned out to the immediate (ordinary) world, but in the sense of perceiving the ordinary world in a substantively different manner altogether). Compared to the "world" of the true radical, the ordinary world is like a flat, colorless, piece of paper. And what transpires in that ordinary world is simply a very small piece of consciousness.

Radical Consciousness 2

This is not to say that the truly radical human being is superior to the ordinary human being, any more than the ordinary human being is superior to the ant. They are simply different. But the lessons here are that there are truly radical human beings and that they seem to live comfortably among ordinary human beings, although if one looks carefully one will notice some (relatively superficial) differences in how they express themselves in the world (less intensely, more subtly, substantially more refined in consciousness) (but these characteristics are very not sufficient to determine or define radical consciousness). In other words there are (some, few) people who are simply more refined, more subtle than most, and “some” of them (actually very, very few) are indeed radical in this higher sense.

For the true radical there is a paradox of being simultaneously en rapport with humanity in the higher sense (at the inner, higher level of the soul) and relatively isolated by the differences in consciousness (which are so radical that it is not really possible to consider the differences, because the differences are not even conceptualizable by ordinary consciousness). And yet despite the isolation in consciousness, despite the otherworldliness, despite the completely different (wholly non-rational) sense of things, there is some comfortableness in the world. It is as if ordinary people are one-dimensional and radical human beings are two dimensional. The thinking and feeling and basis for action are not extensive, these things are symbolically orthogonal, radically but immeasurably different.

The problem of the truly radical human being is that of apparent isolation. The presence of a truly radical human being is extremely rare. The coincidence of two such people is extremely extremely rare. So while there may be friends and acquaintances and relators and all (or much of) the trappings of ordinary life, there is more likely to be also a deeper sense of isolation and loneliness, even while these factors are a relatively small part of the consciousness. In order to function in this world, the radical human being must limit himself (herself) and adapt to some (modest) extent to this world. So there is potentially much of the ordinary dynamic range of ordinary human experience, albeit experienced in

some radically different ways. In other words, while there is radical existence and radical consciousness, there is also ordinary (enhanced) consciousness. And one feeds the other, to some extent.

One might be tempted to say that a genius or prodigy is a radical human being, but virtually all geniuses and prodigies are simply on the fringe of ordinary consciousness. They may perceive things substantially differently, leaping forward (or backward) to some nominally measurable extent, but they are not (generally) true radicals. While the genius is not (necessarily or generally) a true radical, the true radical is (necessarily and generally) a genius, at least in some (higher) sense. But that genius is simply not generally apparent to others. Because it is not generally something (a talent) that is generally applicable to the world or to living in the world. It is something applicable to living in some non-extensive undefinably transcendental state.

The real lesson here is simply that one must eventually open oneself to transcending this four-dimensional framework. This cannot be “accomplished” but it can be realized. Through removing all the barriers in consciousness, all the conditioning of ordinary existence, all the habits and illusions of life in the lower world. And transcending the tendency to think.

† Commentary No. 1298

Zoroastrianism 1

Zoroastrianism is a religion founded by the prophet Zarathushtra Spitama (Zoroaster). Zoroastrianism is the ancient religion of Persia, albeit with strong links to Judaism and Christianity, and not without some influence on and of Hinduism, Islam, and other noble faiths.

God (the one God) in Zoroastrian terms is known as Ahura Mazda, wise lord. Ahura Mazda is the creator and represents good (evolution) (progress), while the opposing force is called Angra Mainyu, destructive spirit, representing evil (ignorance) (forces that inhibit evolution). Zoroastrianism is also known as the Mazdayasnian religion (i.e., the worship of Mazda). Zoroastrianism is also the

precursor to Mithraism (or vice versa). The central scripture of the Zoroastrian faith is the *Avesta*. Following are a few excerpted Zoroastrian concepts.

Adar or fire, representing the original light of God, holds a special place in Zoroastrianism, e.g., there are consecrated fires and prayer is often performed in front of a fire. Fire is not worshipped, but serves as symbolic focus. Asha is a key Zoroastrian concept, and embraces truth, righteousness, world-order, eternal law, and fitness (holiness). Ashavan refers to a righteous or noble person, one who embraces asha. Baj is ritual silence, or a ritual utterance or prayer which frames an action with the power of a manthra (mantram). Barashnom is a major ritual of purification. Hamistagan is purgatory, a neutral place between heaven and hell where souls go when their good deeds equal their evil deeds. Khwarrah is divine grace. Kriya is ritual action. Namaskar is a short prayer of homage. Paywand is a connection or ritual contact between persons serving as a shield against evil.

In Zoroastrian terms, God is the creator and architect who provides human beings with conscience, the inherent ability (potential ability) to discern between the ways of good (righteousness) (enlightenment) and the ways of evil (ignorance). The Zoroastrian creed is humata (good thoughts), hukhta (good words), and havarastra (good deeds). The *Avesta* teaches the immortality of the soul, and in some sense, Zoroastrianism has many more similarities with Christianity than with Hinduism, e.g., notions of heaven and hell, and of purgatory. And like modern Christianity, notions of reincarnation and karma have been deliberately erased or minimized even while the core teaching (mystical dimension) (of both religions) embraces a sense of progressive reincarnation. Similarly with Judaism, for the Zoroastrian, ethnic identity and religion are synonymous and marrying outside of the religion and conversion to the religion are oftentimes discouraged if not prohibited. And much like the case of fundamentalist Christianity and Islam, there are Zoroastrian fundamentalists who are inherently separative. But there are also more noble adherents (in each religion), who transcend this sense of separateness. There is of course a tendency in each religion to remain faithful to what is believed to be the original intent of the religion (i.e., resisting external influence), and also a tendency to relate more effectively to the rest of humanity without losing anything in the process.

Zoroastrianism also teaches the progress of sacred time, and the eventual end of time. The belief is that the collective good acts of humanity will slowly transform the imperfect material world into its heavenly ideal. This is known as the *frasho-kereti*, or making-fresh, that is, renewal. Like most religious “truths” this has a strong basis in the ancient wisdom (theosophy) and is derived from an understanding of the evolutionary framework.

† Commentary No. 1299

Zoroastrianism 2

Other notions embraced by (some) Zoroastrians (*Zarathushtri*) ... “All religions are equal in stature. Converting from one religion to the next is assuming that one is greater than the other, and is a violation of this belief, i.e., the righteous of every noble religion go to heaven. We are born into the religion that we were meant or pre-destined for, i.e., meaning that before birth, our soul chooses the religion we are born into, the parents, the circumstances, etc. Each religion is like a prescription for spiritual enhancement. If the soul needs some particular kind of preparation to reach perfection (the ultimate goal for the Spirit), then it manifests itself as a human soul and is born into the required religion.” Indeed, all noble (sincere, God-centered) religions are equal. And the soul chooses the parameters of each lifetime. But this does not (should not) preclude needed growth or adaptation. Sometimes the soul is born in one place and circumstances, and over the course of a lifetime is (intentionally) drawn elsewhere.

“All Zoroastrians must wear the *sudreh-kusti*: the *sudreh* is a white cotton shirt and the *kusti* is a woolen tube worn around the waist on top of the *sudreh*. Both are specifically designed for spiritual significance. The tying of the *kusti* is a part of the basic daily prayers of a Zoroastrian.” These are of course cultural aspects of Zoroastrianism, and if sincerely embraced, i.e., with meaningful understanding and not merely superficially ritualistically, they have value.

“Zoroastrian prayers are best be recited in the sacred language of *Avesta*, whose words are mantric, in that they are thought or holy words of *Ahura Mazda* and have more meaning and power than their mundane, literal translation.” Indeed, translation into other languages nullifies the mantric

effect. Effective prayers are both mantric and consciously understood and embraced and not merely ritualistic. "The Zoroastrian book of daily prayers is the Khordeh Avesta. It is a collection of prayers selected from major Avestan works. God has given us an enlightened mind and we are free to choose our path, be it the path of good or evil, but must be willing to accept the consequences for our actions." This is karma.

Zoroastrianism is an inherently mystical religion, rooted in principles of seeking enlightenment and self-realization. Zoroaster was not satisfied with the conventional wisdom and sought higher and deeper truth through meditation. He was a mystic and truth-seeker who found himself (the soul) (God) within, through traditional (ancient, esoteric) mystical practices. In the lower sense of Zoroastrianism (much like the lower sense of Christianity), good and evil are entities, but in the higher sense (of both religions), good and evil are mentalities (one being progressive (spenta mainyu), the other being counter-progressive (angra mainyu)) (natural forces) to be resolved. Embracing goodness leads to wholeness (and immortality); embraced evil leads to darkness and dissolution.

"Moral rectitude, the good and the bad consequences of one's deeds follow every act one performs. Zarathushtra's divine message advocates that every person should choose to serve God, the society, and the living world. It advocates human progress through harmony with the beneficial nature. It accords perfect equality to men and women. There exists no racial superiority." In principle, Zoroastrianism (and every legitimate religion) promotes goodness and harmony and respect for others, and encourages individual and collective growth (evolution in consciousness).

The Order of Bels

The Order of Bels (the Order) is the parent group that sanctions the (outer) organization and work of the Upper Triad Association. The Order consists of approximately one hundred second ray souls who individualized together as a karmic (soul) group during the moon chain and who have in the meantime evolved to the point where virtually all karmic members are either on the path or approaching the path. Over the years a few of these souls have transferred to other orders, and a few from other orders have transferred to the Order, but the bulk of constituents consists of the original members. There are also several specialized deva orders closely associated with the Order.

The Order of Bels does not exist or manifest itself in the objective world, i.e., on the dense physical, etheric, emotional (astral), or concrete mental planes. It only exists on the level(s) of the soul (atma-buddhi-manas), and, indirectly, through its members and representatives in the world. One cannot simply join the Order. Either a person (human being) is already part of the Order at the soul level, or the soul is magnetically drawn to the Order by virtue of its gradually changing character through magnetic attraction at the soul level. Thus membership in the Order is never a matter of seeking or striving but a matter of simply being.

The Order is a holy order in the sense that the group is devoted to the service of God (evolution) and in the sense that virtually the entire group (as souls) has largely transcended the need for worldly experience and expression. There are several categories of (informal, subjective) membership, namely (1) karmic members (who are karmically part of the group but who are not functioning at the level of the group (i.e., who remain bound by karma to reincarnate for further experience and expression (resolution))), (2) conscious initiates and disciples of the group who are actively sanctioned by the group and are able to incarnate as representatives of the group (i.e., representing and conveying the energy and qualification of the group), and (3) transcendents who are no longer able to incarnate. There are also a few people (souls) loosely associated or affiliated with the group in various ways, namely those who are approaching the group magnetically and those who have transcended the group altogether.

The Order is an esoteric group and a peripheral ashram affiliated with the Spiritual Hierarchy of the planet, but is not central to the current evolutionary work of the planet. The group is a second ray group but rather specialized by virtue of its nature and experience (history) and the group performs certain relatively long-term tasks and works in support of present and future humanity (and other lifewaves). The group also serves a bridging function at logoc levels. In contrast with most esoteric (soul) groups, the Order is also a monadic group, where all of its members at the soul level collectively constitute an expression of a monad of a particular nature (first ray). This means that the Order as a whole is much more coherent than most. It also means that the Order is somewhat less dynamic than most.

Historically the Order has rarely incarnated as a whole, but whenever the group has incarnated substantially it has formed an esoteric school and/or has played a (subjectively) qualifying role in some particular civilization or root race. Schools historically associated with the Order have been rather difficult, and challenging (not being appealing to the casual aspirant), almost inhospitable. Although there is some hierarchical flavor, the group operates predominantly collectively and cohesively, but at the soul level. Thus no personality presence can enter the group at its level.



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