



# The Upper Triad Material

## Commentaries XIV

Edited by Peter Hamilton

August 2004



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# The Upper Triad Material

## Commentaries XIV

Third Edition, August 2004

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

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# The Full List of Upper Triad Books:

December 2008

**The Upper Triad Material** 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

Articles	3 volumes
Commentaries	15 volumes
Miscellany	2 volumes

**The Upper Triad Material** 4<sup>th</sup> Edition

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

**A Personal Journey** 4<sup>th</sup> Edition

**Through the Grace of God** 1<sup>st</sup> 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 XIV was written by Upper Triad staff members.

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

## Additional Caveat

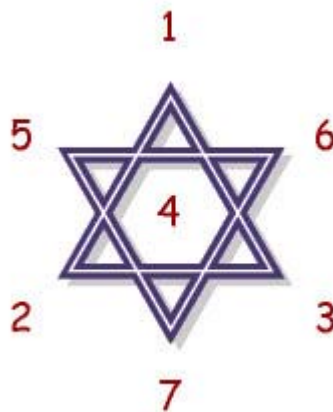
Peter Hamilton is the editor's pseudonym. For questions and comments on the Upper Triad Material, he may be contacted via the following email address.

[peter@uppertriad.org](mailto:peter@uppertriad.org)

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

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

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





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## Religious Orders

Religious orders are particular formal or informal organizations of religious adherents, usually within the framework of a particular religion or denomination, but sometimes bridging between religions and/or denominations. Religious orders are usually formed to encourage and facilitate holiness, advanced religious training, and/or service. Some are substantially reclusive, primarily contemplative orders, while some are very much an active part of some larger community and engaged in one or more service endeavors.

The members of some religious orders live together (indefinitely) in a religious community, while others live together for training and then serve elsewhere while retaining their ties to the order. The advantage of a religious order for advanced training is quite substantial, as a cloistered or semi-cloistered community affords the adherent the opportunity to focus on the immediate task (becoming more holy) without substantial worldly distractions. Typically the members of a particular religious order are all male or all female, though some admit candidates of either sex. The segregation of the sexes is simply additional opportunity to focus on the religious and spiritual objectives. On the other hand, achieving self-mastery in a cloistered environment (e.g., a monastery or convent) is a limited self-mastery, because it is attained without the stress of living in the world. One who achieves this (first level of self-mastery) must then, eventually, go out into the world and be tested (by the worldly experience, by worldly temptations) before attaining true self-mastery. But the cloistered experience offers a fertile ground for the preparatory work. In principle, the (properly prepared) student then goes forth into the world much stronger spiritually to face the world without succumbing to worldliness or egoism.

Adherents of the various religious orders are called brothers, sisters, monks, nuns, etc., according to their religious tradition. Some religious orders consist only (or mainly) of priests or ministers, people (clergy) who are ordained in some manner consistent with their faith and tradition. Other religious orders consist mostly of lay people who are nonetheless devoted to their faith and their order and the principles thereof. But each order typically has criteria for admission for training and additional criteria for ordination or formal acceptance for

membership in the order. In some cases the criteria are formal and objective. In other cases it is primarily subjective and qualitative.

Legitimate (sanctioned, truly spiritual) religious orders respect the dignity of their members, and respect the members of the larger geographical community. While there are typically rules for admission and rules for continuance, the students and adherents are not abused in any way. They voluntarily sacrifice certain freedoms for the advantages of belonging to the religious community and receiving the advanced training. But they are not imposed upon beyond the scope of the rules of the order, and those rules are understood and agreed upon before admittance. In a genuine religious or spiritual order there is minimal personality-centeredness. In the advanced orders there is no personality-centeredness at all.

Some orders are sanctioned by religious authorities, while others function according to some higher calling. While most religious orders operate within the framework of some particular religion, some admit members of all religions and facilitate harmony and respect. In the final analysis, the particular religion is not important, what is important is one's relationship to God.

† Commentary No. 1302

## The Ego State Model

The Ego State or PAC Model and associated transactional analysis (TA) embrace a theory of three ego states or sets of actions, behaviors, feelings, and thoughts. The three ego states or aspects of personality in this system are Parent, Adult, and Child (PAC).

The Parent state is the personality playing the role of parent, either consciously or unconsciously, with some consideration for parental behavior influenced by one's own parents, i.e., acquired parental conditioning. This implies that one's own role-as-parent tends to mimic in some ways the mannerisms of one's own parents. A more conscious person will realize these tendencies and transcend them, incorporating those "inherited" parental traits that are suitable, discarding those which are not, and cultivating new, more suitable traits. In a

broader sense, one's role as parent is also a consequence of what one brings into this world from previous experience, modified by the current experience, and so includes both parental conditioning and experience beyond one's own (current life) upbringing.

Similarly, the Adult state is the personality playing the role of a mature adult, i.e., sensible, but still conditioned by one's upbringing and experience, and potentially changeable as one continues to mature. But the Adult state is relatively more mature than the Parent state, less a matter of (unconsciously) playing a role, more a matter of being oneself and responding to immediate circumstances (here and now) more or less objectively, while the Parent state is often triggered by "parental" circumstances, the Adult state is not. Likewise, the Child state is the personality reverting to the patterns of behavior and feeling and thinking that one had as a child, usually (naturally) being more self-centered (self-absorbed) and being relatively less objective than one would normally be in the parent or adult state.

The problem with the Ego State Model is that it tends to oversimplify things. It is helpful in the sense that much of human behavior can be perceived as fitting into one or another of these three (artificial) states, but the states are merely perceived and inferred on the basis of observations (of behavior, feelings, and thoughts), when in fact the actual and natural ego states are more varied, more complex, and non-correlative. What is more "true" are the actual transactions that take place, which can be perceived as relating to the three states, e.g., between two adults, between a parent and a child, etc. And yet one of the insights of transactional analysis is that people often continue to replay roles, from childhood or other times in one's life, applying largely unconsciously to current circumstances what is not really (sensibly) applicable (i.e., what has not really been resolved lingers influentially).

In this Ego State Model (and in fact) a human being is a composite of ego states and can play a role (embrace a state) in one moment, and another role in the next moment. In principle, the human being can relatively easily evoke the parent within or the adult within or the child within. In practice, most human beings are so conditioned by habits or behavior, feeling, and thinking, that it is all rather quite mechanical, and behavior, feeling, and thinking is largely triggered (almost predictably) by a combination of heredity, upbringing, and

external circumstances (i.e., previous and current experience results in conditioning). The real challenge, through transactional analysis or through other means, is to become more aware of this conditioning and gradually transcend it, in the process becoming more enlightened and becoming more effective (constructive) in relationships with other human beings.

† Commentary No. 1303

## Transactions

In some general sense, transactions are simply “communicative actions or activities involving two people or groups of people or things that reciprocally affect or influence each other.” Each transaction is an act, process, and/or instance of transacting. A transaction may be balanced and more or less equally reciprocal, or unbalanced and partially reciprocal (or generally somewhere in between). Transactions range from those which are consciously engaged and consciously apprehended to those which are relatively unconsciously engaged and only partially apprehended.

In the more formal context of transactional analysis (TA), a transaction is an exchange or communication or momentary (or prolonged (extended)) relationship in which one person is addressing the other from one or another of the three ego states and the other person is responding (or reacting) from one or another of the three ego states (parent, adult, and child (PAC)). Given that, in the framework of TA, each of two people has a range of three ego states, there are six unique combinations or possible types of transactions, namely parent-parent, parent-adult, parent-child, adult-adult, adult-child, and child-child. So transactions in the TA sense are more particular to the psychological framework of TA.

Transactional analysis is properly the analysis and consideration of transactions or sequences of transactions, utilizing the ego state or PAC model. Some transactions are called strokes, i.e., any act or transaction involving substantive recognition. In acknowledging each other, in transacting, in recognizing each other, two people are exchanging strokes. Strokes can be positive or neutral or negative but the emphasis is upon positive or constructive



strokes. Most psychologists believe that people need (positive) strokes in order to develop or maintain their self-esteem, and some people, in believing this, resort to artificial strokes.

Indeed many people need encouragement, need to develop the ego and their sense of self-esteem. Indeed need to develop constructive methods of relating or transacting with other people. But not all people. Some people are able to live at a higher level, in which the ego is transcended and "stroking" is not needed. Another problem with "stroking" is that it often becomes mechanical or artificial, lacking in genuineness, and in which case therefore one is not being truly honest or constructive. If one is self-enamored and dependent on stroking, one is inhibited from developing to the next level of (personality and spiritual) maturity.

The value of transactional analysis is in helping people to understand their conditioning, their behavioral and attitudinal and communicative habits, and in understanding then facilitate constructive change (personal psychological growth) (toward greater psychological health). But while TA has a great deal of potential value, if practiced casually or personally or superficially, it can also be distracting and misleading. If one focuses on transactions as ends-in-themselves, then one misses the real opportunity for learning and growing. If one measures every relationship, every transaction, to gauge (perceived) advantage, then one is abusing the process. And a lot of this occurs unconsciously, which tends to compound the problem. Thus there are natural transactions, which are merely appreciated, and contrived or unnatural transactions, which create stress or tension on some level. Properly embraced, the study of transactions is a study of one's own attitudes and behaviors and consequences in consciousness, and the personal growth that results.

## Devas and Judgment

One of the lessons that can be learned through observing and apprehending the devas concerns judgment. Devas are a parallel evolution to humanity and complement humanity in a number of ways. They do not have much in the way of "human" characteristics, and so do not express the ordinary "human" limitations. In many ways devas are noble creatures, to be admired and appreciated. In no ways are devas ignoble. Because of their nature, devas are "closer" to God in consciousness, but are not inherently creative beings. They are inherently nurturing, healing creatures.

The human being has a brain and a mind and is a thinking creature. This leads, through the course of aeons of development, to the exercising of judgment and the illusions of individuality and separateness. But head-centered people, who rely on the mind and the intellect and their rational, hopefully reasonable, faculties, do not necessarily or generally have much in the way of wisdom. Thus the "human" perspective emphasizes individuality and separateness, one from another. As one continues to develop, one must necessarily broaden and deepen and assimilate experience into knowledge, knowledge into understanding, and understanding into wisdom. In the process the mind is tempered and the heart is allowed to unfold. In the process human beings begin to embrace more of the deva qualities.

Angels or devas are markedly different in character and temperament and expression (consciousness) than ordinary humanity. Devas are naturally heart-centered. They are naturally nurturing and serving creatures. They help, they heal, they "think" nothing of themselves (or of "others" (indeed they have no sense of others)). Of course they cannot "think" at all, yet they are quite intelligent and perceptive, just intelligent and perceptive in ways markedly different from that of human intelligence and perceptiveness. They are not inferior to humanity, indeed they are "superior" to humanity in a number of ways, yet they do not have "consciousness" of superiority, no consciousness of separateness.

In observing the devas one realizes that the absence of “mind” in the human sense means they are not inhibited or limited by the separateness or judging nature that “mind” implies at the human level. Devas do not judge who to help or who to heal; they simply help and heal wherever and whenever and however they are able to. They are naturally drawn to whomever needs their assistance, regardless of the circumstances that most human beings would “consider” before offering assistance. The devas do not care whether a person deserves to suffer or not, they simply help and heal without judgment. They feel the suffering and respond with light and love. They sense the need and move to fill the need. Of course there are many types of devas and each type has a role to play, but all are helpful, healing creatures, by nature. Some work with humanity, others work with mineral, plant, and animal lives. But all serve without judging, without discrimination. They may sense the karmic patterns but they are not inhibited thereby.

But not everyone can respond to the deva energies. While suffering is evoked through karma and while devas naturally respond to those who suffer, if the karma is preclusive, i.e., the person is not receptive, then the deva presence will not be beneficial. But that does not prevent the deva from being there, from offering healing energy. And therein lies a real lesson for humanity. To transcend selfishness and self-centeredness, to transcend egoism and separateness, to move beyond judgment and live from the heart.

† Commentary No. 1305

## Ethical Formalism

Ethical formalism is defined as the “strict adherence to specific formal ethical precepts, rather than unconfinedly embracing the ethical precept openly and broadly.” It is a fundamentally cowardly and dishonest practice.

Ethical formalism, like legalistic formalism, is an attempt to appear to be ethical or proper without actually being so. By interpreting the ethical precepts or laws in the formal sense (according to the detailed “letter of the law” and technicalities) the practitioner seeks to evade what is actually true and proper. In part this practice exists because the conscience of society is permissive. In

part it exists because many people are self-serving and fail to realize that pursuing what appear to be one's own self-interests is actually, in the long run, substantially self-detrimental (as well as being collectively detrimental). In some case ethical formalism is an attempt to evade consequences. In some cases it is a matter of attempting to evade accountability. But in the final analysis, neither consequences nor accountability can ever be (actually) evaded. And so ethical formalism is inherently counter-productive.

Ethical formalism leads unfortunately and naturally to legalistic formalism, reliance on the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law (i.e., rather than reliance on a sense of truth and justice). But the problem with formal ethical precepts and formal laws is that the language utilized can never be completely or comprehensively effective. Everything is subject to interpretation, and if one chooses to interpret matters in a strict formal sense rather than according to what is more reasonable and proper, then truth and justice are not served. But it is relatively easy to function strictly according to the formal precepts or laws, because it does not require much in the way of genuine consideration of truth and justice. To more properly examine the circumstances and disposition requires more effort, more attention, and may need to be explained to those who do not understand. It requires more courage to do the right thing than to do whatever is convenient or has the illusion of self-serving benefit.

Of course with most ethical and legal considerations there are two or more "sides" to the issue. But conflicting perspectives can be resolved if one takes a broad enough view. This, too, generally requires more effort, but in finding a reasonable solution there is much more progress achieved. In the final analysis, ethical and legal conflicts occur because (some (most)) people lack the wisdom and insight necessary to live harmoniously and constructively (and, indeed, progressively). People tend to suffer the illusion of individuality, of separateness, and look after their own apparent interests at the expense of others, without realizing that everything substantive is collective, that there is no real advantage to any one person or group within the whole. Where there is apparent miscarriage of justice, through ethical or legal formalism, the situation simply becomes more complicated, and yet will eventually be resolved as those new causes reach fruition.

The opposite of ethical formalism is actually worse than ethical formalism per se. The opposite of ethical formalism, in one sense, is a complete lack of ethics or respect for law (truth) (justice). What is actually needed is ethical and moral behavior, consistent with reasonable laws, that supports (collective) evolution in consciousness, a devotion to equity and fairness and a conscientious respect and appreciation for the law without succumbing to formalism.

† Commentary No. 1306

## Facades

A facade is a false, superficial, or artificial appearance or effect. In the context of human nature, facades are driven by ego and reinforced by conditioning and serve to undermine one's ability to recognize and discern what is (relatively) real and what is (relatively) true.

One of the fundamental problems of life in this world is that it is a world of appearances. The world is itself artificial and superficial. Not surprisingly then, virtually everyone lives to a large extent artificially and superficially. The ego is artificial and superficial. The ego is a transient. It seeks to sustain itself, to endure, by whatever means possible, however futile. People who are asleep in the world, who do not realize their true nature or the true nature of the world, naturally live according to their conditioning, according to the way things seem to be rather than according to the way things really are. Artificially. Superficially. Facades are of course relative. There are basically several different kinds or categories.

There are relatively simple people whose facades are all they really are, in some practical sense, of simply living according to their conditioning, playing whatever roles they need to. Such people are fairly consistent in their facades simply because there is little or no awareness of their condition. In some higher sense they are not what and how they seem to be, yet in some lower sense they really are what and how they seem to be. The vast majority of people in this world fit into this category. It facilitates experience and expression in this world, to a large extent, but eventually becomes a substantive limitation to growth and deepening, to evolution in consciousness. But these simple people

are relatively honest in the sense that there is no conscious intent to deceive anyone. Thus while these people are nonetheless living at the ego level, the ego is not substantially a problem in consciousness.

But there are people who are somewhat more dangerous, who identify with some underlying (natural) facade but live actively through additional, variable, somewhat deliberately evoked facades. Such people tend to be rather manipulative of the people around them and their circumstances. They are much less genuine, much less honest, than those who live a more simple life. Such people may be somewhat aware of what they are doing, and justify it to themselves on some semi-conscious level, yet fail to realize that they are undermining their own ability to evolve in consciousness. Affective, pretentious people, who consciously, semi-consciously, or unconsciously embrace facades according to their own perceived needs or intentions, are actually building barriers to communication, barriers to understanding. Thus their efforts are largely counter-evolutionary. And these somewhat more complex people are living at a stronger ego-level and driven more by insecurities and complexities rather than the relatively simple needs of life and experience in this world.

And finally there are people who are somewhat aware of the superficiality of life in this world, who seek to live more genuinely, and who gradually temper the ego and the facades that the ego tends to evoke. These are the (few) genuine truth seekers, not merely those (many) who embrace the facade of truth-seeking. Genuine people are not merely sincere, but actively seek to overcome their conditioning. They are not perfect in any sense, but they do (more) actively embrace the process of growth in consciousness, by seeking the truth about themselves, by allowing the truth to emerge in consciousness. Without recourse to facades.

## Purity 1

Virtually every religious and spiritual path emphasizes or encourages a process of purification and refinement. In some cases this process is seen as essential and necessary to liberation (salvation), in other cases it is merely a matter of duty. But the concept of purity is nonetheless important, both in its value to the progress in consciousness of the spiritual student, and in its potential abuse.

In this metaphysical and theosophical context, purity refers to the relative refinement or vibration of the constituent atoms of the physical, etheric, astral, and mental bodies, i.e., of the human form or personality. It is a matter of clarity and cleanliness of vibration, the relative absence of coarseness. Spiritualized matter, matter that is qualified and conditioned by higher consciousness is relatively (much) more refined than ordinary matter. Ordinary matter tends to regress to the lowest and coarsest level. Coarse matter is more responsive to external, worldly, material and egoistic impressions. Refined matter is more responsive to higher impressions. Coarse matter makes one's bodies unsuited to higher work in consciousness. There is nothing wrong with coarseness, or with having coarse bodies, but the spiritual student needs more refined vehicles in order to progress and in order to serve more effectively.

Pollution refers, unfortunately somewhat pejoratively, to coarse matter and coarse influences, whatever impedes or inhibits higher consciousness. In some cases the concept of pollution has been abused in the sense that people who are perceived to be relatively more coarse are shunned or excluded from healthy (meaningful) (comfortable) social contact (whether or not they are indeed relatively more coarse (sometimes they are merely different ethnically and culturally or in terms of religious preferences)). In extreme instances this can lead (wrongly) to adversity and hostility, through discrimination and even violence. But in fact, people who are "different" (whether relatively more or less refined) are not, in any sense, pollution. Moreover, any judgment regarding the relative purity or coarseness of other human beings is necessarily ego-based and a crime (separative) in itself.

Great crimes have been committed in the name of religion (and misplaced sense of purity), e.g., the stereotypical Christian attitude toward heathens and pagans, the stereotypical Muslim attitude toward unbelievers, the stereotypical Hindu caste system, the Hitlerian attitude towards Jewish peoples, and ethnic cleansing (of course stereotypes are not fair and are misleading, but there are abuses, in some instances and by some peoples). Where in fact, if one is refined in consciousness there is no sense of separation or adversity. All peoples are (properly) seen as children of God, regardless of religion, ethnic and cultural background, nationality, etc., and regardless of actual or perceived purity. Oftentimes the actual motives for these abuses are more personal and political, and religion is just an excuse.

But no God-centered religion or spiritual philosophy, in its proper sense, countenances or facilitates any of these abuses. It is only religion corrupted by ego (misplaced (illusional) human self-interest) that allows such things to be done in the name of religion or in the name of God. Religion properly encourages refinement, but it does not, properly, discriminate against those who are perceived as less refined. But much of religion in the lower sense is separative, and separativeness leads to various abuses of otherwise sound principles.

† Commentary No. 1308

## Purity 2

There are several dimensions or aspects of purity. First and foremost it is a matter of individual consciousness and what facilitates growth and progress in consciousness. Secondly it is a matter of collective consciousness, as individuals contribute (less directly) to the evolution in consciousness of the whole. And finally it is a matter of potential abuse in some sense of racial or religious purity.

Each person enters this world as a consequence of previous experience and expression (achievements in consciousness leading to character, temperament, and values). The circumstances of one's birth (place, culture, family, abilities, tendencies, opportunities) are consequences as well as opportunities. The purpose of life is largely a matter of learning and growing (and subsequently



serving in some broader context), and as the student learns and grows there is a natural (gradual, progressive) evolutionary change in consciousness. One who consciously and intelligently embraces a constructive moral and ethical code is thereby enhanced. One who actively meditates and embraces spiritual practices (as well) even more so. But no matter the birth circumstances, there are still opportunities. Thus one is not really limited by circumstances as much as innate abilities. And those innate abilities are improved with experience and growth in consciousness.

In this context, purity and purification refer to the state of relative clarity (purity) (refinement) in consciousness and the process of improving that state. Counter to this evolutionary process is the inertia and coarseness of materialism and egoism. The concept of pollution (in this context) is not really a healthy one, but refers to whatever tends to discourage purity and purification. Such as receptive association with coarser peoples, in which a person is influenced (negatively). This can lead to judgments and to (unhealthy) aversions where people separate themselves (unnaturally) from others. It is more healthy to learn to work (grow) within the community, even if the preponderance of fellow human beings are not living enlightened lives. The consequences of aversion or separateness would seem to be quite substantially more negative than the consequences of non-receptive association. But in some cultures (faiths) (races) there are embodied aversions and (potentially very) separative elements.

Withdrawal from a community (from the world) may facilitate the spiritual focus, but eventually one must necessarily conquer oneself (achieve self-mastery) in the midst of adversity, worldly and sensual temptations, etc. And ultimately, long-term withdrawal or aversion to others is counter-productive, as it is a person's relationship to others (in the context of family, community, culture, race, religion) that affords opportunity to contribute to the progress of the (collective consciousness and human race as a) whole.

The fact is that it is not the association with other peoples (less refined or more so) that determines one's propensity to regress or to progress, but how (effectively (gently) and intelligently (sensibly)) one relates to others. If one is enamoured with or (passively) receptive to people or practices that are relatively more coarse then one will naturally regress. But if one remains

committed to the path (and to one's higher nature and principles) then these associations are not counter-productive at all. Indeed, the spiritual student who is well-established in spiritual principles has no need of fear in walking about the world and associating constructively with the various peoples of the world. After all, every (other) person is simply another reflection of God.

† Commentary No. 1309

### Purity 3

Indeed, healthy (non-destructive) association with others is necessary for the collective consciousness to move forward. Those who would individually or collectively separate themselves from others, on almost any basis, are performing a disservice to the God within all.

In this sense, there is an important distinction to be made, between pollution per se and people who simply may not be very refined. People are simply who they are, living at whatever level and nature of consciousness they can. Some are relatively more coarse than others, some relatively less so. Pollution is simply matter on some level that is relatively more coarse than refined. If one is receptive to pollution then one simply attracts that energy (matter) that is coarser, regardless of associations (even while those associations may prove to be vectors). And if one is not receptive to pollution then one is relatively free from being affected by associations. But other people and other peoples (of other cultures, races, religions, etc.) do not (and never) constitute pollution. And there are invariably gentle (enlightened) souls within every culture and ethnic group, within every race, within every religion, etc.

Many times aversion is not a matter of (necessarily wrongly) perceived "pollution" but is simply a matter of insecurity with one's own beliefs, fears that one might be influenced by association (because one's own self-security is threatened). Many times hostile intent (aversion) (separativeness) is entirely personal, even on a collective scale, and not a matter of the purported "reasons." In some cases it is a matter of arrogance or false sense of superiority (all such senses are necessarily false), that somehow one's race or culture or religion or birth circumstances makes one superior. In every case it is a matter of ignorance

(which is another name for evil). In not understanding that we are all related in spirit and in consciousness. That we are all of God. That God lives through all of us, regardless of our caste, regardless of our circumstances.

Thus on one level there may be (necessarily unhealthy) personal aversions, at the other extreme there is (unconscionable) genocidal ethnic cleansing. And in between all manner of discriminations and persecutions and separative behaviors. None of which is inherently healthy or contributive to healing or progressing the whole. For what is not realized by those who engage in these practices (at any level) is that every life (and every human life) has value to the whole, that in hurting any part of life (human or otherwise) one is necessarily hurting oneself. And that it is collective evolution that matters much more so than individual advancement.

And it is not merely the common man (woman) who may have a problem with separateness (exclusivity) (prejudice) (judgment), but it is also a problem for many spiritual students, who by virtue of their perceived "spirituality" tend to separate themselves from others, in consciousness and in practice. But the student who truly embraces purity and the process of purification, gently, intelligently, sensibly, is one who thereby forms closer, healthier, more meaningful relationships with others, without fear of being polluted, indeed there is (properly) not even the slightest thought or feeling of aversion, and without any impositional sense either, for one must properly not be adversely influenced by others and one must properly not actively seek to influence others either. Thus the spiritual student who embraces the (never-ending) process of purification contributes incidentally and not deliberately to the whole.

## Wine

Of all the alcoholic beverages, wine is probably the most dangerous because of the widespread (but wrong) belief that the effects of wine are almost entirely beneficial. While stronger alcoholic beverages are more obviously intoxicating, the effects of wine taken in moderation would seem to be not really serious. There is a widespread illusion that the only evil of alcohol is the loss of control implied by substantial intoxication, and so wine is generally not seen a real problem. It is perceived by most as simply helpful in some relaxing sense and pleasurable.

But the truth is that all alcohol is detrimental in the sense that it strengthens the hold of the ego or superficial self upon the person in manifestation (incarnated self). It undermines, even precludes the integration of personality and prevents alignment of higher and lower selves. But because the effects of wine (and relatively more gentle alcoholic beverages) are less obvious and apparently less substantial, and because wine tends to appeal more to people who are relatively less coarse, consumption of wine is actually more and deceptively dangerous. Most people who drink wine believe they remain "in control" and are not substantively impaired, and this is really quite deceptive. The problem is that the effects of alcohol in moderation are simply relatively more subtle. Most people confuse superficial "control" with self-mastery, while self-mastery actually requires a great deal more effort and accomplishment than merely embracing the facade of normality (the facade or appearance of self-control).

From a very superficial perspective, of physical body chemistry, the effects of alcohol are reasonably well known to modern "science" and these effects are not really pervasive or long-lasting. So occasional drinking or drinking in moderation would seem not to be detrimental. But this is only true in the physical-superficial sense. The actual effects on more subtle levels (etheric and astral) are much more substantial and much longer-lasting. A single drink of some gentle beverage such as wine can evoke effects on subtle levels that last for many months. If this is reinforced through occasional-modest drinking, then the effects are compounded and cumulative and never really leave the system.

Now this may not be a problem for the ordinary human being, who has no need to find the truth within or to integrate the higher and lower selves, indeed such a person generally has no need to even realize that there is a higher self at all. But for the spiritual student it is another matter altogether.

The spiritual student needs to be free from all intoxicants, from all drugs, from anything that undermines growth in consciousness and the ability to see the truth of things. The spiritual student needs to temper the entire personality (ego) (and intellect) and begin to discern the differences between higher and lower selves so that he (she) can be gradually attuned to that higher self. Which means tempering or eliminating anything that is necessarily preclusive or inhibitive to these goals. The spiritual student needs to be (relatively) free from conditioning, free to perceive and embrace the truth, free to be who he (she) really is (the soul) instead of simply living through the facade of personality (ego).

So for the earnest spiritual student, wine is simply not an option. While those who embrace the facade of the spiritual path may justify their actions and indulgences, the genuine spiritual student simply proceeds quietly, gently, according to the rules of the path, gradually-ever onward and upward.

† Commentary No. 1311

## Eastern Religions 1

There is no conveniently proper way to categorize or organize the various eastern religions, but they can be grouped almost artificially into those traditional religions which predominate in the Indian subcontinent at the present time and those which predominate at the present time in the far east, i.e., in China and Japan. Thus the first group includes Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism, while the second group includes Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, and Zen. And while Islam is a major religion in the eastern hemisphere, it belongs perhaps more logically with the western religions due to its more intimate relationship to Christianity.

Hinduism is by no means the only significant religion in India, but it enjoys a majority and is related significantly to both Jainism and Sikhism. Thus Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism are three of the traditional religions of India. But each of these (and more) is a significant religion in its own right, and each contributes to the whole (collective world religion). Within each of these religions there are a number of sects, indeed within Hinduism there are many. Each has a peculiar emphasis and each offers opportunities for improving one's relationship to God (the higher Self). Moreover, within Hinduism there are major religious movements that might be considered religions, but there is a sufficient commonality, much like the various Protestant denominations or religions of Christianity, although distinctions between and within religions are sometimes almost arbitrary.

Hinduism is perhaps significant on a broader scale than just India due to the effective export and elucidation of various metaphysical and theosophical principles steeped in Sanskrit terminology that are traditionally associated with Hinduism (and principally with theosophy in its non-historical sense of ageless wisdom). These principles are not exclusive to Hinduism, but they are much more a part of outer (popular) Hinduism than is the case of most religions (where the inner teachings are not popularized). While Jainism and Sikhism contribute in part due to their respective emphases, e.g., ahimsa in the case of Jainism, and freedom from artificial (caste) constraint in the case of Sikhism. But while Hinduism has close ties to Buddhism and Sikhism, Sikhism has close ties to both Hinduism and Islam (whereas Hinduism does not, properly, have close ties with Islam). Thus all of these religions are interrelated in various ways, meaningfully and otherwise.

But none of these distinctions really matter. What really matters is the underlying mystical core, which is common to all religions, and the flavor or features that each contributes. Collectively, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism (and theosophy) contribute a great deal through underlying principles, like evolution in consciousness (progressive reincarnation), the nature of dharma and karma, achievement of self-mastery as a stepping-stone to liberation, the various practices and means of yoga, the various cosmological insights, the nature of life and illusion in this world, the relationship of the human being both to God and to "other" lives, and the relationship between God and the various gods (aspects of the one God).

The real value or contribution of these eastern religions is not so much in the cultural-religious dimension but in the philosophical-moral framework and in the perspective of religion as a moral philosophy and means of individual practice (progress) rather than in the more western sense of religious authority and imposed teachings. It is not only the similar inner core that matters, but also the synthesis of inner principles framed in different ways.

† Commentary No. 1312

## Hinduism 1

Hinduism would seem to be the dominant or majority religion of contemporary India, although not without influencing and being influenced by other religions that have emerged or have engaged the Indian subcontinent from time to time. Some would say that theosophy borrows a great deal from Hinduism, and to some extent from Buddhism, but the obverse may also be true.

Like all God-centered religions, the mystical core of Hinduism relates to personal spiritual growth, to the attainment of freedom from the perceived world, to transcending materialism and egoism, to achieving communion with God (within). But unlike many of the world's religions, the outer emphasis of Hinduism is more closely related to the inner, more mystical emphasis. While quite complex and diverse in its outer machinations, the basic teachings and principles of Hinduism are quite simple.

One of the most basic principles, usually suppressed in other outer religions (but nonetheless present in every mystical core), is reincarnation or the progressive, cyclic evolution of the soul which incarnates for experience and expression and eventually achieves liberation and moves on to another, higher level. Cycles are an important aspect of the Hindu tradition, as there is great appreciation for the cycles of the soul, the cycles of life in this world, and the cycles of the world itself. Another basic principle, accentuated perhaps in other religions, is the oneness of God. Many think of Hinduism as pantheistic or polytheistic, having many deities, but it is more a matter of perspective (and (mis)understanding) and is really no more so than other religions, e.g.,

Catholicism. In fact, there is one God who lives through all lives. And consequently there are many gods within the one God. Each god or deity simply symbolizes some aspect of the one (real, true) God. It is simply a matter of perspective. Hindus do not properly worship animals or things or people any more than Christians rever their saints and Muslims rever their martyrs. But Hindus do seem to recognize God within animals and things and people more so than most other peoples.

While meditation is a major aspect of all religions in their mystical cores, it is Hinduism and the yoga of Hinduism that has popularized various meditation disciplines and practices in more modern times. While all religions have their special prayers and mantras, it is Hinduism that more directly and more outwardly explains the mantric value of prayer. While all religions properly embrace some sense of karma, it is Hinduism that more directly explains the nature of karma. But it is really the combination of some sense of karma and some sense of the grace of God that more readily approaches the truth of the matter. And it is in yoga, progressive communion or union with God, that leads the spiritual student of any faith toward his or her goal.

There are many scriptures within Hinduism, including the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita. The classic language of these scriptures, Sanskrit, is particularly well-suited to the expression of metaphysical and spiritual and theosophical principles. Thus many spiritual students of eastern and western faiths study the traditional scriptures of Hinduism. But much like reading the Holy Bible of Christianity, it is the symbolic value of the words and scriptures that really matters and not so much the stories themselves. And while westerners tend to interpret eastern concepts in more familiar terms, that generally leads to misunderstanding. Instead of trying to fit something to an existing frame of reference (belief or perception system), one is better advised to expand and broaden and deepen the reference frame.



## Hinduism 2

Thus Hinduism, like most eastern religions, if properly considered, offers potentially to the western student a deeper, more profound understanding of his or her own religion. The trinity of Hinduism (Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva), for example, is not unrelated to the Christian trinity. And there are many parallels between the various religions, each offering a broader view than perhaps otherwise realized.

Perhaps it should be kept in mind that each religion addresses particular needs of its peoples at a particular time in history, and then grows and adapts as it needs to. Some religions stray from their principles and become entangled in no-longer-meaningful rituals or details that do not really matter. But in the core of each, there is similarity and consistency. And in the outer expression of each, there is richness and meaningful (complementary) diversity. In Hinduism, much like Christianity, there are large numbers of sects or denominations, each contributing some emphasis to the whole. But in Hinduism, unlike popular Christianity, the emphasis is upon one's place and progress rather than promulgation and conversion. There are ascetic elements as well as elements that focus on social progress. In Hinduism, every day is the Sabbath. While there are temples there are also private worship rituals in the home. There are many paths and many ways, but ultimately the goal is self-mastery and communion with God.

While the emphasis in Hinduism is upon the cycle of reincarnation and achieving liberation, there is no less concern for the sacredness of life, indeed the sacredness of all life, giving rise to a sense of ahimsa (harmlessness). There is dharma or true being, responsibility to cosmic law, to one's true (higher) nature. There is karma or the inexorable law of cause and effect, as each action, attitude, behavior, feeling, and thought has consequences. And each consequence is evoked from and through consciousness, past and present and future. The web of karma and the cycles of life provide a panorama for experience and expression in the world. The purpose of life is moksha, liberation. Nirvana refers to the state of liberation, which is evoked eventually from the tempering (extinguishment) of the ego, which allows communion,

which leads in turn to liberation. But somewhere along the way one's intent (liberation) is transcended, as it is (ultimately) only through freedom-from-intent that one can actually achieve liberation.

Hinduism is properly a collection of principles and practices, though there is no substantial doctrine or hierarchy of religious authority. Thus Hinduism is less well-defined in "western" terms, all the while contributing much through its diversity of practices. Where some may see contradictions and paradox, others may (properly) see aspects and dimensions of some greater truth. Where some see rigidity and limitation in the traditional caste system, others see opportunities afforded thereby. While most people identify with the apparent self (personality, superficial existence), others identify with something higher (the jiva) or much higher (atman). While some are wholly entangled in the world of maya and glamour and illusion, others awaken to a higher, deeper sense of reality. While some are englamoured with a guru, others simply learn from the experience, and yet others rely on the guru within.

Hinduism (and Sanskrit (and theosophy)) offer(s) a great deal of insight into human nature and the nature of the world in which human beings find themselves. As one works through the various principles and gradually embraces them, there is progress.

† Commentary No. 1314

### Hinduism 3

Many are the terms of Hinduism. Adarsana is ignorance or the inability to perceive the truth of things, caused by immersion in the material and sensual world. Adharma is lawlessness, not being attuned to one's dharma. Aditi is infinity or boundlessness. Advaita is the principle of non-duality. Agni is the element of fire and relates both to sacrifice and mediation between God and humanity. Ahankara is the principle of individuality and leads to the study of the inner (real, genuine) and outer (unreal, artificial) selves and their relationship. Ahimsa is the principle of harmlessness or non-injury and includes vegetarianism. Akasa refers to space or the etheric realm. Aksara refers to the imperishable. Ananda refers to bliss, more properly the inner, quiet joy (love) evoked through bhakti or communion.

Arjuna is the name of the central character in the Bhagavad Gita, who symbolizes the spiritual student. Artha refers to the four goals (dharma, artha, kama, and moksa). Asana refers to the sitting position or posture for meditation or other form of yoga practice. Astanga yoga refers to Patanjali's eight-fold path of training elucidated in the Yoga Sutras. Atman refers to the monad or highest element of the human being (in contrast with the soul and the personality), or to the soul (atma-buddhi-manas). Avatara refers to a divine descent into worldly incarnation. Avidya is another term for ignorance, being englamoured by worldly appearances.

The Bhagavad Gita is one of the more important Hindu scriptures, an epic conversation between the student (Arjuna) and his higher self (Krishna). Bhajan refers to worship. Bhakti is the principle of love and devotion. Bhakti yoga is a path emphasizing love and devotion. Bodhisattva refers to an enlightened being and the office (place) (position) of such a being. Brahma is the first or creative aspect of the Hindu trinity. Brahmacharya refers to embracing a particular spiritual discipline or discipleship, or being focused on the spiritual path. Brahman refers to the atman or divine source in its transcendental aspect. Brahmin refers to a priest or member of the priestly caste. Buddhi is the principle of higher intelligence or intuition, what comes from the higher self rather than the mind.

Chakras are the centers of force within the human form. Chela refers to the student or disciple of some guru. Cit refers to consciousness. Darsana refers to seeing the truth, either within oneself or from within the presence of some guru. Devas are gods or angelic beings and nature spirits, belonging to a lifewave that is parallel to that of humanity. Dharana refers to concentration, a stage in meditation. Dharma has many meanings and implications, including righteousness, virtue, integrity, duty, truth, and reality. Dhyana refers to meditation, a second stage, beyond concentration. Dvaita refers to the illusion and state of duality. Guna refers to substance or quality (the three gunas are sattva, rajas, and tamas). Guru refers to a spiritual teacher, not necessary but sometimes helpful.

Hatha yoga is a preliminary form of yoga involved with the discipline of the body. In principle, hatha yoga leads to more meditative practices. Jiva refers to

life or the soul rather than the ego or personality. Jnana refers to knowledge leading to understanding and to wisdom. Kama refers to the emotional plane. Kamamanas refers to the bridge between emotional and mental levels, i.e., the desire-mind. Kundalini refers to one's spiritual potency and to the serpent power of the spine and chakra system. Kundalini yoga is a practice relating to the cultivation and management of kundalini.

† Commentary No. 1315

## Hinduism 4

Manas refers to the mind or mental plane. More properly manas refers to the mental principle and the context for antahkarana or the bridge between the lower mind of the personality and the higher mind of the soul. Mandalas are circular diagrams or artwork utilized in meditation. Mantras are sounds or words of power. Mantra yoga is a discipline involving utilization of mantras. Marga refers to the spiritual path or to particular spiritual paths, e.g., ananda marga. Maya is underlying worldly illusion, one of three dimensions of illusion (the others being glamour or illusion on emotional levels and illusion proper being illusion on mental levels). Moksa refers to liberation from the wheel of life.

Namaskar is a salutation. Padma is the lotus or symbol of purity. Paramartha refers to the highest truth, paramatman to the highest or supreme self. Prajna refers to intelligence or wisdom gained from enlightenment. Prakriti refers to nature or manifestation, pralaya to sleep or its dissolution, that part of the cycle in which the universe is not being manifested. Prana refers to the etheric life force or breath. Purusa refers to a person in some higher sense or to the spiritual core of a person. Raja yoga refers to meditational yoga in contrast with hatha yoga. Rajas is one of the three gunas and is energy. Rupa refers to the form or body (while arupa refers to the formless or higher nature).

Sadguru refers to a proper spiritual teacher, sadhana to personal spiritual discipline. Samadhi refers to a higher state of meditation, samsara to the global flow of individual and collective rebirths and remanifestations. Sat refers to being or existence (reality). Sattva is another of the three gunas and is purity. Satya refers to truthfulness. Siddhi refers to accomplishment or to magical

powers achieved through yoga or some particular spiritual practice (siddhis are not to be desired or sought but simply allowed to manifest as they need to as a consequence of spiritual progress). Sutra refers to a thread or aphoristic statement of truth, e.g., the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Sakti refers to divine power or potency.

Tamas is one of the three gunas and is darkness or inertia or matter. Tattva refers to truth or reality. Vidya refers to the knowledge and wisdom that dispels ignorance. Viveka refers to discrimination between what is real and what is not, especially with regard to discriminating between the soul (self) and the personality (not-self). Yama refers to self-control leading to self-mastery. And yoga refers to any one or another of the spiritual disciplines that facilitate self-control and lead to communion or union with God (the highest self).

There is yoga and there are many (many) yogas. Yoga in its entirety includes all of the many paths and practices that individually and collectively contribute to evolution in consciousness. But each particular practice or focus or stage constitutes a yoga or sorts. The Bhagavad Gita for example contains three yogas, and each of the three contains another six yogas. There are yogas that emphasize physical discipline and practice (e.g., hatha yoga), yogas that emphasize etheric discipline and practice (e.g., kundalini yoga and laya yoga), yogas that emphasize emotional or devotional practice (e.g., bhakti yoga), and yogas that emphasize mental discipline and practice (e.g., jnana yoga). And there are yogas that focus on action and consequence (e.g., karma yoga). But yoga proper is a combination of all of these (and more), and not strictly a matter of Hinduism.

## Jainism 1

Jainism is usually considered to be an outgrowth and extension of Hinduism, with emphasis on charity and respect for all animal life, a religion of the God-within-all-lives and a strong sense of “attainment of liberation through right belief, right knowledge, and right action.” Much of the religious philosophy and practice of Jainism is consistent with theosophy and actively encourages growth in evolution of consciousness. There is emphasis on self-mastery. Indeed, a Jain is a Jina, one who (seeks to) be a conqueror of the lower self. but there are actually nine principles traditionally associated with Jainism, namely soul, non-soul, virtue, vice, inflow, bondage, checking, shedding, and freedom.

Soul (jiva) is the principle of consciousness, usually associated with life. The soul is eternal, inherently conscious and formless. The soul inhabits the body, for experience and expression, but the goal is to be a free soul (mukta) rather than a bound soul (bandha). Freedom comes from self-mastery, evolving in consciousness to the point where one transcends life-in-this-world and is no longer required to (re)incarnate. Most souls in this world exist in the bound state. In incarnation the soul has two aspects, that which overshadows from its own plane of consciousness, and that which is entangled in materialism and egoism. The soul itself (on its own level) is perfect, the soul in incarnation generally much less so.

Incarnation consists of obscurity, where the soul in incarnation loses its insight and seeks, gradually, to find itself (return to its own level), bringing with it the assimilation of experience in the lower worlds. The human being in incarnation, then, is typically a bound soul, struggling over the course of (many) lives to overcome the limitations of this world, to learn and grow through various levels of imperfection, and serve, eventually to achieve liberation.

Non-soul (ajiva) is, at first glance, simply everything other than soul, namely matter (pudgala), motion (dharma), rest (adharma), space (akasa), and time. All of which are also eternal. Matter provides the framework for incarnation, for experience and expression. Motion is a principle that allows, indeed encourages, progress (evolution in consciousness). Rest facilitates cyclic

(spiralic) activity which in turn facilitates motion. Space is in one sense an illusion induced by matter, in another sense an underlying reality substantially beyond "space" as it is known to the ordinary senses. Time is in one sense another illusion induced by immersion in matter and cycles of experience and expression, in another (higher) sense the principle that allows endurance (growth) and continuity. The role of ajiva is to provide the means and opportunity for the jiva to evolve. And in that sense ajiva is not jiva. But in a deeper sense, what is ajiva is also jiva, both in some higher framework (the existence (reality) of principles) and in some lower framework (of souls bound in matter at a more fundamental, elementary level).

Virtue and vice are the two poles of karma, one (right action) leading to liberation, the other (wrong action) to increased bondage. Vice is counter-evolutionary, that which inhibits progress. Virtue is evolutionary, that which encourages and facilitates progress. One begins with desire for that which binds us to this world, to material wealth, pleasures of the senses, etc. Then one gradually rises above these things and embraces more noble desires. But all desire per se evokes karma, and so, eventually, one rises above desire altogether and becomes free from the wheel of birth and death.

† Commentary No. 1317

## Jainism 2

Inflow refers to sustained karma, the attraction of karmic "particles" or binding consequences of action (behavior) (feeling) (thinking). Bondage refers to the state of the soul being asleep in the world (and worldliness). Being engaged in karma the "soul" remains asleep. In the fulfillment of karma, in becoming free of continuing karma, the soul awakens and finds liberation. In Jainism there are four causes of inflow and bondage, namely wrong belief, vowlessness, passions, and activity.

Wrong belief includes (one-sided) conviction, perverse belief, doubtful belief, ignorant belief, and blind devotional belief. One-sided conviction is where one believes that one knows something truly when in fact one does not, which leads to considerable illusion. True liberation is where one makes no such

assumptions and remains open to the (broader, deeper) possibilities of truth. Everything is relative. (Virtually) nothing is absolute. Everything that is known and understood is known and understood (necessarily only) partially and relatively. Perverse belief is a one-sided conviction that is counter-evolutionary, e.g., that there is “good” in killing animals for any purpose. Doubtful belief is relatively more healthy than one-sided conviction or perverse belief, but is ultimately limiting (one needs, actually, to get beyond needing to believe) (as the soul (in its higher aspect) is progressively embraced in consciousness, one relies more and more on intuition and not on (merely) intellectual understanding). Ignorant belief is less healthy, more passive, a matter of not making an effort to understand what is believed. And blind devotional belief is “clinging to convictions even in the face of evidence” to the contrary.

Vowlessness refers to the absence of the commitment and practice of ahimsa (non-injury, nonviolence, harmlessness) with regard to all (other) lives, human and otherwise. Passions refer to emotional entanglements which impede the progress of the spiritual student, e.g., pride, anger, deceit, greed. Activity refers to whatever distracts the waking-consciousness from focusing on the spiritual path and its practices, whatever actions evoke karma and continued bondage. There are gentle activities which relatively facilitate growth and progress and freedom, and there are less gentle activities which do not. Embracing humility, honesty, and harmlessness are gentle activities. Having desires and having attachments are less gentle activities.

Checking and shedding refer to the process of minimizing and then eliminating the inflow of karmic “particles” and fulfilling (shedding) that (karma) which has been attracted. Spiritual practice (e.g., meditation) is designed to help the student in this process of checking and shedding. To become aware of the limiting attitudes and behaviors, to check them, and to embrace (more) positive (less limiting) practices. As one accomplishes these things, one gradually achieves liberation.

Jainism is a “working” religion in the sense that there is emphasis on the soul finding its own salvation. There is no external God to appeal to. God is within. And God is all. Thus the jiva (soul) is God and God lives through all jivas. The omniscience achieved in liberation is the (intuitive) omniscience of collective consciousness. The omnipotence achieved in liberation is the power



to remain at the soul level and not be entangled in karma. It is, in effect, living with (as) God. To live in the world without being entangled. And to not need to return to the world. But even the entangled human being is a noble creature, for God (jiva) lives within all.

† Commentary No. 1318

## Sikhism 1

Sikhism is another religion that is considered to be an outgrowth and extension of Hinduism, indeed in some sense a Punjabi version of Hinduism, and it is also considered by some as a bridge between Hinduism and Islam (Sufism), embracing evolution (karma) (reincarnation) and liberation through self-mastery. While Sikhism is similar to Hinduism in some ways, it also contrasts with Hinduism in some ways, e.g., in promoting sexual equality and in rejecting the caste system. In the final analysis, Sikhism is a religion in its own right, and not simply an extension of one and a bridge to another.

The attributed founder of Sikhism is Guru Nanak, the first of ten Sikh Gurus. A Sikh is literally a "learner" and one who follows the path of liberation revealed by the ten Gurus. In the Sikh tradition, these Gurus were inspired messengers of God, instruments of divine revelation, not unlike the progressive revelation of the Judaic-Christian-Islamic-Bahai lineage, except that the ten Gurus formed a continuity with each leading directly to the next. But the central theme of Sikhism is not "upon" the Gurus but upon the way of union with God, "by dwelling in God while remaining detached in the midst of worldly attachments." Thus Sikhism is inherently monotheistic and is inherently mystical, even while there are cultural aspects, as there are in every religion. The cultural context of Sikhism leads to the perception of Sikhism being a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam, while in fact it borrows from both and adds another dimension as well (as no religion (and no human culture) is wholly isolated one from every other). Sikhism emerged within, indeed may have been evoked by, a cultural context in which Hinduism and Islam were in contrast. Perhaps the intent of Guru Nanak was to illustrate the truth that emerges naturally from within, rather than what is revealed or obscured by formal religions.

This concept is furthered in the notion of the collective Guru, present in the spiritual community rather than through successive outer (external) Gurus. The principal Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, is treated much as a living Guru, not merely as a scripture to be read and studied and its principles to be embraced. Yet God is the supreme Guru. And "God as Guru is the self-revealing aspect of the divine whose purpose is to bring about the spiritual liberation of humanity." Thus while there is a cultural dimension to Sikhism, the practical-spiritual dimension of Sikhism is quite profound in its consistency with the deeper, mystical dimensions of other religions.

In Sikhism (as in fact) the ordinary human being is ignorant of his or her spiritual dimension, of the truth within. Such a person is immersed in worldliness and egoism and doomed to cycles of gradually progressive reincarnation (the comings and goings of life (lives) (lifetimes) in this world). The ignorant (self-centered) person must eventually become God-centered, through the practices of the spiritual path and (simultaneously) through the grace of God.

There is karma, the process (principle) of action and consequence, in which accumulated karma must be fulfilled and the student must reach the place in consciousness where no additional karma is acquired, not through indifference or inaction, but through transcending the ways of the world and the ways of ego. Through communion with God. Thus a state of liberation is possible even while incarnated. The person and his or her purpose are transformed, from being focused on self-interests to being focused on spiritual practice and liberation, ultimately to merely serving God.

## Sikhism 2

Sikhism breaks new ground with respect to a number of traditional Hindu practices and principles. Traditional Hinduism embraces a caste system and people are perceived in the context of their birth circumstances, some being perceived as being more highly evolved than others and therefore closer to liberation. In Sikhism one is not bound by caste or circumstances, but anyone who can is free to seek liberation (i.e., noble souls may be incarnated in difficult (lesser) circumstances, but circumstances alone do not determine one's ability to evolve in consciousness. In traditional Hinduism there are several (four) stages in life, while in Sikhism these four stages are merged and one can embrace aspects of all four simultaneously. Thus while (traditional) Hinduism emphasizes an orderly progression, according to circumstances and timing, in Sikhism there are opportunities to all, without discrimination. Of course there are benefits to both approaches, and each complements the other.

In principle, Sikhism also embraces equality of the sexes, though in practice the various ideals embraced by any religion are not so easy to achieve. While some religions are exclusive in their scriptures in the sense that "truth" is found only within a particular (culturally-focused) religious context, Sikhism more readily acknowledges truth from sources beyond its own writings. It is not surprising then that many of the underlying ethics and principles of Sikhism are quite consistent with those of other God-centered religions and with theosophy. One of the basic principles of Sikhism is seva or community service. It is not sufficient merely to believe, one must also practice. And spiritual development leading to liberation invariably includes some form of seva. Another principle is that of oneness of God and unity of humanity which leads to the "rejection of discrimination" not merely in the sense of the traditional caste system and equality of the sexes but in other ways as well.

In the (mystical) tradition of Sikhism, God is one, immanent, and all-pervading. God is self-revealing and sovereign. God is self-consistent. God is ineffable. God is personal, but does not employ "human" strengths and weaknesses. God is beyond being male or female. God is noble and God's love is both personal and impersonal. God is both immanent and transcendent. God is creator and

sustainer, eternal and infinite, in time and beyond time, in space and beyond space. And God is Guru.

There are many and various terms utilized in Sikhism. The Adi Granth is synonymous with the Guru Granth Sahib, the principal scripture of Sikhism, consisting of 1430 pages of shabads. Amritsar is a place of special significance to many Sikhs, even while pilgrimage plays no essential part in this religion. The Darbar Sahib or Golden Temple is located in Amritsar. Anbhav prakash is enlightened experience. The Atman is the soul or God within. Daswandth is the Sikh equivalent of tithing in the service of the Panth (spiritual path). Dharam Yudh refers to war in the defense of righteousness (as a last resort, with minimum force, without enmity, without abusing one's enemies or one's enemies' property, and without mercenaries). Dharma refers to the Sikh dharma or religious teachings and to the Sikh lifestyle (ethics, conduct).

Grace and karma are both utilized in Sikhism. "The body takes birth because of karma, but liberation is attained through God's grace." One should take responsibility for one's actions, but liberation is not mechanistic. Guruwara is a place of worship, the doorway to the Guru (God). Gurmukh is one who has become God-oriented and God-filled instead of being self-centered, i.e., one who has attained some measure of spiritual liberation.

† Commentary No. 1320

### Sikhism 3

Guru is God, especially in the revelatory sense. It also refers to the ten human Gurus and to the Guru Granth Sahib (scripture). Haumai is the principle of the non-liberated state. Haumai applies to human beings prior to liberation. Haumai relates to the karmic cycle, to bondage, and to the transcendence of this wheel of life and death as one overcomes haumai or the tendencies of the human being to be self-centered, materialistic, etc. Heaven and hell are places in consciousness, in this world and this life. The objective is not so much to be free from the wheel of birth and death (action and consequence) (reincarnation and karma), but to achieve communion with God (in which case one transcends duality). Hukam refers to God's Order (the Tao) which is truth.

Kabir was a man, not a Sikh, who is respected in Sikhism and whose writings have been included in the Guru Granth Sahib. Khalsa is the community of Sikhs initiated through the rite of amritsanskar. Langar is a matter of taking food together, an assertion of social equality, when visiting a gurdwara. Man Mukh is an ordinary person, dominated by haumai, engaged with maya (delusion). Mukti or jivan mukti refers to the spiritual liberation of the jiva (soul), achievable as one lives in accord with God's Order (as one's karma is fulfilled and as one accumulates no additional karma). In principle, liberation can be achieved here and now if one is properly prepared. Nam refers to the name of God or God manifest. "Nam is all pervading." "Nam the immaculate is unfathomable. How can it be known? Nam is within us, how can it be reached? It is Nam that works everywhere and permeates all space. The perfect Guru awakens your heart to the vision of Nam. It is by God's grace that one comes to enlightenment." Sat Nam means the True Name, and is often utilized to express acknowledgment of oneness with all lives, human and otherwise.

Nam jpana, kirt karna, vand chakna refer to "meditation on God's name, honest work, and giving to those in need" and are the "three major characteristics of Sikh spirituality and morality." Nam Simran refers to being focused on God, in prayer and meditation (and otherwise). Nirankar refers to the formlessness of God. God is spirit, does not take human form, and while God may inspire human beings, human beings (the ten Gurus) are not more than human. Nirguna refers to the qualitylessness of God, and discourages attempts at anthropomorphization. There are no avatars. Panth or Qaum refers to the spiritual path or way, and also to the "nation" of Sikhs and to groups who follow a particular teacher or teachings. Punjab is the homeland of the Sikhs, the land of the five rivers.

Sahaj is the state of spiritual peace resulting from communion with God. Samsara refers to the wheel of life and death, of successive lives (progressive reincarnation, not transmigration in any lesser sense), within a framework of divine qualification. Sangat or satsang refers to association or community. In Sikhism, family and community are quite important. One does not renounce either of these for the sake of self-mastery. Sat Guru refers to God, the

supreme Guru. Human teachers may be helpful, but ultimately one must rely on God (within). Sat Sri Akal is a salutation meaning "Truth is eternal."

Singh (lion) refers to those who follow the Khalsa code of discipline and is a (middle) name traditionally given to Sikh males (while Kaur (princess) is a (middle) name traditional given to Sikh females). There are five stages or realms of development on the path of enlightenment, namely Dharam Khand (duty), Gyan Khand (awareness), Karam Khand (endeavor leading to wisdom), Saram Khand (grace), and Sach Khand (truth).

† Commentary No. 1321

## The Caste System

The caste system of traditional India and Hinduism, while no longer sanctioned, having been officially abolished, nonetheless continues to contribute a great deal to Indian culture and continues to be subject to various abuses. In the first place the caste system had a qualitative basis and the various castes served particular cultural and societal needs and were treated equally and equitably. But eventually the system became hereditary and institutionalized and rather rigid.

In this jati or caste system there are four (five) castes (varnas) or social divisions, namely (1) the brahmana or priestly caste, (2) the ksatriya or caste of rulers, aristocrats, and warriors, (3) the vaisya caste or middle class of farmers, merchants, craftsmen, and peasants, and (4) the sudra or caste of laborers and servants. In addition to the four castes are the untouchables or pariahs who are "below" caste and the sannyasin or pilgrims who are "above" caste. And of course there are many social divisions within each caste, i.e., thousands of castes. While the caste system is often viewed as peculiar to India and Hinduism, in fact many societies have embraced caste systems (by other names or without acknowledgement) through relatively rigid class distinctions, based on education, heredity, race, ethnic distinctions, religion, traditional vocation, or otherwise. So the Indian caste system is by no means the only one, nor by any means the only one to continue to have influence in the world. In a sense, the Indian caste system is simply more open and honest than the others, while others tend to be imposed in relatively more subtle ways. The underlying

premises are that a caste system is intended to protect the racial purities (even while there is no such actual need) and that the caste system facilitates clarity of duty and obligation to society.

People are simply born into one or another of the castes and are expected to fulfill the karma of their respective caste. While this is superficially consistent with the laws of karma, there are aspects of the caste system which are not consistent with karma, e.g., there is traditionally and even today to some extent prohibition (or inhibition) from transferring from one caste to another, through marriage or other means. Whereas in karma, one who is able to “move” to another level or place should be afforded an opportunity to do so. In a rigid caste system (Indian, English, or otherwise) the opportunities for education and training, hence for advancement, are limited by one’s caste or socio-economic standing. In a more enlightened culture, education is relatively more universal and those of “low” birth circumstances who are able to advance professionally and socially may do so.

The caste system has facilitated cultural and social and national stability, and perhaps has served its purpose. Instead of evolving in consciousness throughout one’s lifetime with the hope of being subsequently reborn into a higher caste, one should be able to advance according to one’s needs and opportunities rather than being limited artificially. But the real abuse conveyed through the caste system is the emphasis on differences between groups of peoples rather than acknowledgment of the underlying common divinity within. Thus the caste system is inherently separative, while a more homogeneous society has at least the potential to be less so.

The soul, of course, does not belong to any caste, to any religion or race or culture or ethnic group, or sex or social group. Only the personality can have any of these attributes. But the soul incarnates progressively through whatever birth circumstances are needed for experience and expression.

## Eastern Religions 2

The three principal traditional religions of China are Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. The principal traditional religions of Japan are Buddhism and Shintoism. While Buddhism has its origins in India, it has flourished primarily in the far east of Asia. And while Zen is often associated with Buddhism, it is more properly considered an outgrowth of both Buddhism and Taoism.

The exposure of far eastern religions to western peoples (and to some extent vice versa) has helped substantially in bridging the gaps between eastern and western cultures. In (at least partially) understanding and respecting the spiritual and cultural-ethical framework of eastern religions, the western student can more effectively relate to the eastern cultures. In embracing pertinent eastern principles, the western student is able to broaden and deepen his or her perspective. Conversely, in studying and apprehending the western religious framework, the eastern student is better able to understand and relate to western methods. There are of course both similarities and differences between the various eastern religions, and between eastern and western cultures, significantly and otherwise.

One of the biggest differences between eastern and western religions is that eastern religions tend not to be exclusive, while western religions tend to be exclusive and separative. In the west (oversimplifyingly) one is either a Jew or a Christian or a Muslim or something else. For example, one cannot properly be a Christian and a Muslim (or a Christian and a Buddhist) at the same time. But in the east, one can properly be one or another or some or all of these, at the same time (of course this is true in the west also, but not generally accepted as such). In the west the differences between religions tend to be barriers, while in the east the differences between (eastern) religions tend to be not so.

Some tension exists naturally between Judaism (Christianity) (Islam) and other religions because of the separative nature of these western religions. But this separativeness is not a natural characteristic of any of these religions, it comes about because of the (more substantially) egoistic nature of western adherents and the relative insecurity of western peoples. In the east there is in principal



more harmony within and beyond each of the religious frameworks. Of course there are always exceptions. There are eastern egos as well as western ones. And there are western mystics who are not constrained by the more conventional barriers. There are gentle and harmonious elements within each religion, and there are more hostile (separative) elements likewise. Those who are gentle and harmonious are simply closer to the core and truth of their religions, while those who are separative have moved far from the ideals of their own religions.

Perhaps it is a matter of cycles and a matter of perception. The west has collectively embraced materialism on a broader, more intense scale than in the east, but this is changing. There is an ebb and flow globally and regionally. And while inferred generalizations may be relatively true, they are never entirely true. It is really in the synthesis of eastern and western religions and cultures that a broader and deeper truth can be revealed and apprehended and embraced. One has no need to give up one's religion or faith in order to study and apprehend and appreciate the contributions of other religions, but one must move beyond exclusivity and separativeness if the whole and the deep are to be embraced.

† Commentary No. 1323

## People and Perception

People tend to perceive each other in various ways, largely according to their conditioning and expectations. There are people as they are. There are people as they appear to be. And there are people as they are imagined to be. If one fails to realize which of these three means are being utilized, then perception becomes rather more complicated and likewise the consequences and implications.

When people meet there is a tendency to perceive each other according to the facades that are faced, consciously or otherwise, deliberately or otherwise. Similarly and simultaneously, when people meet there is a tendency to perceive each other according to superficial impressions (e.g., physical appearance, body language, credentials), according to stereotypes that are generally unconsciously embraced. This is perceiving people as they appear to be rather than as they are.

If the existence of the likely or potential difference between appearance and reality is recognized, then there is a possibility of learning the truth of someone. Otherwise one's perception is compounded and confused, as inferences are made (usually unconsciously) based upon appearances rather than truth.

The worst case is a matter of unconsciously perceiving someone wrongly (superficially), based on conditioning, appearances, etc. The next-to-worst case is a matter of making judgments about someone, likewise wrongly and superficially (as all judgments are in some sense both wrong (limited) and superficial). Far better to not judge, but to remain non-judgingly observant, to learn more of someone and to simply appreciate whatever there is to be appreciated. In remaining open to the truth, without judging, without forming opinions, without making inferences or assumptions, without drawing conclusions, then is there a real possibility of apprehending the truth. As a general rule, one should accept people as they seem to be, and as one learns more then people can be accepted more so as they are. But one should not assume that a person is as he or she appears to be, even if that person truly believes that his or her appearance is genuine. For in most instances it is simply not so.

Another complication arises from the absence of knowledge or understanding about someone. People have the tendency not only to stereotype but to actually (largely unconsciously) imagine what someone is like, filling in the gaps with however one would like to perceive them to be (much like many people "project" how they would like people to see them, even if it is not consistent with how they really are (and in some instances not even consistent with how they perceive themselves to be)). The problem is that as one gains experience with someone, the new information that is inconsistent with the imagined person tends to be ignored or discounted, instead of being assimilated and realized and accepted. It is therefore important that the student simply be aware of the role of imagination, and being honest about it, then being able to adapt to the reality of someone as it is apprehended.

There is also a halo effect (and similarly an anti-halo effect), where one who is viewed favorably (unfavorably) continues to be viewed favorably (unfavorably) regardless of evidence to the contrary. In other words people tend to perceive people as they want to perceive them (if not as they want to be perceived), rather than even as they appear to be, and rarely as they are. In this whole

process (people and perception), it is not how a person is imagined to be that matters, nor how they appear to be, nor even how they are. What matters is awareness, and how honest the perceiver is about all of this.

† Commentary No. 1324

## Ahimsa

Ahimsa does not belong merely to the Jains nor to Jainism, but is a concept found to some extent in every God-centered religion, but ahimsa has been popularized mainly through Hinduism and Jainism and theosophy.

Ahimsa is a Sanskrit word with many meanings and implications. It is a principle of non-harming or non-violence, of dynamic harmlessness embracing both truth and compassion. Ahimsa “is a central concept of Hindu and Jain morality” but it appears in other words and forms in virtually every other religion as well. In Hinduism ahimsa is a basis for rejecting animal sacrifices, a basis for vegetarianism, and a basis for right human relations. In Jainism the concept is extended to the microscopic realm and to all of life. Clearly one cannot avoid “harming” lives for which one is barely aware, but the principle is a matter of intent as well as practice, and one must endeavor to not harm other lives directly or deliberately, and to minimize the harming of other lives indirectly (incidentally). Thus it is both an ideal and a daily practice.

The basis of ahimsa is a simple recognition of the God that lives within all lives. To harm another creature is to harm oneself. To harm another creature (or oneself) is to live not in harmony with God. The implications are vast, and extend from individual human relationships to collective consciousness to relationships among nations, races, and cultures, to relationships with other kingdoms (especially the animal and plant kingdoms). There is of course an underlying purpose to all of life, and intended relationships between kingdoms, such that the animals are evolving (involving) through their relationship with humanity (which does not include provision of food), while the plants are involving less directly (more passively) (and which does include the provision of food to other lives). In other words, eating flesh foods is counter-evolutionary, it does not contribute to the evolution of animal consciousness, while eating plant

foods is evolutionary and does contribute to the evolution of (collective) consciousness, especially if it is done with respect and consideration for plants-as-life.

Ahimsa is very much a matter of awareness. As one approaches the God-Self, one simply finds oneself unable to harm others in any direct or deliberate sense, one finds oneself more and more averse to flesh foods (i.e., one who is relatively refined in consciousness becomes more and more sensitive to the quality and caliber (and suitability) of foods and the digestive system will eventually reject all animal foods). As the awareness grows, so does the recognition and apprehension of consequences of our attitudes, behaviors, feelings, and thoughts. One simply becomes more aware of the potential harm and there is (gradually) evoked a natural change in attitude and behavior and feeling and thinking such that one is less and less harmful to others.

Ahimsa is not merely a passive attitude. In proper practice it is an active, dynamic process. It is not a matter of weakness, it is a matter of spiritual strength. It is a matter of allowing the God within to express itself, which naturally embraces compassion, gentleness, harmlessness, harmony, peace, and poise. It is not simply a matter of not hurting someone but of embracing compassion for all others, regardless of circumstances. It is accepting responsibility for one's own actions (on every level of consciousness) and for one's own circumstances. It is living from the heart. It is embracing reverence for (all) life. The student is not expected to be perfect in all these regards, but the student is expected to sincerely embrace the principle and its practices, to the full extent of his or her abilities and awareness.

## Objective Consciousness

Objective consciousness is the (artificial) consciousness of the waking-mind directed outwardly to embrace the (external) world through the apprehension of sense impressions on various levels (although it can also be directed inwardly but in an objective and limiting manner). It is utilizing the lower or concrete mind in a relatively focused or narrow manner. Thus objective consciousness embraces the sensible world, primarily through the concrete mind and the faculty of thinking.

The measure of effectiveness of objective consciousness is called objectivity. If one is properly objective, one is perceiving and interpreting sense impressions in an objective or relatively unbiased (clear) manner. Thus objective thinking involves accuracy and clarity and discrimination. It involves embracing the world as it seems to be in some objective sense. Where the mind is properly focused, there is (superficial) apprehension and understanding of the object of consciousness, based on experience and conditioning and ability. While one extreme of objective consciousness is objectivity, the other extreme is lack of objectivity or unconscious recourse to bias and prejudice, where what is observed and apprehended is actually distorted by conditioning, by desire, by expectation, by (non-genuine) feelings.

Objective consciousness on emotional and mental levels is the primary means of experience and learning in the objective world. It is objective consciousness that is first developed as one becomes aware of the objective world and begins to succumb to its illusions. At first one is not very objective, but through the course of many lives one eventually develops more and more basis and capacity and tendency for objectivity. As one becomes more objective one naturally becomes relatively head-centered. In the head-centered person, thoughts and thinking tend to dominate the waking-consciousness. This is a natural consequence of life-in-this-world, of immersion in the world, as the person in incarnation is generally unaware of the true nature of the world and is generally unaware of the true nature of oneself. Thus objective consciousness, while a necessary and helpful tool to apprehending the world and experience in the world, is also a limiting factor in consciousness, because the objective

consciousness is relatively narrow-minded or limited in its ability to embrace truth.

The objective consciousness embraces whatever is apparent and not generally what is actually there. In being focused, one is closed to everything beyond the focus. Therefore objective consciousness is ultimately separative. It is sustained by the illusion of the world and the illusion of the individuality (separated self), and in turn sustains these illusions. And yet it is necessary to first develop the objective consciousness before one can learn all the lessons of this world and begin to broaden and deepen in consciousness. If one tries to broaden and deepen prematurely then one simply misses a great deal of what is afforded in the world (necessitating a return to the world, under more constrained conditions).

For the ordinary student of life in the lower worlds of physical, emotional, and concrete mental experience and expression, there is not much need to go beyond objective experience. But for the spiritual student there is a need to both develop and refine (and temper) the objective consciousness and to balance that consciousness with something more subjective. The spiritual student needs to be able to be objective, i.e., to be able to exhibit objective consciousness as needed, but without that consciousness dominating.

† Commentary No. 1326

## The Sixth Precept

The sixth precept of Buddhism is the principle of abstention from frivolous or idle speech, or, in the more positive framing, the principle of meaningful speech. There are a number of occult or metaphysical aspects to speech, namely that speech requires and consumes energy, that speech tends to constrain the mind and attention to the content and quality of speech (and to the quality of the content of speech), and that speech (words and sound) both attracts and conveys energy, for good or ill. The first of these is not so important, but the second and third aspects are the focus of the sixth and seventh precepts, respectively.

Frivolous speech suggests speech that simply has little or no value except to the ego. Most people are asleep. They tend to speak, mechanically and superficially, according to their conditioning and according to the tendencies and needs of the ego. There is a momentum to habits of speaking, such that frivolous speech tends to maintain the status quo, effectively preventing or inhibiting progress. The danger is in the sense of constraining the mind and attention, preventing the mind from focusing on more meaningful issues, inhibiting awareness of what is actually significant. Thus idle chatter is counter-evolutionary. It sustains the bondage of mechanicalness. It sustains the sleep of those who are engaged and entangled in banal endeavors. And it prevents deepening leading to enlightenment.

Meaningful speech is another matter altogether. It has (some) value, it is the speech of encouragement to others, speech that helps the mind to focus on issues of significance, or speech that encourages or facilitates goodwill without being banal. It does not mean that only speech that pertains to the spiritual path is meaningful, but that meaningless speech should not be engaged. One needs not to speak unless there is meaningfulness in speaking, contrived or otherwise. But many people speak as an unconscious end in itself, masking the need of the ego to control the personality. This wastes energy, keeps the mind needlessly occupied and distracted, and strengthens the mundaneness of life. While meaningful speech is constructive and leads away from that which inhibits progress, leads from being asleep to being not quite asleep.

If one is truly committed to the spiritual path then there is a natural reluctance to speech, a natural uncontrived reticence that is overcome only naturally as the inner senses evoke gentle, meaningful speech. Those who engage in idle chatter are simply not focused on anything meaningful and are simply not in tune with their inner nature. That is okay for most people, but not for the spiritual student, Buddhist or otherwise. Many people have minds which grasp, and are easily distracted by external circumstances (stimuli), which are continually entertained by stimuli and responding to stimuli in an almost never-ending sequence. But the spiritual student is more detached, more observant without grasping, without being engaged or entangled in events and circumstances, but simply able to respond as (truly) needed, according to (higher) quality of consciousness.

Furthermore, meaningful speech is in a sense a means to enlightenment, as it tends to help to focus the attention of the mind on the path and on consciousness. And eventually, the subsequent-consequent natural reticence leads to a more gentle and more quiet mind, one that is more capable of apprehending (deeper) truth simply by virtue of its non-grasping nature (and more refined, less personal, less worldly nature). No wonder then that in some serious schools there are prohibitions from speaking.

† Commentary No. 1327

## The Seventh Precept

The seventh precept of Buddhism is the principle of abstention from malicious or slanderous or untruthful or otherwise harmful speech, or, in the more positive framing, the principle of harmonious and harmonizing and constructive and truthful speech.

The basic notion is that speech can be harmful and the spiritual student must endeavor to not be harmful in his or her speaking, thinking, or feeling, all of which broadcast energy that can impact other people, regardless of proximity (more properly, regarding people who are proximate and regarding people to whom the speech, thought, or feeling is related, regardless of how proximate those people may be). While speech is rather potent, one should not forget that thoughts and feelings also convey energy, for good or ill. Speech is usually accompanied by thoughts and feelings (and sometimes vice versa) which in turn intensify whatever energy is conveyed.

Harmful or slanderous speech (thinking) (feeling) is not simply saying something unpleasant or untoward to or about someone, or something that is overtly or indeliberately malicious, but any form of critical or judgmental or separative or dishonest (or untruthful) speech is inherently harmful, to others and to oneself (all energy conveyed ultimately returns to the sender). The human being (and the mind) is inherently creative, sending forth creative energies that impact the surrounding atmosphere and circumstances. Thus harmful speech is inherently self-reinforcing. The mind develops patterns that are very hard to relinquish or transcend. Slanderous speech is especially



pernicious and reinforces one's tendencies in that direction. If one speaks (thinks) (feels) ill toward or about someone, then that tends to reinforce one's perception of that person, regardless of additional experience that may be contrary to one's perception and judgment.

Slandorous or harmful speech is that which comes from relative coarseness, from the coarse mind and from the coarse (closed) heart. As the student becomes more refined in consciousness, there is increasing clarity and refinement in thinking and feeling (and therefore in speaking). More constructive (more refined) speaking then reinforces the refinement in consciousness, because it does not embrace or attract coarseness (coarse energy, coarse people), but tends to embrace and attract that which is comparably refined. Even well-intentioned (believed to be truthful) gossip is inherently harmful and separative. If one cannot naturally say something nice about someone then one should simply refrain from speaking (there is never any real obligation to speak, it is simply a matter of social conventions and (mundane) cultural conditioning). The challenge is really to observe one's own thinking and feeling and speaking so that one can reinforce the expression of positive (constructive) (gentle) energies and discourage the expression of negative (harmful) (separative) energies.

But the real object here is to bring about more harmonious conditions, both within oneself and within the immediate environment, within relationships with people, and within the broader collective consciousness. Thus abstention from slanderous speech in its more positive framing actually contributes directly to this object. Speech is creative, and refined (gentle, considerate, harmonious, truthful) speech is creatively harmonizing, i.e., tends to bring about harmonious conditions. This does not imply the avoidance of issues that need to be resolved, but it does imply that through harmony conflicts (illusions) can be more effectively resolved.

## The Eighth Precept

The eighth precept of Buddhism is the principle of abstention from covetousness and avariciousness, or, in the more positive framing, the principle of tranquility. Covetousness is considered in its broader, deeper context of seeking or striving for that which belongs to the lower self or not self, while tranquility is simply a consequence and expression of not striving in this sense.

Covetousness in this sense implies wanting something for the separated (superficial) self (ego) (personality), and/or brooding about something pertaining to that outer, lower self. It is another sense of self-absorption or self-centeredness, but not necessarily selfishness, instead of accepting one's immediate circumstances and remaining focused on the way or process of evolution in consciousness (spiritual path), one unfortunately allows the mind to be distracted by some object in consciousness, something external or worldly, which can never actually be embraced. In one extreme it is a matter of desiring something that belongs elsewhere or through greed, in the other extreme it is simply (wastefully, unnecessarily) brooding over one's circumstances and not liking them.

Covetousness in this sense is a mental or emotional state that tends to pervade the waking-consciousness, undermining the fulfillment of whatever is actually needed. In some sense it is simply a matter of being passively (defaultedly) absorbed in mundane and personal things rather than being actively engaged in higher and more noble endeavors. It is also a matter of being entangled in the distinction between oneself and that which is beyond the immediate consciousness, i.e., between that which covets and that which is coveted, without realization of the lack of (actual) distinction. It is a product of immersion in matter (material existence) (the external world) and egoism, and something that must eventually be worked through and transcended. It is also a matter of the absence of proper meditation and meditative awareness.

In meditation, if properly engaged, the student is able to shift the focus of consciousness away from the coarse and personal and worldly, to more refined, less personal, less worldly, more noble endeavors. As one becomes more

meditative, and as one carries that energy (qualification) into the day-to-day life (experience and expression), then one naturally becomes less covetous and more tranquil. Not passive, but actively tranquil. Through proper meditation the student tames and tempers the monkey mind and the grasping, seeking mind. Through proper meditation one overcomes melancholy and self-absorption. Through proper meditation one refines the waking-consciousness and the entire aura (physical, etheric, emotional, and concrete mental nature). The result is properly a state of active tranquility in which one can engage experience and expression more meaningfully and more effectively, and necessarily without appreciable entanglement.

Tranquility is a very positive state. Tranquility suggests and implies (and conveys) serenity and poise, equanimity and steadiness. It is a place where one is free from disturbing influences, and yet, in the higher sense, also a place where one can function effectively in the world without becoming absorbed or entangled. A properly relaxed mind (and accompanying disposition) is one that can interpret sense impressions without exuding bias, one that is relatively responsive to higher impression and not (merely) an end in itself. Thus freedom from covetousness is quite preceptive.

† Commentary No. 1329

## The Ninth Precept

The ninth precept of Buddhism is the principle of abstention from hatred, or, in the more positive framing, the principle of compassion. Again it is not simply a matter of not doing something, but of actively embracing a positive principle. Hatred is a very violent emotion and conveys energy forcefully even if not expressed in physical or physically violent terms. Hatred is entirely inconsistent with the higher Self and all spiritual principles. It is a great separator (in consciousness), between human beings and between a human being and the God within.

In the broader context of this ninth precept, hatred also includes contempt and despite and malevolence and ill will. Each of these conditions in consciousness constitutes a profound sickness (illness in consciousness), an emotional-mental disease that if not checked will eventually result in substantive physical illness.

In such illness the aura is profoundly impaired, opened and vulnerable to the coarser elements. In some sense this precept is hardly worth addressing, as it should be obvious to anyone who contemplates a spiritual endeavor that any embrace of evil (selfish) intentions is simply inconsistent and incompatible with the path and its practices. One cannot possibly meditate, cannot possibly find the God within, if one engages in coarse practices. Hatred is simply an extreme form of coarseness, an identification with the basest human (animal) nature. In another sense hatred is simply an extension of covetousness, allowing the waking-consciousness and marshaled personal energies to be focused on whoever-whatever seems to be between the one who covets and whatever is coveted.

Hatred is in the final analysis simply a matter of extreme inner discontent. One does not actually hate another person without necessarily and simultaneously hating oneself (despite whatever other illusions or delusions there may be). And the inverse of hate is compassion. It is a gently growing compassion for others (without discrimination) that eventually conquers one's atavistic and separative tendencies. One cannot resolve any of the more subtle challenges along the way without first overcoming the basest elements of human nature. And compassion is the principal means.

The first task would seem to become aware of the dangers and implications of hatred. Only then is it likely for someone to be able to become aware of his or her own nature in this regard (the second task, awareness or realization of one's hatred). Then it is a matter of checking the active form of hatred, i.e., in not expressing the energy, then a matter of transforming one's tendencies in these regards into something more noble. Eventually one passes through neutrality (detached indifference, not hating, not loving) and comes to compassion, and the positive phase begins. This is where the precept is really intended, for the spiritual student to more actively embrace compassion, both in everyday relationships with other human beings, with regard to all of humanity collectively and in its various components, and all of life's creatures.

Embracing compassion does not mean necessarily that one will never encounter hatred in others, but it does mean that one will respond to hatred not in kind but with compassion. If there is no coarseness within, then one is simply unresponsive (invulnerable) to external coarseness. Moreover and more

properly one who embraces compassion has a very positive effect on his or her surroundings and all of the people who are encountered thereby. And since all people are connected on some level, the collective healing influence of compassion is quite profound.

† Commentary No. 1330

## The Tenth Precept

The tenth and final precept of Buddhism is the principle of abstention from false views, or, in the more positive framing, the principle of wisdom. But what are false views? They are views (beliefs) derived from the world of appearances, of the material world and through ego. They are beliefs that sustain the illusion of ego and the place of that superficial individuality in the world. They are natural and common beliefs but derived from false premises (that the external world is real and that the ego (personality) (lower self) is substantive).

The problem is that (wrong) beliefs tend to become doctrines or principles that are embraced consciously or otherwise but which qualify and condition how one relates to the world and to other people (which condition how one experiences and expresses oneself in the world). If one believes in the separated individuality, then one is likely to act on the basis of apparent self-interest rather than more nobly. If one believes that this (apparent) world is all that there is, then one relates to that world accordingly. If one believes that “man” is superior to animals and that animal lives do not really matter, then one tends to live accordingly, i.e., in killing animals and eating flesh. Thus most of what is relatively common practice (behavior that is selfish or self-centered) is based on wrong belief. Or, in the terminology of the previous two precepts, wrong beliefs are derived from covetousness, hatred, and/or delusion, from a (conscious or unconscious) sense of separateness and separativeness.

Wrong belief is not so much a matter of beliefs that are unfounded or untrue, but a matter of seeing things wrongly in some broader or more fundamental sense. It is more pernicious than simply having a difference of opinion. Indeed, all differences of opinion are derived from wrong belief (not that one is right and another is wrong but that both are wrong because both are based on the illusion of separation (truth and reality are based on something much deeper and do not

engender conflicting “differences” but engender harmonious diversity)). And right belief is not so much a matter of being “right” about something as it is a matter of seeing things in a deeper sense. Indeed, the basis of wisdom is not right belief but the assimilation of understanding (which is based on the assimilation of knowledge). Wisdom is not about beliefs at all. Beliefs are inherently separative. Opinions even more so. Wisdom is about seeing things as they are rather than as they appear to be. Beliefs, opinions, knowledge, even understanding are based on superficial comprehension (at the personality level), while wisdom is based on something higher and deeper, the conscience, intuition, or love-wisdom of the soul.

In this context, right beliefs and right views are a matter of non-attachment to beliefs, to non-view. Awareness and enlightenment and realization do not relate to having right beliefs in contrast with wrong beliefs, but in being free to see things without the impediment of “having” beliefs or being attached to beliefs, having opinions, convictions, etc. One is not therefore aimless or unfounded, but is rather simply living from conscience rather than conviction, from a sense of what is right(eous) rather than from some rationalization or judgment or cultural conditioning.

So. How does one become wise? Through self-observation, through the gradual and deliberate refinement of one’s nature, through dedication to truth, through embracing harmlessness and honesty and humility. Through allowing wisdom (the higher self) to emerge.

## Buddhism 1

Buddhism is a major religion and moral philosophy. While (outer) Buddhism originated in India, it has spread throughout southeast Asia, and to some extent even the western world, and seems (now) to be more related as much to Confucianism and Taoism as to Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Buddhism is essentially more a moral philosophy (Buddha Dharma) than a religion, though there are elements of religion in the sense that there are scriptures and priests and temples.

Buddhism was founded by Siddharta Gautama Buddha. The story of the Buddha is helpful but not crucially so. What really matters are the principles and teachings of Buddha (and Buddhism), much of which is derived from the life and experience of the Buddha and his subsequent enlightenment. Thus Gautama was a human being who became the Buddha, and remains human (much like Jesus became the Christ). While Buddhism does embrace evolution in consciousness, it does not seem to embrace the theosophical concept of our being Gods-in-the-making. In principle Buddhism is non-dogmatic and not in competition with any other religion. As a moral philosophy, like theosophy, Buddhism can be embraced without one needing to leave one's traditional religion or context.

The four noble truths or statements of principles of Buddhism are (1) there is suffering, (2) suffering is caused by grasping (attachment), i.e., identification and entanglement with the material and sensual world, (3) suffering can be fully overcome, and (4) a way that leads to cessation of suffering is the noble eightfold path elucidated in Buddhism. Buddhism has a strong inner component, with focus on meditation and contemplation, which leads potentially to a strong outer spiritual practice. Thus Buddhism exhibits a strong moral philosophy, with implications for individual and collective conscience (consciousness). There is progress, evolution in consciousness, but this is not properly (in principle) an egoistic endeavor, indeed it is to the contrary.

The underlying philosophical framework of Buddhism borrows much from Hinduism and theosophy (and vice versa), albeit not without a considerably different emphasis in its outer practices. In Buddhism there is acknowledged appreciation of karma and reincarnation, of the process of cause and effect, the wheel of life and death. The conditioning of karma refers to each effect being or evoking also a cause (and vice versa). The object is to transcend karmic conditioning so that one may live a life free from artificial conditioning (i.e., liberation). Dharma in Buddhism is perceived as something more transcendent, more absolute, than perhaps dharma in traditional Hinduism. The objective in this sense is to bring one's karma in harmony with dharma, which in turn means that karma is fulfilled or transcended and nirvana is achieved.

In Buddhism there is no emphasis on God, indeed in Buddhism there is no personal God in the sense of Christianity or most other religions. If perceived in terms of God, then God is the absolute, underlying void. This sense of void is often misunderstood; Buddhism is not nihilistic. Indeed, God is the void. Emptiness and fullness are equivalent. And words are necessarily limiting and misleading. Yet God is also found within, though usually referred to as the Self (in contrast with the not-self). But the not-self is entangled in the illusion or maya of life in the sensible world. All things in this lower world are relative and therefore illusory. Through proper spiritual practice, over the course of many lives, one finds the truth or reality within (self-enlightenment), and bondage (suffering) is transcended.

† Commentary No. 1332

## Buddhism 2

Besides Buddhism as a moral philosophy, there is a very central concept of self. In some sense Buddhism does not recognize the existence of a soul in the same sense as theosophy. In Buddhism the "soul" or self is much less personal. It is not the personal self that reincarnates, but the web of karma that relates to (and produces) a personal self. So there is a soul; it simply is not recognized and identified as a soul; instead it is recognized and identified in more abstract terms, but no less meaningfully. In this sense Buddhism complements more soul-oriented philosophies, and the truth is that the soul (atma-buddhi-manas) has both personal and impersonal dimensions. It is a matter of perspective.



And the Buddhist perspective is simply much less personal. Which is necessary for one to be able to grasp the need for non-grasping, which involves non-identification with the grasping element (the ego, the intellect, the personality).

Like Christianity, Buddhism has many “denominations” or sects or schools of Buddhism, each contributing to the whole. The three main vehicles of Buddhism are (1) Hinayana or Theravada with its Pali Canon, (2) Mahayana, and (3) Vajrayana, although Mahayana and Vajrayana are often considered together, as Tibetan Buddhism. Hinayana means “little vehicle” and is perhaps the earliest school of Buddhism, with Theravada or “doctrine of the elders” being the principal modern survivor of the original eighteen sects and which predominates as the “southern” school of Southeast Asia. Mahayana means “great vehicle” and predominates as the “northern” school or Tibetan Buddhism. In Mahayana there is a distinction between the arhat and the bodhisattva, the arhat being one who is assured of enlightenment and is mainly self-motivated, while the bodhisattva being one who is motivated more altruistically.

In fact, one cannot achieve enlightenment if one is personally motivated, for self-centeredness is a barrier that precludes the very object of the quest. Thus in a broader sense, both the arhat and the bodhisattva are necessarily transcending of selfishness and self-centeredness, but the bodhisattva is one who returns to the world to help others even while not required to do so by karma. The arhat is the ideal of Theravada Buddhism, one who has traveled the noble eightfold path and who has eliminated the ten fetters and has therefore entered nirvana. The bodhisattva is the ideal of Mahayana Buddhism, one who has renounced nirvana. Mahayana has advanced Buddhism both in the sense of its large array of scriptures and in its sense of active compassion for others. It is not enough merely to seek the end of one’s own suffering, one must also work toward the alleviation and eventual transcendence of others’ suffering, and ultimately to collective enlightenment.

Vijrayana means “thunderbolt vehicle” and is also known as Tantrayana. It is a school of Buddhism that emphasizes the Tantric path and practices (of magic and mystery and Buddhism occultism). But of course these distinctions (between Theravada, Mahayana, and Vijrayana) are not so clear-cut or exclusive, and there are noble elements and mystic elements within each school.

Theravada tends toward monks and monasteries and intellect and rules of discipline (detachment, seclusion, renunciation), while Mahayana tends toward the heart and the intuition and tends to appeal to a broader spectrum of students and lay people.

Much of Buddhism seems to involve lineage. But in the final analysis, the popular emphasis on gurus and lineage is really not important; what is important are the basic teachings and principles, the various concepts and practices that encourage the student in spiritual development.

† Commentary No. 1333

### Buddhism 3

The lexicon of Buddhism is perhaps more complicated than that of Hinduism, as it involves more than just Sanskrit words utilized in some familiar, some not so familiar, ways, but also engages terms from other Asian languages.

The absolute plays a special role in Buddhism and effectively replaces the notion of a personal God. Ahimsa is a philosophy of harmlessness and compassion, embraced both by Buddhism and Jainism. Anabhoga refers to purposelessness, the living of a spiritual life as an end in itself, without regard to self-interest or conscious striving. Anapana-sati refers to the monitoring of the breath, and exercise of mindfulness. Anatman is the notion of non-ego (paradoxically equivalent to the atman or not-self) and refers to the non-separateness of all of lives, not to any sense of annihilation. Anicca refers to impermanence, of life being a matter of ever-changing (ever-becoming) flux. Anshin refers to the repose of mind. An arhat is one who has traveled the noble eightfold path, conquered the ten fetters, and attained nirvana. Asava refers to mental intoxication or that which impedes realization.

Buddhism is the Middle Way, between asceticism or self-mortification and entanglement in the senses. Bhava is a state of existence or becoming, the link between upadana or clinging to life and jati or rebirth. Bodhi refers to enlightenment, based on wisdom and compassion, i.e., the second ray aspect of love-wisdom. Bodhisattva refers to one who has gone beyond being merely an

arhat, but one who returns to this world to help others, one whose wisdom results from direct perception of truth. Buddha (like Christ) is a title bestowed upon those who achieve a certain stage of enlightenment and compassion. Buddha-Dhamma refers to the teaching of the Buddha. Buddhi is the vehicle or bodhi or enlightenment, the faculty of the (higher) spiritual intuition.

Compassion is a central virtue in Buddhism. Selfish desire is the cause of suffering. Dhamma or dharma is the notion of proper conduct, adherence to higher principles or law. Dhammapada is the principal scripture of the Pali Canon, i.e., the way of the Buddha's teaching. Dharmakaya refers to the Buddha as the personification of truth. Dhyana is meditation, leading to samadhi. Dojo is any place where the Buddhist teaching is provided or the way of Buddhism practiced. Dukka is the first of the four noble truths or suffering, a lack of well-being. The ego is an artificial barrier to truth and realization. Enlightenment is the lesser goal of Buddhist practice (the greater goal being love-wisdom). The eternal now or eternal moment refers to the place of mindfulness in the Buddhist practice. Fetters refer to personal (emotional and mental) attachments which must be eliminated and transcended before enlightenment can be achieved. The four noble truths are dukkha, samudaya, nirodha, and magga. Happiness in Buddhism is not an end in itself but merely a consequence of righteousness, ultimately to be transcended. Jiriki refers to salvation (liberation) through one's own efforts.

Maitreya refers to the Bodhisattva who will become the next Buddha. Nirvana refers to the goal of Buddhist endeavor. The Pali Canon are the scriptures of Theravada Buddhism. Paramita refers to the various stages of spiritual development leading to perfection. The ten precepts refer to moral and ethical practices of Buddhism. Renunciation refers to the sacrifice of self-interest. Samadhi refers to the meditative state of the quiescent mind, the mind that has transcended separateness. Santana refers to continuity of consciousness. The swastika refers to the ceaselessness of manifestation, to prosperity and long life. And vipassana refers to the meditation of intuitive insight.

## Human Motivation

Human beings in incarnation are motivated in a number of ways, variously according to their circumstances and conditioning and nature. There are many ways of looking at human motivation, among them Abraham Maslow's hierarchical perspective on motivation and personality.

Maslow's perspective provides a fundamentally sound view of human motivation in a non-metaphysical, non-spiritual framework. Thus it applies to most people but does not take into consideration the role of the soul or higher (deeper, spiritual) needs nor the place and nature of the spiritual path. In Maslow's hierarchy a person tends to address basic needs before moving onto higher levels. At the most basic level are physiological needs such as satisfying hunger and thirst and obtaining shelter. At the next level are needs relating to safety and security, finding protection from physical and emotional dangers. Then there are more social needs, to satisfy a need for a sense of belonging, for acceptance, affection, and friendship. To satisfy the need to love and to be loved. At the next level are the ego needs, relating to self-esteem, a sense of worthiness. These include both external factors such as attention, recognition, and status, as well as internal factors such as self-respect. Finally (in this hierarchy) there is self-actualization in the sense of accomplishing something.

In a sense, the human being at the personality level tends to seek to satisfy whatever are the apparent dominant needs at a given time. The hierarchy of needs is dynamic, shifting according to circumstances, shifting according to the growth and maturation of the person. And some activities address more than one level of need. And the satisfaction of needs is quite relative and varies a great deal from person to person. What satisfies one person (in a particular need) may not be sufficient for another. What is a need for one person may not be of any concern to another. Some needs are artificial, evoked by society or marketing or peer pressures. And most needs are not really needs but simply wants.

Another approach to human motivation is afforded in the perspective of having, doing, and being, which is not inconsistent with Maslow, but is rather simpler

and leads to appreciation of something beyond Maslow's personality levels (i.e., being). The ordinary (worldly) personality (ego) tends to be entangled at the having and doing levels, while the spiritual student tends to be more involved in doing (in a more noble sense than merely self-actualization) and being. Ultimately one simply embraces being, and while one has things and does things the motivation is not for having or doing but in being.

Yet another perspective, not inconsistent with the others, simply describes the various objects of typical human endeavor. In this perspective there are various motivations pertaining to health and wealth (money as an end in itself or for what it can buy in terms of perceived comforts), fame and fortune. There are motivations of beauty (vanity), material comforts, and various pleasures of the senses. There are motivations pertaining to power and position, of fame and status. There are motivations pertaining to accomplishments, noble and otherwise, according to values and intentions (e.g., one may undertake noble work for ignoble reasons). And there are motivations pertaining to freedom, both in the lower sense of physical, emotional, and mental freedom, and in the higher sense of spiritual liberation. And finally there is the motivation from within, for service, for simply doing what needs to be done.

† Commentary No. 1335

## Subjective Consciousness

Subjective consciousness is not the opposite of objective consciousness, nor the lack of objectivity. Subjective consciousness is in one sense the complement of the (artificial) objective consciousness of the waking-mind. It is in another sense the consciousness directed inwardly to embrace the (internal) world of the soul and conscience, and in yet another sense it is the individual consciousness in a broader, deeper sense than just the objective or superficial consciousness.

Subjective consciousness thus has both higher and lower aspects. In the lower sense it is the unconsciousness or subconsciousness of all of the impressions and energies for which the waking-consciousness (ego) is not really aware. In this lower sense it is still an active player as it contributes potentially substantially to the underlying motivations and qualifications of outer experience and

expression, through various personality-level sensitivities (i.e., sensitivities on psychic (mainly emotional or astral) levels). In the higher sense it is the super-consciousness of the soul, or the effect of that higher consciousness on lower levels, through conscience and through other forms of higher, deeper awareness. In this higher sense, subjective consciousness is quite (w)holistic.

While the objective consciousness tends to be focused and narrow, relying on the concrete mind, the subjective consciousness tends to be much less so, relying on the abstract mind and the intuition (buddhi). While the objective consciousness separates itself from its object, the subjective consciousness embraces the object without distinguishing between the embracer and what is embraced. In subjective consciousness there is neither separateness nor any sense of separateness. The subjective consciousness involves feeling, both on the lower (astral, emotional) level and on the higher (buddhic, intuitional) level, but does not actually involve thinking. Thinking is, in this sense, internally (and externally) disruptive and separative.

The measures of effectiveness of subjective consciousness are sensitivity and awareness. True awareness, not merely having sense impressions and interpretations of those sense impressions, is evoked by higher consciousness. Thus the spiritual student must cultivate receptivity and responsiveness to that higher quality and consciousness. Thus one must temper the objective consciousness to some extent, even while that objective consciousness is helpful, indeed necessary, to effectively embracing opportunities for experience and expression. The objective is to achieve a balance between objective and subjective capabilities, where the subjective influence comes primarily from the higher Self and qualifies whatever is obtained through the more objective senses such that one does not simply accept objective impressions as actuality, nor allow the stream of objective impressions to dominate in any sense.

Subjective consciousness is not simply a matter of feelings, for one also needs to make sense of one's (higher and lower) feelings. One needs eventually to be able to properly discriminate between the higher and lower sources and sense the higher qualities to be embraced (affording their power and influence) and the lower qualities to be (effectively) ignored (thus removing their power and influence). Thus objective consciousness, properly refined (and tamed) is an instrument for more effective subjective consciousness. This does not require

thinking objectively except in the preliminary or preparatory sense, but goes beyond that to allowing the objective mind to clarify impressions without thinking (and therefore without distortion).

† Commentary No. 1336

## Confucianism

Confucianism is a “religion” or moral philosophy of ethics, emphasizing “filial piety, justice, propriety, benevolence, intelligence, and fidelity.” Confucianism is arguably the dominant philosophical system in China and enjoys a peaceful coexistence (complementarity) with both Buddhism and Taoism, indeed the distinctions between these three religions in Chinese culture is not so clear, nor between Confucianism and Chinese culture and philosophy in general. Yet much that is a matter of “Chinese” philosophy is loosely associated with Confucianism.

Confucianism was founded by Confucius. Confucius was a social scientist and humanistic psychologist. Much of the classical Confucian literature is ascribed to Confucius or to his subsequent Mencius. The principal scriptures are the four books, namely the Analects of Confucius, the Meng-tzu, the Ta-hsueh (the Great Teaching), and the Chung-yung (the Application of the Center). Confucius and his philosophy have had a profound effect on Chinese culture. In Confucianism, virtuous conduct begins in principle with the head of state and extends throughout the government and culture. The family is an important aspect of Confucianism, and it is a special place where virtues are expounded, developed, and experienced. Society is perceived in some sense as an extension of the family.

One of the basic elements of Confucianism is belief in the inherent goodness of human nature. Consistent with the deeper tradition of all the world’s great faiths, that inherent goodness needs to be cultivated or evoked into manifestation. By seeing the good and acknowledging the good one is encouraging the good to grow. Mencius was a strong proponent of this idea (inherent goodness), while Hsun-tzu suggested that people are inherent evil and need to be reformed (i.e., learn goodness). There is truth in both perspectives, but the notion of inherent goodness more readily allows and affords cultivation

of compassion and other heart-centered qualities, while the notion of reformation is more a head-centered approach and somewhat less effective. Another basis of Confucianism is living in harmony, among peoples and with nature. Relationships are properly and ideally motivated entirely through love (humane love).

Another way of looking at Confucianism is through Confucius' notion of the ideal man (sage) (wise man) (perfected human being). The ideal man (person) has four characteristics, namely yi, jen, li, and chih. Yi is simply the best way of doing things, i.e., by living naturally (uncontrivedly) in accord with one's own inner nature (essential goodness). As yi is applied to social interactions, it embraces two major principles, namely reciprocity and sincerity. Jen is humane love or goodwill, accepting others as they are, allowing others to live in accord with their own inner nature. Jen is also considered as a willingness to live in accordance with yi, according to principles of harmony. Li is propriety, the link between one's inner nature and outer expression. One needs to embrace inner and outer harmony. Differences between inner and outer nature arise from insincerity. But in living properly (in accord with yi) and embracing jen, then one also embraces li. Li also refers to adherence to (proper) (social) ritual. Chih is wisdom, the fourth characteristic of the wise man. This is not about knowledge or even understanding, but simply living confidently-harmoniously.

The wise person embraces all of these characteristics, indeed, embodies them all. The wise person simply lives from a higher, deeper place in consciousness. And this place is found through embracing the way.



## Taoism 1

Taoism is very complementary to Confucianism in the sense that while Confucius was a moralist and psychologist-activist, Lao-Tzu, the founder of Taoism, was a more so a mystic. Taoism is a religion and philosophy emphasizing “conformity to cosmic order (the Way or Tao) and simplicity of social and political organization.” Embracing spontaneous action, in accordance with natural needs.

In one sense Tao is Nature, the totality of natural forces. In another sense (little) Tao is human nature. And the object is to bring the Tao in conformity or harmony with Tao, to live the way of Tao. Taoism is sometimes called the effortless path, in the sense that the object is to allow the higher nature to manifest, rather than changing anything (in any unnatural sense). But Taoism is by no means an easy path. In Taoism there is a sense that “conscious efforts to control people and events are counterproductive” and that one only needs to embrace the natural patterns. Taoism emphasizes self-reliance not in the sense of ego or individuality but in the sense of the person in his or her natural (divine) state. Clearly there is a popular, outer dimension to Taoism, and a more mystical inner dimension, but both rely on the same basic principles. In Taoism there is properly no quest for immortality, there is however an effortless embracing of immortality.

While Confucianism emphasizes adherence to harmonizing social conventions, Taoism emphasizes adherence to natural conventions, which are not inherently different from the Confucian social conventions. It is more a matter of perspective than distinction. Taoism is not properly a matter of intellectual consideration, it is more about feeling and sensing the natural path and choosing to live in accord with that path. It is about wu wei, non-selfishness, doing nothing, or simply not doing anything in any contrived manner, or effortless action. It is about connecting with the underlying natural force (universal elemental flow) and working with nature rather than (futilely) attempting to struggle with or impose upon nature. Man’s folly in this sense is his arrogance in thinking that this is his world, to be manipulated according to his whims, rather than a world to be respected and (almost) revered. This

acceptance of nature does not mean giving in to the lower human nature, but aligning oneself with the true (higher, human) nature (which is equivalent to the Tao).

The principal scripture of Taoism is the Tao Teh Ching but Taoism also embraces the writings of Chung-Tzu and others, the I Ching (Book of Changes), etc. In addition to the interplay between Confucianism and Taoism, there is also an interplay (state of mutual influence) between Buddhism and Taoism. Indeed, Zen is properly considered an outgrowth of this interplay rather than an extension or dimension of Buddhism.

Taoism has many facets, both religious and philosophic, elucidated in the Shamballa Guide to Taoism, including its shamanic origins, the transformation of Taoism from philosophy into organized religion, mystical Taoism, the development of alchemical Taoism, the role and place of Taoism in the synthesis of the three Chinese religions, magical Taoism or the way of power, divinational Taoism or the way of seeing, ceremonial Taoism or the way of devotion, internal-alchemical Taoism or the way of transformation, and action and karma Taoism or the way of right action. All of which lead to various practices including meditation, cultivation of the personality, and rites of purification, ceremony, and talismanic magic.

† Commentary No. 1338

## Taoism 2

The terminology of Taoism is predominantly Chinese and overlaps with that of Buddhism and Confucianism, but many of the concepts are similar to what is found in Sanskrit and in the more metaphysical aspects of all the world's religions and in theosophy.

Chai refers to fasting, especially in the sense of ceremonial acknowledgement of sins. Ch'ang refers to that which is constant or enduring. There is that which is (relatively) permanent and immutable, and that which is changeable or transient. Ch'ang-sheng pu-ssu refers to immortality, popularly regarding physical immortality (which is simply not important) but more properly regarding spiritual immortality (enlightenment). Chen-jen refers to the ideal

human being, one who has achieved Tao. Ch'i refers to energy, and in the Taoist sense it is the vital or etheric or life energy. Of course all lives exist within the etheric web and ch'i or prana is crucial. Ch'i may be embraced in its higher (profoundly spiritual) as well as lower (physical-etheric) sense. There is some emphasis in Taoism on the breath and its proper utilization (also movement).

Fang-chung shu refers to various Taoist sexual techniques, literally the arts of the inner chamber, again both in some higher, more spiritual sense, and in some lower, more personal sense. In one sense it is a matter of conservation and transformation of energy, in another sense more a matter of sharing and balancing energy. There are in fang-chung shu similarities with tantra as well as more western, occult techniques. Fu refers to the movement of Tao, literally, returning. The universe is cyclic, the flow of energies through manifestation likewise. All outpourings are ultimately fulfilled and return to their source, both personal, collective, and universal. Hsin-chai refers to the purification of the mind and allowing the heart to unfold, to listen to the intuition rather than the (common) senses.

Ju ching refers to the cultivation of silence prior to meditation, the process of quieting one's surroundings and one's mind, entering the silence. Ming refers to enlightenment (luminosity), to know and understand the Tao. Enlightenment comes not through knowledge, nor even understanding, but through wisdom. Ming also refers to destiny in the sense that all consequences are the natural outcome of their causes, and one should accept the inevitability of natural outcome, to work with the flow of things rather than against it. T'ai-chi refers to the ultimate reality. Tao-chia refers to philosophical or mystical Taoism and its emphasis on union with the Tao, while tao-chiao refers to religious Taoism and its emphasis on immortality. Tao-tsang refers to the Taoist canon of writings. Tso-wang refers to subjective meditation (meditation without object), embracing the flow of energy in meditation without allowing the mind to disturb the flow. Ts'un-ssu refers to more objective meditation, or concentration on some (worthy) object.

Tzu-jan refers to that which is true to itself, being spontaneous in the sense of being in accord with the Tao, embracing wu-wei or uncontrived action. Wu refers to the central concept of non-being or emptiness, being in the higher sense,

beyond the senses. Wu-wei is another very central concept of philosophical Taoism, the notion of acting only in accord with the natural flow of things, i.e., non-intervention. In wu-wei one approaches the Tao. Yin and yang are the polar energies or manifestation of the Tao. In apprehending the nature of yin and yang one begins to apprehend the Tao. But in not apprehending the nature of yin and yang, one truly embraces the Tao.

† Commentary No. 1339

## Zen 1

Zen is usually considered an outgrowth or dimension of Buddhism, but it is more properly considered as having elements of Buddhism and Taoism. In a sense it embraces the more mystical dimension of both and it is difficult (and not necessary) to discern where Buddhism and Taoism meet in Zen. So whether Zen is perceived and considered and embraced in Buddhist or Taoist terms, it does not matter. The word "Zen" is derived in a round-about way from dhyana and implies advaita (non-dualistic) meditation.

While most religions and philosophies can be more or less effectively described in words, Zen is not so easily apprehended or described. There is, like in the case of most religions and philosophies, an outer or popular version that is appealing by virtue of its glamour, and an inner or less popular but more meaningful version that is not appealing at all, but simply there for those who can embrace it, who are genuinely drawn to it. Zen is properly a non-intellectual tradition. It pertains to enlightenment and expounds vague principles, which if apprehended and embraced, do indeed lead to enlightenment, though not from doing but from being. Most people who approach Zen do so for the wrong reasons and in the wrong way, i.e., through glamour, and simply create more barriers. Those who are successful in approaching Zen, are drawn to Zen without glamour and simply leave themselves behind. For any sense of self is just another barrier.

Most people do not appreciate that much if not all of what is ordinary and commonplace, even necessary for most people, does in fact constitute a barrier to enlightenment. One simply cannot attain enlightenment while being immersed in the senses and/or in thinking, being entangled in materialism,

sensualism, or egoism. So in a very real sense Zen is about breaking down those barriers and simply allowing enlightenment to emerge in its own way. Enlightenment is seeing the truth of things, particularly the truth of one's own nature, not intellectually so, but truly so. So enlightenment does not convey the ability to convey this understanding. One simply understands, without even believing that one understands (if one believes it, then one has simply created another barrier).

Words are barriers. In Zen one tends to use words that are paradoxical, but not contrivedly so. Words that are not words. Words that stimulate without conveying information in any ordinary intellectual sense (i.e., non-correlative expressions). It is not making anything important, not having any attachments, yet remaining quite effective in living and functioning in the world. Words and concepts are a matter of conditioning. In Zen one learns to be unconditioned and unconditional. Through transcending words and concepts. Through becoming aware of ourselves as we are and not as we have been conditioned to perceive ourselves. Through overcoming preconceptions and eventually even our own perceptions.

In principle there is gradual enlightenment and sudden enlightenment and various degrees of enlightenment. In practice there is simply a gradual growth in the ability to be enlightened. Sudden realizations are simply (small) indications of alignment with something higher (greater) (deeper) (less superficial) than oneself (Tao). Anyone who claims to be enlightened is not. Anyone who believes in his or her own enlightenment likewise. True enlightenment is simply enlightenment. It has no degrees or measures. It does not come and go. It just is. To be oneself. To forget oneself. To be. To breathe.

## Zen 2

Enlightenment or self-realization is not actually profound. At all. If one thinks it is profound then one simply pushes it away. But the effects (more properly consequences of the process) of enlightenment are indeed profound, as the whole (human) nature is transformed, though the evidence of this transformation is not readily apparent to those who have not embraced enlightenment.

Enlightenment is not graspable. One can expound the intellectual consequences (little realizations) that are evoked through enlightenment, but one cannot actually apprehend those realizations except through enlightenment. There is no difference between enlightenment and true compassion. In Zen there is nothing to be learned, but there is much to be unlearned. In the thunderous silence there is much and there is emptiness. There is no going and doing, there is simply a coming home, a progressive lifting of the veil (overcoming delusions). Thinking is heaviness, helpful in some ways and to some extent, but ultimately obstructive. Not-thinking is enlightening, revealing in a more subjective, more meaningful sense.

There is at least one rather substantial misconception about Zen, and that is that enlightenment can be transmitted from master-teacher to student. In the vulgar (common) sense of Zen this may be so, but it is not true enlightenment. True enlightenment comes not from an external teacher but from the living-master-God within. Outer teachers may be helpful in the preliminary and preparatory phases, but no teacher can convey (actual) enlightenment. Teachers can convey ordination, energy, encouragement, stimulation, even psychic adjustment, and many related "things" but teachers cannot convey the actual essence from within. They facilitate. But they do not transmit enlightenment. It is simply there, to be found by the properly prepared student who seeks through non-seeking.

The three traditional Zen practices are za-zen, koan study, and achievement of satori (enlightenment). The first (za-zen) is crucial to calming the whole of the outer person, koan study (more properly non-study) is simply one means of transcending the intellect and ego, and satori is not something to be sought as

much as allowed. Za-zen is a place to sit. For sitting meditation. A place and regular (frequently recurring) practice of quietude and meditation. Breathing, relaxing, sitting. Not thinking. Just keeping the mind at a point of tension. But while za-zen is crucial, one does not achieve enlightenment simply by virtue of za-zen. It is only when the student has actually undergone the self-transformation that enlightenment is possible, so one must also refine the personality nature and "do" the work. Meditation is necessary but not sufficient. Only when the work is embraced can one begin to approach the Self. There are no quick and easy methods. If one finds enlightenment effortlessly, then that simply means that one has done the work (indeed, enlightenment can only be achieved effortlessly). Koans are simply one means of breaking through dualistic consciousness. If the koans are embraced intellectually then they afford nothing of actual value. But if (true) koans are simply embraced, then the truth is revealed in the form of samadhi (power).

The Zen lexicon is relatively modest (principally, minimally za-zen, koan, and satori) and embraces much of Buddhist and Taoist (non-intellectual) principles. In the final analysis, Zen is a way of life, an end in itself, an intrinsically spiritual path that transcends materialism and egoism and leads to the Self.

† Commentary No. 1341

## Western Religions

Western religions include Judaism in its several major forms and its mystical component (Qabalism), Christianity in its several major and many minor forms, Islam and its mystical component (Sufism), the Bahai Faith, and Zoroastrianism. All of these religions have emerged from the Middle East, but it is primarily Judaism and Christianity that have provided the predominant religious tradition of Europe and the western hemisphere.

In terms of progressive revelation, one can perceive Judaism as a precursor to Christianity, and Christianity as a precursor to Islam, even while each continues to be viable. The Bahai Faith is seen as an outgrowth of Islam with some relatively more universal sentiment. And Zoroastrianism is seen as a continuing religion with strong ties (influence) with these other western

religions. While Judaism and Christianity have their devotional aspects, Islam and the Bahai Faith are predominantly devotional and idealistic (sixth ray). Judaism has a strong first and fifth ray flavor, while Christianity is properly a second ray religion with a strong sixth ray aspect. The single predominant characteristic of western religions as compared with eastern religions, is the emphasis on the individual human being as a separate entity (ego) (and his or her relationship to God), which leads to western religions being relatively more separate and separative than most of the eastern religions. Yet all contribute nonetheless to the whole (world religion).

In the west one tends to be considered a Jew, a Christian, a Muslim, a Bahai, an atheist, an agnostic, etc., but not generally more than one of these, least not simultaneously. While in the east one can generally embrace more than one religious tradition, or aspects of more than one religious tradition, without inherent outer conflict. But in fact, the western religions are not inherently separate or separative. They tend to be separate and separative because western peoples (and people in general) tend to perceive themselves and express themselves as (if they were) separate peoples. Even those religions or denominations that teach more universal principles, e.g., the Bahai Faith, Unitarian, Unity) are staffed primarily with adherents who are themselves separate and relatively separative. This is because the ego tends to dominate, in east and west, and western religions have catered more so to the ego than those in the east (with exceptions of course).

Western religious adherents perhaps tend to be more outgoing and promulgational and proselytizing than their eastern colleagues. This simply reflects the relative insecurities of peoples and their faith(s). Faith that is embraced emotionally or intellectually, rather than simply felt in the heart. Faith that is somehow enhanced if others believe as they do. Or faith that needs to convert others in order to justify itself. While some adherents are doubtlessly sincere in these regards, imposition (on physical, emotional, and/or mental levels) remains a crime against humanity. Those who are converted are rarely genuinely so. Which weakens the faith as a whole. True religion cannot be sustained through artificial means. True religion endures not by virtue of the attitudes and behaviors of its adherents but by virtue of its intrinsic value, the value of its principles and practices.



But it is the inner aspect of religion that really matters, that remains true to its origins rather than adapting to peoples and cultures and transient needs. And the inner traditions of Judaism and Christianity and Islam and the Bahai Faith and Zoroastrianism are one and the same. And the innermost tradition of the western religions is the same as those in the east.

† Commentary No. 1342

## Judaism

Judaism began in the Middle East, in the region now encompassed by Israel. The two principal prophets of Judaism were Abraham and Moses. The principal scripture is the Torah. And there are three major sects, namely Conservative, Orthodox, and Reformed.

In the sense of progressive revelation, Christianity can be seen as having emerged from Judaism. And in a deeper sense of the esoteric tradition, the deeper (Qabalistic) elements of Judaism continue to provide the underlying mystical and occult basis of both Christianity and Islam. In another sense Judaism is a bridge between tribal religion and "world" religion. The ray nature of Judaism is primarily first ray and secondarily fifth ray, which are also the rays of the Jewish peoples. Indeed even while Judaism is a religion, it is in some sense also synonymous with Jewish culture and the Jewish peoples. The Jewish peoples have been scattered about the world and yet retain a very strong religious and cultural identity. That adherence is both a blessing and a curse.

It is a blessing in the sense that there is considerable spiritual encouragement and inspiration derived from the Jewish faith. A blessing in the sense of the many and varied contributions that Jewish peoples have made to human civilization and progress. A curse in the sense that strong attachments to tradition and racial-cultural identity mean that the Jewish people tend to be generally more separative, more self-isolated, and less assimilable than most. Those of any religion or faith or dispensation (disposition), who see themselves separately from the human race as a whole, are doomed to suffer, until such time as they rejoin humanity. Many "humanists" have incarnated within the Jewish peoples in recent times, and the race as a whole is moving toward reconciliation.

According to Moses Mendelssohn there are only three central principles in Judaism, namely God, providence, and legislation. God is (only) one, the creator and sovereign of all things. This is the first ray aspect. Sovereignty in the deeper sense means that God qualifies all aspects of creation, through providence and legislation. God does not control the details of manifestation except subjectively through qualification. Providence refers to karma, the underlying (divine) principle of cause and effect that encourages good and discourages evil and ignorance. This is the second ray aspect. Some think that God is aware of everything within creation, to the smallest detail, but in fact, God (the Logos) is aware in ways that are well beyond human comprehension, and is no more aware of details of human life than the human being is aware of the details of molecular and microscopic lives within his or her own body and consciousness. But there is a collective subjective awareness, a realization of relative well-being (harmony with intention) and a deliberate conveyance of energy (life, consciousness).

Legislation refers to the divine (cosmic) laws that govern creation, manifestation, life on earth, human experience and expression, etc. This is the third ray aspect. There are many formulations and perceptions of God's laws for human expression, including the Ten Commandments. Most (laws) are conveyed through conscience, which is how the human being in incarnation connects with the higher Self or God within. That which is consistent with divine intention will tend to ring true to conscience (accumulated wisdom); that which is inconsistent will tend to ring not true. The problem of course is that many do not listen to their own conscience.

## Christianity

Christianity is the religion founded indirectly by Jesus the Christ, i.e., he inspired the founding of the religion but it was not his contrived intention to do so. Christianity has several major components or sects, namely Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant. The protestant sect has numerous separate (and generally separative) denominations.

But despite denominational diversity (and richness), the real components of the Christian faith have to do with principles and teachings. The Christian faith in the highest, most noble sense, is based on the underlying ancient wisdom (as are all proper religions). The actual teachings of Christianity, as expressed mainly through the Holy Bible and to some extent through other Christian writings, are about cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis, about the nature of life on earth, human nature, the evolution of consciousness, and the spiritual path. The actual teachings of Jesus were the inner, spiritual teachings, symbolized in the scriptures. But unfortunately people have (in most cases sincerely, in some case not sincerely) distorted these teachings a great deal, so that much of what is taught as Christianity today is merely the outer cultural teaching, adapted to the needs and whims of people.

Jesus was a human being, a spiritual student of considerable training and preparation. He achieved enlightenment. He became the Christ. In one sense "Christ" is a title, in another sense "Christ" is a living more-than-human being. And in yet another sense Christ is the second aspect of the Trinity, the second ray. Jesus achieved communion with the Christ. He allowed the Christ to overshadow his life and live through his vehicles. Thus he was inspired, but remained human. While Christ remains Christ, in the higher sense the principle and aspect of consciousness (love-wisdom), in the lower sense a super-human being much closer in consciousness to God than is humanity.

The real essence of Christianity is simply the way to achieve communion. Jesus showed his disciples, his students, how to meditate, how to live in accord with the God within, how to evoke the inner, higher, deeper, more noble nature. How to achieve liberation (salvation), not through faith, nor through works per

se, but through (inner) communion. All of the principal events in his life symbolize the stages of the spiritual path, of evolution in consciousness, and the various degrees of self-transformation undertaken on the path. Thus the life of Jesus is demonstrative of Christian-spiritual values. It hardly matters whether or not he was real, whether or not he was Christ, whether or not the events described or attributed to his life actually occurred. A literal reading of the scriptures is far less significant than a symbolic reading. What matters is the symbolic value of each of the principal events in the life of Jesus. What matters are the ethics and morals and principles of living. Living a "Christian" life in the higher, more noble sense. But much of what is currently considered important by many Christians is simply not so in any higher, deeper sense.

Likewise the history of the Christian Church is not important, and there is little in its history for the adherent to be proud. The antagonism between outer (superficial, polarized) Christians and those of other faiths, and the antagonism of outer Christians within their own faith, e.g., between sects or denominations, are simply not consistent with the actual teachings of Christianity. The actual (inner) teachings are not inconsistent within the various denominations, nor inconsistent with the actual (inner) teachings of other faiths.

† Commentary No. 1344

## Islam

Islam is directly related to Judaism and Christianity in the sense of (perceived) progressive revelation. The problem is exclusivity, as adherents of each new religion tend to perceive their faith as more noble or more final than that of earlier religions and as adherents of older religions tend to remain attached to their beliefs and traditions, resisting the newer faiths. Of course these conflicts are entirely at the ego level, there being no inherent conflict between the (proper) teachings of any of the (proper) religions, and instead of perceiving any religion as more noble or better or more final than any other, the spiritual student (properly) perceives all religions as equal and each as continuingly contributive to human welfare.

Islam means submission to God (Allah). An Islamic adherent (Islamist) is more properly called a Muslim, or one who submits himself to the will of God. Islam was founded by Mohammed and the principal scripture is the Koran or Qur'an, the word of God as revealed through the prophet Mohammed. The two principal groups within Islam are the Sunnis and the Shiites. Sunnis are the majority of Muslims and are followers of the political successors of Mohammed, while Shiites are a (substantial) minority of Muslims and are followers of the Mohammed's family successors. Sunnis are considered "orthodox" and "traditional" while Shiites differ from Sunnis mainly regarding the issue of succession.

In Shi'a the (hidden) imam (Mahdi) is the unqualified authority or spiritual leader of the community, represented by mullahs, while in Sunna the head of the Islamic community is the khalifa or caliphate. In addition to the Sunni and Shiites are two significant spiritual groups or sects, the Sufis and the Baha'is. In some sense Sufism and the Bahai Faith are within Islam, in some sense they are also religions both within and beyond Islam.

In Islam there is a somewhat precious balance between fate and freedom. The human being should do his (her) best and fate is determined both by one's striving (actions) and through the grace of God, but there are tendencies toward fatalism. For Muslims there are five religious duties or pillars of faith, namely the confession of faith (shahada), prayer (salat), alms (zakat), fasting (sawm), and pilgrimage (hajj). The confession of faith is a declaration of there being no God but God (Allah) and recognition of Mohammed as "the" prophet. Prayer rituals play a significant role in Islam, with daily prescribed prayers, Friday as a main day of prayer, and Mecca (birthplace of Mohammed) as the direction for prayer. Islamic Mosques are special places for prayer and worship. Alms are more usually compulsory taxes to benefit the poor than voluntary offerings. Ramadan is the month of Islamic fasting (between dawn and sunset). Pilgrimage refers to the obligation for the adult Muslim to make at least one pilgrimage to Mecca.

Other features of Islam include the jihad or holy war, and Islamic law. Jihad is sometimes perceived as the war against unbelievers, but is more properly considered the war (noble efforts) against injustice. In Islam it is not so easy to separate the church from the state, as Islamic law is rather imposing. Muslims

are prohibited from gambling, from drinking alcohol, from adultery, from slander, for theft, from violent crime, etc. Penalties tend to be rather severe. Given the relatively unconditional nature of Islamic faith, cultural stability usually comes more from the coincidence of church and state, though there are tensions even within an Islamic state, as there are variations of beliefs and a tendency of those in power to impose on others.

† Commentary No. 1345

## Sufism

Sufism is the mystical element of Islam where the inner teachings, common to all proper religions, are embraced. In Sufism there is a natural focus on unity, oneness, and communion with the God within. Indeed, the Sufi aspires to the state of fana or union with God, and the practices of Sufism are the means of achieving fana.

While outer Islam may have its (superficial, worldly) conflicts with Judaism, Christianity, and Hinduism (and other faiths), Sufism is a bridge between these faiths. Sufism has strong (inner) links to Judaism, Christianity, and Hinduism. While in some sense unconventional and challenging, Sufism is also a moderating influence within Islam, wherever it is allowed to function openly, otherwise it is a moderating influence on more subjective levels. In Sufism there is appreciation for the love of God, and this love is reflected in the love of humans for life and for each other. And while there is naturally both inner and outer forms (elements) of Sufism, this focus on love forms a bridge in both directions, to humanity and the world (without) and to God (within).

Thus Sufism is in a very real sense the awakening of the heart. Among the aims of Sufism are the abandonment of desire for worldly things, the purification and refinement of the body (and emotions (and mind)) (transcending self-centeredness), the search for truth within (living an inner, spiritual life), purification of the heart and achieving communion with God, ultimately to approach God in consciousness such that one becomes absorbed in that higher, deeper consciousness. Sufism represents a relatively simplified lifestyle, and in some sense is threatening to those in authority because it fails to embrace the human ego and all of its comforts. Sufism focuses on the spirit of the Islamic

teachings rather than the blind implementation of law (legalism) and ritual. And although (outer) (organized) Sufism tends toward the worldly (ego), inner Sufism remains true to the deeper principles, the proper union of (balance between) inner and outer.

Twelve principles of Sufism are abandonment (tark) of the world of illusion, repentance (tubeh) or returning to a higher state, virtue and abstinence (tugha) or obedience to divine laws, patience (sabr) in the sense of allowing the heart to unfold, truthfulness (sedgh) or consistency between faith and practice, purity (safa) or adherence to truth and not to the ways of the world, love (vud) or living in and through the heart, remembrance (verd) of God at all times, loyalty (vafa'a) to the spiritual path and its principles, isolation (fard) or non-separative detachment from the world, poverty (faghr) or freedom from worldly and egoistic attachments, and annihilation (fana) of ego or achievement of perfection.

Sufism is the bhakti yoga of Islam. It is the recognition of the soul of its source and embracing the means of its returning to the source (love, devotion, living from the heart). It is the mystical journey, of meditation, of finding oneself, of preparation, of transformation of the heart, of communion. From the heart emerges a longing, an otherworldliness, that gradually transforms the outer person(ality) and leads the seeker to communion. Sufism is, in some sense, the ancient wisdom of the heart, in an Islamic context (through the Qur'an). It is an awakening to the pain of separation, a listening the voice of the silence (the soul). It is embracing the inner ideal of Islam, submission to God, in the most noble way, progressively without impediment of coarseness or ego, through love.

## The Bahai Faith

The Bahai Faith has emerged from within Islam and is a moderating influence with respect for other religions and with more universal appeal than traditional Islamic faith. The founder of the Bahai Faith is Baha'u'llah (meaning, the glory of God), who was a Persian prophet who is perceived by Baha'is to be part of a succession of prophets (e.g., Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed) in the sense of progressive revelation. Each new prophet builds upon the existing tradition and offers encouragement (influence) in some particular directions (reformations).

While some religions compete with each other for adherents and influence (more properly it is the misguided adherents of religions and not the religions per se), Baha'is tend to be more gracious and accepting of other faiths. Thus one of the principal characteristics of the Bahai Faith is non-separative respect for other faiths and traditions. Indeed Baha'is have actively and fundamentally promoted the ideal of unity in diversity, and Baha'is have actively and fundamentally promoted the ideal of human equality regardless of race, religion, even before these notions have become popular. Indeed in some sense religions emerge within the world religion as a consequence of need (balance), and the Bahai Faith has emerged for these purposes (social and spiritual teachings) in complement to other religions. The Bahai Faith is more of an outer religion than Sufism, has the strong devotional aspects of Islam, yet remains (properly) connected to its mystical core. There is of course a tendency to emotionalize Baha'u'llah and therefore miss some of the import of his message, but the community of Baha'is and many of the practices of Baha'is are nonetheless progressive and encouraging.

Among the principles and teachings of the Bahai Faith ... The singularity of God, the non-anthropogenic nature of God, the immeasurability and unfathomability of God, the transcendent and immanent nature of God, God as creator, existence of non-physical dimensions to manifestation, evolution in culture and consciousness, the notion of God living within all human beings (and all lives), the existence and continuing evolution of the soul which transcends the human physical form, the body and mind being merely



instruments, the need for progressive revelation (fresh collective spiritual impetus), the golden rule, the spiritual nature of our true existence, the need for spiritual growth, the balance of social and spiritual teachings, the inherent harmony of science and religion, etc.

While some religions rely on and promote blind faith and (fearful) obedience, the Bahai Faith encourages perceptive faith (self-realization) and voluntary (loving) obedience to the principles as they are understood. Bahai principles tend to be more affirmative and less prohibitive or prescriptive, although there are admonishments that preclude the use of alcohol and drugs, gambling, premarital and extramarital affairs, and backbiting. There is an openness to the Bahai Faith that promotes honesty and discourages derisive activities. While many religions have become institutionalized and ritualized to the point where much of the substance has faded for the outer (more worldly) adherents, as a young religion, the Bahai Faith remains relatively fresh.

In principle, Baha'is actively encourage social (societal) progress through facing the various problems of humanity and living lives that encourage progress in these regards (overcoming poverty and injustice, promoting universal education and the development of human potential, promoting unity in diversity, promoting peace).

† Commentary No. 1347

## Homeopathy 1

Homeopathy is "a system of (alternative) medical practice that treats a disease especially by or through the administration of minute doses of a remedy (from a repertory) that would in (some or most) healthy persons produce symptoms of the disease (being) treated." It is an ancient practice rediscovered and popularized in modern times by Samuel Hahnemann. There are two major schools of homeopathy, namely classical homeopathy in which one and only one remedy is utilized at a time, and pluralist homeopathy in which several remedies are utilized simultaneously.

The fundamental (practical) problems in homeopathy are (1) that each human being is an individual and there are differences between people and the way each

relates to disease or injury and (2) that it is not necessarily easy to find the proper remedy and apprehend the effects of that remedy. Consequently, each treatment is properly a matter of (relative) understanding the whole person and his or her context. This requires much more time and attention, consideration or (preferably) insight than more traditional (modern) (generally allopathic) medical practices which (generally) treat only the effects. Homeopathy is progressive in the sense that it is more holistic and goes beyond the superficial and looks more for apparent causes. In this sense neither conventional medicine nor homeopathy really address causes in consciousness, even if there is a competent psychological evaluation as part of the treatment. The problem is simply that both practitioners of allopathic and homeopathic medicine generally are not aware of the underlying metaphysical dimension (cause and effect relationships in consciousness that transcend individuals and individual lifetimes).

Nevertheless, some insight is possible and homeopathic treatments may be just as effective if not more so than allopathic treatments. It really depends on the relative competence and insight of the practitioner and the genuineness of the patient (openness to healing, openness to learning). But with pluralistic homeopathy it is more difficult for the practitioner to discern the superficial cause and effect relationships (between the effects of various remedies). There is also not inconsiderable danger from "cookbook" homeopathy (much like the dangers of hypnotism and "cookbook" psychology). Thus homeopathy is properly practiced with much closer attention to the psyche and context of the patient, and best practiced in conjunction with true metaphysical insight.

Allopathic (conventional) medical practice is simply a matter of applying whatever treatments are known to work, generally through drugs or medicines that counter the effects of the ailment. In other words, (generally) using whatever attacks the disease and leads to the elimination of effects. If there is pain, then painkiller is used to attack and dull the pain (without dealing with the actual cause). If there is infection, then antibiotics or other medicines are used to attack the infection and remove the effects of the infection (again, without dealing with the underlying cause(s)).

If indeed there is either fulfillment of karma and/or a learning in consciousness leading to adjustment in consciousness, then the treatment is effective in the

long run, but it is the learning and adjustment in consciousness (fulfillment of karma) that results in the “healing” and not the medical treatment per se. But as a practical matter, the medical treatment can be quite helpful as it allows the patient (who is willing) to focus on the underlying causes instead of worrying about the effects. In other words, most medical practice alleviates effects and (potentially) enables healing.

† Commentary No. 1348

## Homeopathy 2

There are three basic principles of (classical) homeopathic practice, namely the law of similars, the principle of single medicine, and the principle of minimum dose.

In the law of similars a disease is “cured” or addressed by a medicine which is similar to the disease itself in the sense that the medicine (remedy) is “proven” to cause similar symptoms in others (healthy people). The problem is that there are many symptoms and many remedies. Part of the challenge is to identify and evaluate all of the symptoms that a patient is experiencing, i.e., to understand the context, and not simply to treat each symptom individually. This means that the process is (somewhat) “closer” to the cause and not merely mechanical. In the principle of the single remedy the challenge is to find a single (homeopathic) remedy that treats all of the symptoms, on all discernable levels (physical, emotional, and mental). In the principle of the minimum dose, the homeopathic physician or practitioner prescribes a small number of doses so that the effects of the treatment can be discerned and each remedy is administered in infinitesimal doses. In allopathic medicine, a large dose equates to large (more substantive) effect, while in homeopathic medicine just the reverse is true, smaller doses equate to larger effects. Indeed, the smaller the dose, the larger the effect.

Homeopathy is in a sense more honest than conventional medicine (allopathy) because it admits that the process (treatment) is experimental, the physician is simply seeking a solution that seems to work and openly (honestly) (objectively) (less arrogantly) seeking to understand. Of course homeopaths are human and can be arrogant, but the process of homeopathy tends to be less egobased than

allopathy. The challenge for the practitioner is to look and listen and learn, and not to draw conclusions based on superficial considerations. It may require a number of iterations to discern the proper remedy. And except for minor and simple ailments, without a proper (competent, qualified, insightful, sincere) practitioner, there is a danger of utilizing the wrong remedy or the wrong dose, which can make the situation much more serious.

Homeopathy is no more a panacea than conventional medicine, but it can be quite effective if properly practiced. Part of the key to effectiveness in homeopathy, in understanding the problem and evoking a cure, is that the person and his or her ailment are not separate. One cannot properly infer that if two people exhibit the same symptoms that the underlying causes are the same or that similar treatments would be effective. In this sense homeopathy is closer to the underlying truth than more conventional practice. In the more conventional approach to disease, disease is simply a result of some disturbance or condition to be treated. More properly, and somewhat less superficially, disease is a reaction of the body (person) to some disturbing influence, and so one must properly consider the person and the disease together (holistically) in order to effect a satisfactory resolution.

There are actually three dimensions to proper healing. One is treatment of effects, alleviating symptoms. The second is helping the body (person) to heal itself, by stimulating the body's own defensive and restorative systems, which is (much) more effective than simply treating the effects. And the third is true healing or making adjustments in consciousness (learning, understanding, changing (improving) one's attitudes or behaviors or feelings or thinking practices) which means that the cause has been addressed and there will be no need for the evocation of subsequent (usually more serious) ailments.

## Homeopathy 3

Conventional medicine tends to treat only the first dimension. Homeopathy tends to treat the second dimension. Indeed, the basic underlying principle of homeopathy is, properly, that the medium for healing is the elemental or fundamental or vital or etheric force (in the theosophical sense). The dense physical body is surrounded and interpenetrated by the vital body or etheric double. It is through the vitality or etheric force (prana) (chi) that the body is sustained.

Diseases and injuries that appear in the dense physical form are really (generally) manifestations of disruptions or disturbances in the etheric body, i.e., in the proper flow of vital force through the vital body in sustaining the dense physical body. If the vital body is healthy on its level, then the physical body is generally and substantively protected from both disease and injury (barring imprudence and barring substantive karma (sudden manifestation)). Moreover, mental problems (wrong thinking) tend to evoke emotional disturbances (wrong feeling) which in turn evoke disturbances in the etheric body which in turn lead to vulnerability to disease and injury. The closer one can get to the actual cause of disease the more likely the treatment is to be effective. If one treats the physical body (only) then the cause is not dealt with and subsequent ailments are likely to appear. If the problem is at the etheric level and treated at the etheric level then success is much more likely. But if the cause is (and generally is) on emotional or mental levels, then treating the physical body or the etheric body will have only nominal (transient) (temporary) impact (regardless of appearances of comfort).

Homeopathy (and some but not all other alternative medical practices) tends to treat the person at the psychological level in terms of context, and at the etheric or vital body in terms of remedy. Homeopathic remedies are in fact little doses of poisons that stimulate the (etheric-vital) body to defend itself. It is important not to utilize a "large" dose, which would simply overwhelm the body's defenses. Proper homeopathic remedies tend to be diluted so substantially that it would be difficult to even detect the remedy on dense physical levels, but the success of the remedy correlates to its etheric

component, not to its dense physical component. And that etheric component is not diminished by dilution.

Through trial and error homeopaths have discovered the process (successive dilutions with the remedy being succussed or shaken between each dilution) that works. And likewise the correlations between symptoms and remedies through the process of “proving” or seeing what effects are evoked in healthy people. But it is all a matter of doctoring at the etheric level. Consequently homeopathy can be quite effective in non-irreversible conditions, i.e., in those instances where the conditions are not inconsistent with the vital body’s capacity for repair and regeneration (which is generally greater than that understood by “modern” medicine) (miracles are simply natural healings that are not understood in conventional terms). Homeopathy tends actually to be more effective in some instances than others, based on the degree of involvement of the etheric force, e.g., some chronic conditions that are not responsive to allopathic medicines may be responsive to homeopathic remedies.

But homeopathic practice is generally not really compatible with allopathic (conventional) practice, because much of allopathic practice tends to be repressive or suppressive and these in turn tend to mask discernment of the underlying causes.

† Commentary No. 1350

## Homeopathy 4

Almost all homeopathic remedies are natural substances. While the collection of “proven” remedies comes from a rather diverse spectrum of sources (mineral, plant, and animal) (including inert substances, poisons, etc.), the spiritual student should be more cautious than most, for animal sources can have substantial (negative) consequences for consciousness and the ability of the spiritual student to work in consciousness, even while they may be effective in persons of ordinary sensitivity. And while the process of preparation (successive dilution and succussion) should eliminate any physical potency, the etheric component of a remedy from an animal source can remain quite potent.

In the final analysis the spiritual student (as patient) should rely on his or her inner senses (intuition) insofar as the remedy is comfortable, rather than merely the practitioner's senses, however competent and sincere he or she may be. The problem is that most homeopaths have only a basic (rudimentary, limited, merely pragmatic) understanding of the vital force and its role in healing, and generally do not have any training in the metaphysical or theosophical framework for the vital force.

The vital force is holistic in the sense that it tends to sustain the whole body and in the sense that it reacts (responds) holistically to any disturbance or disruption. If the disruption is severe enough, then the dense physical body simply dies. If the disruption is not too severe, then the vital force will naturally respond to the disturbance with "healing" energy (which is simply a qualified or focused or directed component of vital energy). Disease is a major disruption of the vital force (body). Sometimes the vital body is simply overwhelmed and dulled such that it cannot effectively respond to the threat (disturbance). Thus one might first need to heal on some higher level (mental or emotional) before one can effectively heal on the etheric level, homeopathic and other remedies notwithstanding.

The vital force is not substantially intelligent in its own right, but it is a reflection of the higher intelligence and is therefore qualified by higher energy (which means that it seems intelligent). Some homeopaths believe that only one disease can be active at the vital level at any one time, i.e., that disease being collectively symptomatic, but in fact what occurs at the etheric level (effects, even collectively) can come from more than one source on emotional and mental levels (in which case homeopathy tends to be less effective). But where there is a single cause with multiple symptoms, then homeopathy is, in principle, potentially, quite effective. Homeopathic remedies can be viewed as irritants that stimulate the vital force into addressing the larger problem (one must be careful to stimulate without interfering in the (vital) body's ability to heal itself). But in fact, homeopathic remedies are not conclusive unless there is also some understanding in consciousness on some level by the patient. Homeopathic "healing" is no more a matter of mechanics than is allopathic "healing."

Another way of looking at healing and homeopathy is that most disease is evoked by stress on some level, or more properly by the improper dealing with stress on some level. While superficial (conventional) insights may be helpful, apprehension on a more metaphysical (holistic) level can be much more so. One must simply deal with problem (stress) on its own (causal) level before any real (enduring) healing can take place. But homeopathic (and to some extent allopathic) remedies can be helpful in alleviating effects while adjustments are being made in consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1351

## Religions

There are many and varied God-centered religions, each tailored to a particular culture and particular needs for a particular period of time, and each contributing to the whole.

Conventional religions are those which are organized to some extent and which appeal to a relatively large following or geographical extent. Among the eastern religions are several traditional-conventional religions of India, namely Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism, and several traditional-conventional religions of China and the far east, namely Buddhism, Confucianism, Shinto, Taoism, and Zen. Among the traditional-conventional western religions are Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Zoroastrianism. Of course there are many divisions or dimensions and extensions (denominations, sects) of these religions, and others, but the conventional religions are all relatively well-known and "accepted" as traditional-conventional religions by substantial numbers of people. That "acceptance" or popularity is not what makes them legitimate religions, but it does make them conventional.

Most if not all of the conventional religions have emerged or evolved from within some more primitive context, often with the assistance of a prophet or catalyst (e.g., Jesus, Buddha, Zoroaster). Thus there are elements of earlier and/or more primitive religions within each of the emerging and continuing religions, even if some (most) of the modern adherents do not wish to acknowledge this heritage. The "primitive" religions were well-suited to their times and cultures, but much of the content and practices of these religions



continues to be of value. And these more primitive forms of religion have also continued to some extent in their own right, and have emerged or evolved into what are now considered by the majority of people to be relatively unconventional religions. Included in these relatively more natural, unconventional religions are animism, paganism, neo-paganism, shamanism, and Wicca or witchcraft.

There are also relatively modern religions which simply do not fit comfortably in the mainstream nor directly with the more nature-oriented religions, such as spiritualism and universalism in its various forms, and spiritual movements which are not really religions by any popular definition yet acknowledge (the one) God and offer much in the way of knowledge and understanding, such as theosophy. There are also somewhat unconventional (more popularly metaphysical) religions which bridge between the conventional and unconventional, such as Religious Science and Unity and other "new age" religions, some of which are simply on the fringe of more conventional religions.

Some might suggest that the distinction between conventional and unconventional religions is that of monotheism and pantheism or polytheism, at least for "western" religions, but in fact each of these religions is both monotheistic and pantheistic or polytheistic, even Christianity. It is simply a matter of perspective and emphasis. There is one God in several aspects and many facets. At one extreme the emphasis is upon the one God; at the other extreme the emphasis (focus) is upon divine (natural) manifestation through many "spirits" ... Some choose to worship God as one. Others choose to worship or acknowledge one or more aspects or facets of that one God (even if the whole is not "called" God). The real challenge is to learn enough about each religion to be able to respect and appreciate its value, even if it is not comfortable to embrace all of its teachings and practices.

## Irreligion

Many religious devotees unfortunately label “other” religions as unfounded or without merit or value, or with diminished value. This arrogance or sense of superiority of one’s religion is never sanctioned by one’s actual religious principles, but is an unseemly manifestation of ego and separateness.

Thus while pagans and heathens (and others not within the perceived mainstream of some (arguably) “respectable” religion) are speciously labeled as godless or irreligious, in fact, most pagans and adherents of natural (nature-based) religions are just as spiritual if not more so than most conventional adherents (spirituality being defined as being in touch with the God within to some extent and on some level, however that God or facet is consciously acknowledged). Thus while many religions are outwardly exclusive and separative and while many conventional adherents look down at those of other faiths, the peoples of religion (of God) are really quite diverse. The particular faith or religion or beliefs do not really matter, provided there is appreciation for spirituality (God-ness) (the good within). The measures of spirituality are rather subjective and to some extent diverse, but generally embrace relatively common principles of living a spiritual life, being helpful and constructive, adhering to a sense of ethics and morals that promotes harmony and justice, and reverence or respect for God, however God is perceived.

Thus there are religious adherents and spiritual students of all faiths, some belonging to “organized” religions, some not, some of conventional faith, others of unconventional faith. But all, to some extent and in some meaningful ways, religious and/or spiritual. But there are also the irreligious, more or less by degrees, namely agnostics, agnostic humanists, atheists, and (for lack of a more suitable term) satanists. A humanist is simply one who emphasizes the place of humanity in the world, in contrast with one who focuses more on God (indeed many so-called religious adherents are better “humanists” than they are religious or spiritual (humanism and spirituality are not mutually exclusive or even necessarily in conflict, they are simply each a matter of emphasis or focus)).

A true agnostic is simply one who does not “know” that there is a God, and an agnostic may have nonetheless a strong sense of ethics, may even have an active spiritual dimension (tempered perhaps by his or her agnostic beliefs (non-beliefs)). But agnostics are not necessarily “bad” people (even as religious adherents are not necessarily “good” people). Similarly there are (good and bad) atheists, though most atheists tends to have stronger beliefs or convictions (active denial of the existence of God) than agnostics. Agnostics and humanists and atheists, whether or not they are also materialists and/or egoists, form a sort of middle ground between those who are focused on God and those who are substantially godless.

The truly godless are those who are so self-absorbed that they have become seriously and dangerously entangled in materialism and/or sensualism and/or egoism, such that they are no longer (if they were ever) responsive to conscience. Satanists are simply one such group of wholly self-absorbed, self-centered people. Other groups include black magicians and black occultists, any of those who serve (destructively) the forces of matter (involution) rather than (constructively) the forces of spirit (life) (evolution in consciousness) (e.g., white magicians and white occultists). Thus the principle of saving of souls refers not properly to which of the various religions one belongs, but to (saving) the godless, to those who have renounced their true nature.

† Commentary No. 1353

## The World Religion

The world religion is a concept or principle that refers not to any organized religion but to the (informal) collective world religion that embraces and works through all of the various God-centered religions. Spiritual students of the world religion simply acknowledge the merit and value and extent of viability of each of the various conventional and unconventional religions. Spiritual students of the world religion may embrace one or another or none (or several) (in whole or in aspect) of the various religions of the world. Indeed, most spiritual students embrace meaningful elements of all of the various (proper) religions.

The world religion is also a component or dimension of the Bermuda Protocol in the sense that provisions are made for the (noble) (non-harmful) (non-separative) religious practices of each of the world's religions, indeed citizens are encouraged to embrace one or another of the world's religions and to work in harmony with those of other faiths. There is even provision for agnostics and humanists and atheists (who are also human and potentially contributive), but the only group actually excluded are the truly evil (ignorant) who serve the dark side (who are not therefore contributing (constructive) members of society).

The basis of the world religion is simple. Each of the religions of the world has a common underlying mystical core. Thus each religion is perceived as a facet of the world religion. And each contributes to improving the relationship of the individual to God. It matters not which religion one belongs to (or not). It matters not "how" religious or spiritual one may be. What matters is the extent to which one is evolving in consciousness and the nature of that process (i.e., the relationship of the individual to the process of evolution in consciousness (which is equivalent to the relationship of the individual to God (within))). Religion is simply one means of addressing the balance and facilitating progress in that relationship.

The world religion has always existed and will always exist in some form or another. The world religion "evolves" as each of the religions of the world contributes to that evolution. One of the ways in which this occurs is the tendency of human beings to incarnate progressively through each of the various major religions, experiencing the culture and context and faith and principles of each, eventually apprehending the commonality and value of all (similarly one tends to incarnate alternatively male and female, and progressively through various cultures and nations and races). But there is no outer organization associated with the world religion.

There is, however, an inner organization (and a number of subordinate and contributing holy orders), in which all of the various religions contribute. This is the spiritual hierarchy of the planet, whose necessarily spiritually mature members (who have graduated from the human sphere) have lived through all manner of incarnational contexts and who at some point "represent" a particular facet of human life (race, religion, etc.). But representation at this level is not exclusive nor is it promotional. Hierarchical "members" each

embrace the world (and humanity (and the world religion (and all of the religions of the world))), and place the common cause ahead of individual (necessarily minor) preferences or inclinations. Thus it is a naturally harmonious and selfless body, ruled by collective wisdom (higher consciousness) and not in any way by the lower selves (which really no longer exist, indeed, at that level, cannot exist).

† Commentary No. 1354

## Promotion and Relegation

There is a practice common in association football leagues in which the several teams that finish a season at the top of the table are promoted to the next "higher" league for the following season, and in which the several teams that finish a season at the bottom of the table are relegated to the next "lower" league for the following season. A similar principle holds true for lives at all levels of consciousness.

Actually the principle of promotion and relegation has three aspects, collective, individual, and dynamic-transitional. Individuals (souls) are part of the collective consciousness of some race or lifewave and that race or lifewave inhabits a particular kingdom (place within some level) for an intended duration (major cycle). The "race" evolves in some collective sense, through experience and expression. At the end of a major cycle, the race or lifewave as a whole (collectively) is promoted to the next level or kingdom. But usually there are some "individuals" within a lifewave who are not qualified for promotion, who have not advanced sufficiently, and are therefore relegated or held over for the following lifewave. They simply stay at that level (e.g., in the human kingdom), until the following lifewave catches up, and then those relegated individuals are merged into that following lifewave. Relegation generally occurs only for a very (very) few units of consciousness. Because all lives at all levels are so conditioned by evolutionary force (qualification), there is almost always an inexorable advance in consciousness, however gradual it may be.

But there is also a dynamic or transitional aspect, in which those who advance beyond their peers (not in any competitive sense, but in the sense of some pioneering natural affinity for "higher" consciousness) are promoted to the next

level, even in the midst of a major cycle, and in which those who are truly impedimental to the lifewave are dynamically relegated or withdrawn from the race until the next lifewave moves collectively forward into the kingdom. Thus (generally) within each lifewave there are these few individuals who have been promoted from a lower level and a few individuals who have been relegated from a higher level. These two groups provide an important linkage between successive lifewaves. There is continuity both in this sense of promotants and relegants, and in the sense that at a (much) higher level the ensouling lives of the various lifewaves are all equal (and equal in consciousness).

For humanity there is import in both regards (promotion and relegation). Those human beings who are (actually) on the spiritual path, who eventually achieve self-realization, are not therefore required to subsequently reincarnate in this world. They are naturally promoted to the next higher level. This promotion cannot be sought. It does not happen because one strives to qualify, it happens because of natural affinity (and one therefore happens to be more able to qualify for promotion); indeed, one who seeks to qualify is thereby precluded (because seeking is "personal" and self-centered and self-serving, and "qualification" requires selflessness).

Likewise relegation. One cannot actually strive to fail. But one can become so self-absorbed, so entangled in matter and the senses and the ego, over a substantial period of time, that one is no longer responsive to the evolutionary encouragement of the race or lifewave as a collective consciousness. And one is then separated or isolated from the lifewave, and held in a very unfortunate place (hell (stasis)) until such time as the major cycle is over and another major cycle begins.

## Infallibility

Infallibility refers in the absolute sense to the state of being incapable of error, and in the more applied sense to the state of being incapable of error in the (limited) context of defining faith and morals. The distinction between these two is really quite significant.

Human beings are simply not infallible. No one is infallible. Religious dignitaries and spiritual “authorities” are not infallible, no matter how noble they may appear to be (and indeed, no matter how noble they may be actually). The Pope is not infallible. Not in any absolute sense. But a truly spiritual person, regardless of religious affiliation and regardless of religious credentials, is more likely to be able to be unerring in matters of faith and morals. It is a matter of actually being able to listen to the voice of the silence, the conscience, the soul or higher Self, and understand that conveyance or sense, and act in conformity to that sense. Which means perceiving without the impediment of ego or worldliness, without the impediment of being entangled (in matter, in the senses, in the ego). Thus infallibility is possible in this necessarily contextual and relative sense, but only to the extent and times that one is true to the inner self. Thus it is unlikely that one can be infallible in any continuous sense (and for most people unlikely that one can ever be infallible in any meaningful sense).

Moreover, even super-human beings are not infallible, not in any absolute sense. Even God is not infallible at the God level. But God is infallible, in some very subjective and relative sense, within the God domain (affecting and influencing all component or constituent lives). In this sense it is God who defines what is true and what is real. But these definitions are conveyed subjectively, through various layers of consciousness. And it is simply not possible for the human being, at any level or extent of consciousness, to apprehend truth at a higher level than his or her experience to date. And while it is possible for (extraordinary) people to apprehend truth and reality at some extraordinary level, it is not generally possible to convey that understanding or apprehension to anyone who is not also capable of functioning at that level. And as the realization is clothed in concepts and words it is thereby limited in its “quality” and simply not perfectly clear. Whenever the mind is involved, whenever the

“person” is involved, there is distortion due to the person being immersed in the world (matter and ego).

Religious dignitaries and truly spiritual “leaders” are not substantively different from ordinary people (and many are not really different at all). They are simply (in principle, and not necessarily in practice) a little farther along the way than most, perhaps a bit more experienced, a bit more refined, a bit more responsive to the inner, higher calling (the soul), but still decidedly human. Thus none are infallible. This does not mean that they have no value or import, just that one must ultimately and necessarily rely on one’s own conscience, especially in matters of faith and morals. One can listen to others, and appreciate and even glean much from their experience and (relative) insight, but in the final analysis, one is (entirely) responsible for one’s own beliefs and one’s own actions (and one’s own consequences).

But many people need to believe in religious or spiritual authorities, because they cannot (yet) see and feel and (even) think effectively for themselves. And so the proclamations of such authorities (e.g., the Pope) generally have some underlying merit and value, and generally, usually serve to encourage people in the right (evolutionary) direction.

† Commentary No. 1356

## Lineage

Lineage refers to “descent in a line from a common progenitor” or a “group of persons tracing descent from a common ancestor regarded as its founder.” In some (outer) religions, especially in some elements of Buddhism and Islam, there is emphasis or perceived significance to the lineage of its leadership.

There are actually two kinds of lineage, which may in some instances coincide. One kind is based on physical (genetic) lineage. The other is based in the process of reincarnation, as some are (or are perceived to be) reincarnated (spiritual) descendants of themselves, with or without there also being a physical or genetic lineage. But there is a problem of validation, as physical lineage is not so easy to demonstrate and historical records may be missing or inaccurate (one should never actually take on faith anything of an historical or



second-hand nature (and of course nothing of an historical nature is actually very significant)). And in the final analysis, all peoples are genetically related to all other peoples (which is actually much more significant than the genetics of direct descent). And even psychic senses may not be entirely clear or accurate, and truth is not a democratic process, so even if an overwhelming majority of adherents believe in some lineage it may not actually be a true lineage.

But the actual lineage (of either kind) is not really important. One is not a spiritual master or a true spiritual leader or authority based on lineage. One is a spiritual master or a true spiritual leader (but never an authority) by virtue of quality of consciousness, and that quality of consciousness is generally expressed through the spiritual quality of one's life and teachings. Not through claiming lineage or being acclaimed a successor. Not through self-profession nor through the profession of others. Indeed those who engage in self-profession (claims-making) are invariably either insincere or self-deluded (englamoured) (or both). Yet it is indeed possible for a truly spiritual person to be inspired by the higher Self and to express teachings from a higher place than the mind. But it does not really matter whether or not someone has lineage, whether or not someone is actually inspired. What matters is truth. If the words, the teachings, the writings have value, if they embrace some truth, that it what matters.

But truth is necessarily relative, and so the truth of one spiritual source may be true and meaningful for some, but not necessarily for others. This does not invalidate or nominalize the truth. It just means that actual truth is larger, more whole than the human mind can apprehend, and so people tend to see and hear and feel and know truth only in some limited, partial ways, according to their capacities for (recognizing or discerning) (apprehending) truth (and according to their conditioning (biases)). But there is another dimension to truth, and one that relates significantly to lineage.

And that is the lineage of the teachings or of truth itself. Not in the sense that a particular scripture is inspired, but in the sense that one can place one's (refined) consciousness in touch with the source of some truth, and discern its relative truthfulness and its relative import. And in being in touch with some truth, one is also in touch with related truths. There is a multi-dimensional chain, or lineage, or web, or matrix, such that if one is properly attuned, then one

can follow the various paths or threads and evoke whatever is needed, especially (actually necessarily) to the extent that one is not trying to do this. This is how people are actually “inspired” (consciously or otherwise).

† Commentary No. 1357

## Paganism

Paganism is a rather general term referring in some sense to the beliefs and practices of those who do not embrace any of the more conventional or more established, more formal religions. Many Christians refer (separatively) to non-Christians as pagans or heathens, while many Muslims refer to non-Islamists similarly as infidel. Yet some pagans are also Christian, and some are Muslims (and some belong to other religions), without being any less a pagan and without being any less a Christian or Islamist. Religion is not properly about belonging to one or another of the religions, but about one’s relationship to God. And in this sense, ordinary pagans perhaps enjoy a more direct experiential sense of that relationship than most people (except perhaps for the genuine mystics within each of the various religions).

But while some of these inferences to pagans are impolite, and while in the conventional lexicon a pagan is a heathen or country dweller or irreligious person, in fact pagans are simply adherents of any of the various pagan religions, generally including various earth religions, shamanism, witchcraft, etc. But there is a rather wide variety in these religions, some relatively more formal than others, some with informal practices, others with more formal practices and well-developed rituals. In this sense pagans can be just as religious and/or spiritual as non-pagans. And while many conventional adherents refer to pagans as godless, because they do not seem to embrace “God” in the same sense as their own, more conventional religion, most pagans are God-centered; it is just that pagans tend to see God in a broader, less exclusive, more subjective, more natural sense, than the conventional (more anthropomorphic) sense.

So pagans (and neo-pagans) tend simply to worship God in different (traditional, but unconventional) ways. Paganism tends to be much more

nature-oriented, though by no means limited to the earth and the forces of the earth. In principle, and largely in practice, paganism embraces both nature and the underlying divine force. The "God" or "Goddess" is a natural being, to be experienced, to be felt and embraced, not in some remote or intellectual sense of comfort. There tends to be a great respect for the earth and nature, and nature is not something to be exploited, but something to be appreciated, to be part of. Paganism can be perceived a polytheistic, because there tends to be acknowledgement of many facets of nature, but these are also facets of the one God, and so the (pantheistic) deities are simply instruments of nature (nature forces), and components of something greater, something divine. In some sense the various pagan deities "represent archetypes of the collective unconsciousness" and symbolize some very meaningful aspects of human nature and nature as a whole.

Paganism is, in principle and largely in practice, inherently constructive and evolutionary, valuable and noble even, as compared with satanism (which is not a God-centered religion). But there is a tendency to associate more with the lower manifestations of divine force (the earth and the nature spirits) rather than finding the God within in some higher sense. There is a tendency to look outwardly, experientially, rather than inwardly. So while there is a mystical element to paganism, it is not strictly speaking a proper form of mysticism, because the threads of paganism lead not directly to the God within.

And while strictly speaking paganism includes all manner of natural religions, it is perhaps more closely related to (perhaps even properly synonymous with) Wicca or witchcraft rather than shamanism.

## Shamanism

Shamanism is a relatively broad collection of many different (enduring) tribal or indigenous or natural religions. Shamanism refers to the role of the shaman or priest, who is generally engaged in various magical and healing practices and who may or may not be a controlling (religious) factor. Shamanism is similar in a number of ways to paganism, but the biggest differences are the tribal context and the role of the shaman.

Among the features of (some) shamanistic faiths are the recognition of the existence of an unseen world of gods, demons, and/or ancestral spirits and the existence of various natural or developable abilities for divination and healing. In more enlightened shamanistic cultures the shaman is a healer and spiritual leader, in the less enlightened shamanistic cultures the shaman is more imposing and controlling, e.g., where only the shaman is allowed to contact and/or control the spirit guides. Virtually all of the original (ancient) religions began as tribal (shamanistic) religions or developed through various shamanistic forms. In more modern times shamanism has continued but with less of a tribal nature or import (context) and more a matter of principles. There is also, in these more modern expressions, an issue of glamourization as non-tribal peoples attempt to (superficially) embrace shamanism.

Among the basic principles of shamanism are a deep sense of the sacredness of life and the earth (nature) and living in harmony with nature. In this sense there is an actual communion with the spirit of the earth and of natural forces. There is also, usually, a communion with ancestral spirits or spirit guides. There is of course a strong underlying metaphysical and theosophical basis (truth and reality) for these principles and related practices. When people die they sometimes are unable to transcend straight away to the next level and linger near the earth, being attached to their earthly existence, and available as spirit guides to those to whom they are or were close emotionally and psychically, or to those who are particularly sensitive. In tribal cultures there tends to be a greater (but relatively coarse, atavistic) sensitivity to the etheric and astral realms. This includes not only "departed" or transitional human beings but also a wide variety of nature spirits.

So shamanism tends also to place some emphasis on contacting or working with these (non-human) nature spirits, some of which are relatively highly evolved and some of which are rather sub-human. But in the natural sensitivity of native peoples to their physical and etheric environment, people can generally sense the working of natural forces and the existence and influence of various magical (and therefore sacred) places. But shamanism is generally a pre-materialistic religion. As peoples become more materialistic and more rational, they tend to lose their sensitivities to natural forces. And as shamans effectively lose their powers and abilities due to entanglement in materialism or sensualism or egoism, there is a tendency to maintain control and influence through less natural means and practices (i.e., a true shaman is one who is true to his or her own spirit and living in harmony with natural forces, while a charlatan is one who wears merely the facade of shamanistic abilities).

There is a great deal of truth and validity in shamanism. But shamanistic powers tend to be involuntary and atavistic in these ancient practices, and what is needed (in human evolution) is to evolve through (and beyond) materialism and egoism and then embrace something more natural (spirituality) on a higher turn of the spiral. Thus the spiritual student develops a much more conscious sensitivity than is generally available through traditional shamanistic methods.

† Commentary No. 1359

## Spiritualism 1

Spiritualism is a relatively unconventional religion in many regards, but somewhat more closely related to Christianity and orthodoxy than paganism or shamanism. It is unorthodox mainly in the sense that spiritualism embraces a number of occult practices (e.g., white magic), but in a relatively more conventional format (of church).

In spiritualism there is no substantial emphasis on the earth or upon the (seen or unseen) forces of nature. Instead the emphasis is upon healing, and evolution in consciousness, often in the context of contact with departed loved ones and others who are contacted psychically. There is an element of this in shamanism,

particularly with regard to ancestral and tribal spirits (and their wisdom), whereas in spiritualism there is an emphasis on psychic development and psychic experience and psychic contacts. At one time theosophy was (almost properly) perceived as decidedly spiritualistic, and there are certainly historic relationships between spiritualism and theosophy, but spiritualism is properly a religion and affords religious experience, and theosophy is properly a metaphysical philosophy that embraces the spiritual (but not religious) essence of all the world's religions.

In some sense spiritualism is a science, a philosophy, and a religion. It is a science in the sense that (many) spiritualists investigate psychic phenomenon, particularly through mediumship and establishing a factual basis for non-physical existence. The problem is that while there is a non-physical reality, indeed more so than the physical, it is simply not possible to "prove" to other people. Observations and testimony and reasoning are simply not sufficient. One can only really "prove" something to oneself. But spiritualism certainly contributes to conventional apprehension of the non-physical. Spiritualism is a philosophy in the sense that understanding to some extent the laws of nature on both physical and metaphysical levels leads to apprehension of principles. This is where spiritualism truly contributes to the world religion. And spiritualism is a religion in the sense that it has a strong focus on God and the (natural) laws of God and in the sense that it is organized and implemented through a religious format.

In principle, a spiritualist is one who believes "in the communication between this and the spirit world by means of mediumship and who endeavors to mold his or her character and conduct in accordance with the highest teaching derived from such communication." The problem is that people who find spiritualism appealing tend to be relatively gullible. And "mediums" tend to be involuntarily psychic, do not necessarily understand the phenomena they are engaged in, and are often unable to discern the relative quality of the "spirits" they are in communication with. There are many ordinary (merely human) "spirits" and many sub-human and pseudo-human entities. And many gullible mediums. People tend to be more impressed with the phenomena than with the quality of content. People tend to believe what they hear, without really sensing its truth or import.

At its best, spiritualism is meaningful, insightful, inspiring, and can facilitate healing. At its worst it is personal and petty. The spirit world is real, but not necessarily properly discerned. The phenomena are real, but not necessarily significant. Some of the insights are real (valid); others are misleading. But where there is a proper spiritual basis (qualified and refined mediums, not merely sincere) the process and results are likely to be more meaningful.

† Commentary No. 1360

## Spiritualism 2

There are traditionally nine principles or guidelines of spiritualism. (1) There is an infinite intelligence or God or spirit. (2) God is expressed through all lives and all forms in nature, both physical and non-physical. All are the children of God. (3) True religion is living in harmony with God's (natural) laws. This evokes progress (evolution in consciousness). (4) There is continuity or life after death. One never really dies. The personal identity of the individual continues (but spiritualists do not seem to realize that while the personality or ego may linger after death, the personality is eventually dissolved and the soul is what goes on to the next higher level). And that identity (soul) reincarnates periodically for additional needed experience and expression (although some spiritualists do not embrace the concept of reincarnation).

(5) It is possible to communicate with people who have died. Indeed, for as long as the departed "linger" they can be contacted and they can communicate with those who are sensitive (susceptible) (vulnerable). None of this is "proven" in any legitimate scientific sense, but it is true nonetheless. The problem is that the departed are not enlightened simply by virtue of being dead. They have no more to offer by virtue of being in the spirit realm than they had when they were alive in this (lower) world. And those who linger are generally those who are relatively less enlightened, who simply do not know (yet) how to move on to the next level, i.e., who are still attached to the world (worldly ways) or to people in the world. But while there is generally some truth (and some illusion) in these communications, it is not a supernatural process but a natural one, albeit somewhat atavistic.

(6) The golden rule. Common in some form or another to all religions. Goodness and kindness to others evokes like qualities and consequences. (7) People have a moral responsibility to live in accordance with nature's (God's) laws. If we live in harmony with these laws then "goodness" and "happiness" result. The emphasis should be on learning and growing rather than being happy, but certainly one's happiness is of one's own making. But we are each responsible for our circumstances. (8) Every person is afforded the opportunity for learning and growing. The door is never closed. Every day offers new opportunities. (9) Prophecy and healing are divine attributes, demonstrated through mediumship. The problems here are with both prophecy and healing. Healing is a divine process, and healing is possible. But true healing is evoked only through learning and adjusting in consciousness. "Healers" can relieve symptoms. They can encourage and facilitate healing, but they cannot evoke true healing.

Prophecy is a bit more complicated. Some things can be prophesized, especially in general terms. But karma is rather dynamic, and with new causes and with consequences emerging, it is always changing. Thus when a "seer" has a vision (or a medium embraces some spirit-guidance), there is a question of validity both with regard to the caliber and truthfulness of the source and the quality and competence of the medium, and with the stability of what is seen. So while prophecy is possible, it is not necessarily significant. And those who focus on gleaning prophecies for the most part are therefore and thereby not really focused on learning and growing.

The symbol of spiritualism is the sunflower. And the traditional motto is "As the sunflower turns its face to the light of the sun, so spiritualism turns the face of humanity to the light of the truth."



## Reference Frames 1

One of the concepts of physics that can be applied to human psychology is that of reference frames. A reference frame has an origin or place from which everything else is measured. The reference frame is the means through which everything is measured relative to that origin. If the origin is fixed (without moving) then everything else either moves or not with respect to that origin. And if the origin is moving, then the reference frame is moving, and everything else either moves or not with respect to that origin, but will appear to be different than if the origin were fixed. But from the point of view of the origin, it is always fixed. The origin moves only in the sense that it is relative to some other origin or reference frame. It does not move (ever) in its own reference frame. In other words, the choice of origin and the choice of reference frame determines how things are measured or perceived.

For example, the planet (earth) may be considered an origin and the (rest of the) external universe may be considered to be embraced by and through the reference frame that is centered on the earth. In this reference frame the earth does not move, but everything else (sun, moon, stars) moves. It does not matter, in this reference frame, that it is actually the earth that is moving around the sun. All of the encountered phenomena can be perceived from this earth-centered reference frame nonetheless. But one might draw the wrong conclusions, based on this choice of reference frame. Likewise, if the sun is the origin, the earth is perceived to move around the sun, but also the background of stars appears to move while the sun appears to remain still. And one might draw the wrong conclusion from this. In actuality, the stars are relatively motionless, but all move to some extent. But the choice of origin and the choice of reference frame determine or strongly influence how things are perceived.

For all practical purposes, the chosen origin is the center of the universe or the place from which everything else is perceived and apprehended. The reference frame is the context or means of perception and apprehension. For any given choice of origin, there are many possible reference frames, depending on the number of dimensions embraced, the manner in which each dimension is embraced (e.g., linearly, exponentially, angularly). While things appear

differently depending on origin and reference frame, one can simply transform coordinates from one reference frame to another, without losing validity. In other words, all reference frames embrace the same truth or actuality, but in different ways, leading to potentially different inferences or conclusions.

In any given reference frame there may be more than one object apprehended. These objects may be moving relative to each other, within the framework, but they are apprehended inclusively and relatively, within the overall reference frame, even though each (exclusive object) may be an origin in its own right and have its own reference frame. But the experience of one is limited compared with the experience of the broader, more inclusive reference frame. The exclusive (individual) object sees other things only relative to itself. The inclusive reference frame allows objects to be perceived relative to each other and relative to some broader context or whole.

For example, in a two-dimensional (planar) self-centered reference frame there is no possibility of perceiving or apprehending depth. But in a broader, more inclusive, more dimensional, non-self-centered reference frame, it is possible to perceive and apprehend depth in potentially many and various ways, each contributing something to one's understanding.

† Commentary No. 1362

## Reference Frames 2

Now most people are essentially and substantially self-centered. The origin or center-of-the-universe is the person (body) (mind) himself (herself). And the (typical) human reference frame allows a person to embrace or perceive everything else as if it were external to oneself but relative to oneself. This places a tremendous bias on the whole process. Because a person's own conditioning determines the reference frame, i.e., how things are perceived and apprehended, objectively and subjectively, correctly or otherwise. In practice, in such a reference frame, almost everything perceived is distorted by the process. And so only a very (very) small portion of truth and reality is actually embraced.

A self-centered person suffers the illusion of independence, of separateness, of individuality, of personal significance. Experience is embraced in a self-centered

manner, i.e., relative to oneself. What is significant, to such a person, is whatever is consistent with what that person wants or the process through which that person believes something can be obtained. But most people are not entirely self-centered. Their worlds (reference frames) are still self-centered but tend to include the immediacy of friends and family, vocation, etc. The context is somewhat broader, slightly more inclusive, but still self-centered. Instead of embracing a polarity or dichotomy of oneself and everything else, there tends to be a polarity of oneself and one's immediacy, and then everything that is external (or appears to be external) to oneself and one's immediacy. As the person grows personally and psychologically (and even spiritually), the origin and reference frames remain essentially self-centered, but the reference frame is broadened and becomes more inclusive, embracing one's cultural, national, racial, and religious context in addition to one's personal, family, and (narrow) vocational context.

But there still tends to be, for most people, a sense of "us" and "them" if not a sense of "me" and "them" ... And yet, with additional experience and growth there is a gradual but continual (inexorable) expansion of one's horizons and perspective, an increasing inclusiveness, and increasing universalism. This is all simply an expansion of one's reference frame in various dimensions and an expanding and continual reevaluation of how things are perceived, in some very gradually increasingly larger, broader, deeper context. As that perspective grows, then it becomes more possible to (more correctly) apprehend relationships of objects (people, groups, concepts) within the reference frame, even while remaining relatively self-centered.

Eventually one reaches the practical limit of one's ability to apprehend externals in this universal sense. A person (the mind) can embrace all peoples (even all lives) as consisting of a whole, but it is still merely an experiential and/or intellectual apprehension, which means that what is universal is conceptual and one is still feeling and thinking in a fundamentally self-centered manner, despite one's thinking to the contrary, because the reference frame remains centered on the origin (oneself). So it hardly matters that one has become more and more noble in one's outlook and practices. One has simply become more inclusive, but through a reference frame that is inherently self-centered.

The real change comes when there is a radical transformation of origin and reference frame, where a person no longer thinks and feels and behaves individually, but much more subjectively, without any sense of self and others. This is a considerable transformation of the reference frame.

† Commentary No. 1363

### Reference Frames 3

Many people work relatively selflessly, engaged in relatively noble work, while remaining in an essentially self-centered reference frame. But through (proper) transformation (self-realization), one can transcend the sense of individuality and actually live through the collective reference frame. In this collective there is no origin, no self to relate back to. This is not simply a replacing of the self with the group or collective or even universal (in which case there would be a sense of “us” and that which is not “us”) but a much more radical process in which the consciousness of the collective is embraced without attachment to the collective. In this sense there are no barriers. But this is extremely difficult to evoke and extremely rare. And yet, eventually, this is where one (not-one) must be. Words are very much inadequate to describe either this process or the experience, for human language simply has not the words. Until one is “there” one cannot truly apprehend except (merely (superficially)) intellectually and conceptually.

Now this whole concept (reference frames) can also be applied to collective frameworks. For example, one can perceive the world through the framework of materialism, or through the framework of psychology, or the framework of metaphysics, or some other framework. Each such framework has its own nature (quality and character) and dimensionality, its own set of conditions (conditioning, biases). And each is compounded by the biases and conditioning and perspective of the person himself (herself) (i.e., the personal framework or reference frame). But each framework is necessarily somewhat self-centered (the origin being the basis of the reference frame) and each framework has some dimension or extent of inclusiveness.

For example, there are two religious reference frames called, respectively, Baptist and Unity. In the Baptist reference frame everything is perceived and interpreted according to Baptist beliefs and principles, and in the Unity reference frame everything is perceived and interpreted according to Unity beliefs and principles. But while each serves a purpose and satisfies the needs of its adherents (to some extent), and while each contributes to the whole, the Baptist reference frame is relatively exclusive and the Unity reference frame is relatively inclusive. In the Baptist framework there are Baptists and there are non-Baptists. But in the Unity framework there are (properly) simply people (children of God), with no substantive distinctions made between adherents and non-adherents. In the Baptist framework, Unity is an external phenomenon. In the Unity framework, the Baptist faith is an internal phenomenon.

Another example is that of spiritualism and theosophy. The spiritualist framework is centered on spiritualism and theosophy is seen within the spiritualist reference frame. In other words, theosophy is an extension and dimension of spiritualism, i.e., derived from or evoked by spiritualism. But in the theosophical framework, which is centered on theosophy, spiritualism is an extension and dimension of theosophy, i.e., derived from theosophy, validated through the perspective of theosophical principles, a part of theosophy in some broader sense. Of course there are both similarities and differences between the two, and one may be more inclusive than the other, but both frameworks are (relatively) true, and both have value (the actual genesis is simply not important). They simply (tend to) appeal differently to different people.

But collective frameworks are not substantively different from individual frameworks, simply having a broader (collective) embrace. What is needed, eventually, is a radical transformation (breakthrough) on some collective scale.

## Wicca 1

The Wiccan religion or witchcraft is a relatively diverse collection of various pagan and neo-pagan faiths and traditions. Wicca is an expression of respect or reverence for nature. It acknowledges God in both male and female aspects, and generally embraces reincarnation and various forms and practices of ritual magic.

Wicca is relatively individualistic, both in the sense that Wiccans are free to interpret their faith and make it what they will, and in the sense that Wicca tends to attract people who are individualistic, i.e., who have strong (separative), independently-minded personalities. The basic principles of Wicca are quite sound, but given the diversity of personalities involved and the dynamic range of beliefs and practices, there is therefore, as is the case for most religions, a spectrum of spiritual qualities, ranging from very noble to relatively coarse and self-centered. There are many and various Wiccan groups, and a number of relatively well-defined traditions or collections of practices (methods) that appeal to one group or another.

The God and Goddess of Wicca are not anthropomorphic. There is one supreme creative force encompassing all forms and all lives and all levels of existence and expression. Natural laws (and natural forces) are expressions of that one supreme creative force. The God and Goddess of Wicca are simply the masculine and feminine aspects of that supreme creative force. The focus of Wicca is upon living in harmony with the earth and the forces of nature, and utilizing those forces for good. In principle, and largely in practice, Wicca or witchcraft is a noble craft. But like most things good-in-principle, the quality and nobility of the particular craftwork depends on the quality and nobility and motives of the individuals involved. Thus Wicca properly does not embrace satanism or any obviously self-centered, self-serving practices. But satanism does embrace many of the practices and methods of witchcraft.

The fundamental problems of Wicca or witchcraft (or the practice of magic) are the source of energy and the motives of the people engaging its methods and practices. Natural (divine) forces can be embraced in two ways, through the

lower self and through the higher Self. In Wicca, much of the embrace is through the lower self, and consequently there tends to be a strengthening of the ego or personality and its role in Wicca. Where the embrace is through the higher Self there is a weakening of the ego or personality, with much more noble emphasis and more noble results. But because natural forces are more easily encountered through the lower self and lower practices, there is an inherent vulnerability in these practices. There seems to be little emphasis in Wicca upon personal refinement, but there is a not inconsiderable appreciation for the dangers of magic evoked in the wrong ways or for the wrong reasons. In some sense Wiccans have pioneered popular appreciation for occult safeguards, for psychic self-defense practices. Which is necessary due to the overall (popular) appeal of witchcraft. But if the emphasis were to include personal refinement (self-discipline, purification, etc.) then the protections would be more natural and more effective (coarse energies are attractive and competitive, refined energies are attractive and non-competitive) (coarse energies and refined energies are not (mutually) attractive).

Wicca is really quite experiential. Wiccans tend to feel the energies they are working with, to feel the connections with the earth and with nature and natural forces, much like true mystics feel their inner, higher communion with God. And in the higher sense, Wicca is also a mystical path.

† Commentary No. 1365

## Wicca 2

Thus like most religions there is an outer, popular tradition in Wicca, that appeals to a diversity of peoples (and perhaps especially to those who are disaffected by the rigidity and “failures” of more orthodox practices), and an inner, less popular (less realizable), more mystical tradition to Wicca. There is ordinary, outer-nature-based magic. And there is a higher, deeper soul-based magic. Thus a common theme in Wicca is apprehension and expression of magic, particularly in its ritualistic form.

Magic comes from within, but it can be evoked in the lower sense through the ego (personality), drawing from the lower forces of nature (which is more

properly perceived as external), or it can be evoked in the higher sense through the soul. Most Wiccans (like most people) are not able to touch the soul, and must rely on the lower magic. With proper training and proper (relatively selfless (self-less)) motive, these (lower) Wiccan practices can be quite effective (for good). It is a matter of being fit, being strong, being properly trained, understanding what one is doing, etc. But this is an active magical practice. One must properly actively and consciously control the evoked energies and forces. If one is passive in these regards, then one is easily engulfed by the forces and associated (unfortunate) entities. The higher magic is much more natural, requires not active control but simply intelligent and competent allowing of the energies and forces to flow as they need to. But the higher magic can only be evoked through higher (personal) qualification (refinement) (attunement to the soul). While the lower magic can seem (and be) quite natural, it is natural in a lower sense. Living in harmony with nature, in the lower sense, is to be entangled in nature. Living in harmony with nature, in the higher sense, is something else entirely.

Wicca has in some sense been greatly and badly misunderstood by the masses, and a few abuses here and there have been allowed to misrepresent the entirety of this religious tradition. Sometimes people attack that which they do not understand or apprehend, that which in ignorance they fear. But there is nothing in Wicca that should be feared, indeed there is much there to be appreciated. The potentials for abuse are there, but this is true also for other religions. Wicca is really quite honest in its approach to magic, while most religions embrace magical practices without admitting it (and usually without apprehending it). The differences between Wicca and Christianity, for example, are primarily in perceptions (perspective) and emphasis (focus), but these are not fundamentally mutually exclusive. Indeed, the higher principles and practices are actually quite similar.

Some think of Wicca and witchcraft as different and evil, but in fact they are similar if not synonymous, and there is no more (or less) evil in witchcraft than there is in Christianity. Wiccans tend to be tolerant of other faiths but also tend to react badly (humanly) to impositions. No faith has exclusive insights or an exclusive relationship with God. And no faith has the right to impose on others. Each contributes to the whole. And Wicca contributes nonetheless. The focus and domain of Wicca provide its contributions, namely appreciation



for nature (to live in harmony with nature, without exploitation), and appreciation for magic as a legitimate means of experience and expression.

Some religions emphasize submission to the (perceived) will of God, while Wicca tends to emphasize individual will (tempered by the golden rule). Thus the challenge for Wiccans is to gradually cultivate the inner, higher senses, so that the needs (will) of the soul can emerge into the daily life.

† Commentary No. 1366

### Wicca 3

There are a number of terms utilized to some extent in Wicca, in some cases differently than in other practices. An amulet is a magically, magnetically charged object for protection. The aura is the energy field that enfolds the human being (and all lives). Bane refers to that which is counter to life and consciousness. To banish is to magically exclude the influence of some entity or force. To bind is to magically constrain some entity or force. A Book of Shadows is a personal diary relating to magical experience (lore) and insight.

Calling refers to the invocation of divine or natural forces. The chakras are the energy centers within the human vital body, which are utilized in some magical practices. Charging refers to the deliberate qualification of some object or practice with personal energy or intention. Charms are simply amulets or talismans, infused with personal (magical) energy for some purpose. Circles are magical (sacred) spaces for working magic and ritual. They are means of containing and intensifying energy prior to its release or sending forth. Circles also provide protection. Cleansing refers to the purification of some object or place, removing unwanted influences. A coven or grove is simply a group of witches (usually thirteen or fewer) who practice magic together or who engage together in religious ceremonies.

Divination is (properly) a practice of obtaining insights. Earth magic refers to the natural magic (magical power) derived from natural objects. The natural elements are earth, air, fire, water, and the ether or akasha. Elementals are relatively primitive creatures associated with the elements. Fascination or

mind-bending is an unethical practice of attempting to influencing others. Folk magic refers to personal magic, often utilizing herbs and crystals. Grounding is a practice of maintaining stability in magical work and relieving excess energies.

Hand-fasting refers to a pagan wedding. Incense refers to the utilization of aromatic practices for attunement and facility. The left-hand path is the path of black magic, or magical practice that is selfish or self-serving, or which seeks to influence others (the right-hand path is the path of white magic, or magical practice that is more noble and selfless). Magical systems are specific systems or traditions of magic, each with their own set of practices and principles. Occultism refers to head-centered magical practices, for good (white magic) or ill (black magic). That which is occult is simply that which is hidden or not apparent to the mass consciousness. Paganism and neo-paganism are more general terms than Wicca or witchcraft. The pentacle is an encircled upright pentagram (five-pointed star), a symbol of Wicca and the five natural elements, while an inverted pentacle is a symbol of satanism (much like the swastika is a genuine religious symbol and the inverted swastika is a misappropriation or blasphemy).

Projective hand refers to the hand as a point through which magical force (personal energy) is conveyed. Receptive hand refers to the use of the hand(s) to receive energy. Rede is the Wiccan formulation of the golden rule, "An it harm none, do what thou will." Runes are sets of symbols used in magical work, sometimes also in divination. Sabbats are the eight seasonal festivals (Samhain or November eve, Yule or the winter solstice, Imbolc or February eve, Ostara or the vernal equinox, Beltaine or May eve, Litha or the summer solstice, Lammas or August eve, and Mabron or the autumnal equinox). A solitary is a pagan or Wiccan who works alone. Spells are magical rituals to address (or redress) some need. Sympathetic magic involves the principle of attraction.

## Xunzi and Goodness

Xunzi or Hsun-tzu was a Chinese philosopher, a Confucianist, who believed and taught that the human being is essentially evil and needs to be reformed in order to be able to embrace goodness. Xunzi is also the title of his book. This notion of good and evil (evil inherent) is somewhat in contrast to that of Confucianism proper, in which the human being is perceived as being essentially good and simply needs to be encouraged and goodness cultivated (goodness inherent).

In fact, the human being has within himself (herself) both good and evil tendencies, the pull of matter (ignorance and evil) and the pull of spirit (enlightenment and goodness). Indeed it is in the human experience that a being first more-or-less-consciously encounters these forces or tendencies, and it is within the human being that these contrasting forces are resolved. Thus Confucius and Xunzi were both essentially right in their thinking about good and evil. These are simply two perspectives which complement each other and feature a particular focus. Much like the yin and the yang, there are various complementaries and it is the human being in manifestation who must eventually confront them and resolve them (harmony through contrast).

Most people tend to see the world and other people in accordance with their own experiences and understanding. If Confucius could see and feel the goodness within himself, then it was only natural for him to see that goodness in others and formulate or realize a philosophy based on this inherent goodness. And if Xunzi could see and feel the evil tendencies within himself, and yet seek goodness, then it was only natural for him to see those tendencies in others and seek ways of helping himself and other people to overcome them. So while the methods and basis of Confucius and Xunzi may have been somewhat different, the objectives were very much the same. Confucius emphasized cultivation of good, of seeking and finding the good and encouraging it to grow. And Xunzi emphasized teaching people to embrace the good, through cultural and societal forms. For one approach, the evil is simply ignored and allowed to wane. In the other the evil is confronted and a person implored to change, through education, and through moral guidance.

Indeed education is important to this process (embracing the good, from either perspective). In order for someone to embrace the good, he or she needs to be aware of the tendencies and consequences, to understand the value of goodness. To understand what is (relatively) right and wrong, what encourages progress (goodness) (evolution in consciousness) and what encourages retrogression (evil) (devolution in consciousness). In these regards the moral laws and (proper) cultural-social traditions of (relatively enlightened) society serve to actively encourage goodness.

But fundamentally it is a matter of the individual and his or her place in evolution (relative maturity) (relative ability to listen to and adhere to conscience). Thus some people are relatively coarse (inexperienced) and the evil (ignorance) (entanglement in matter) is strong, while others are relatively more refined (more experienced) and the goodness (conscience) (insight) is relatively strong (and the evil is weak). Some need external encouragement through societal pressures, while others need only to listen to their own conscience (which should not be inconsistent with the proper (enlightened) encouragements of society). Most people need both. Because most people are in the middle and feel the pull of both good and evil. Indeed, even with the (relatively) enlightened there remains a small pull of matter (ego).

† Commentary No. 1368

## Helpfulness

Helpfulness is an attitude and natural demeanor of being able, willing, even wanting, to be helpful to others, of rendering aid or assistance or supplying whatever is needed given whatever the circumstances may be, and of allowing others to be helpful.

Helpfulness tends to be a matter of one's nature, a predisposition to be helpful to one's friends and family, to one's neighbors and colleagues. Genuine helpfulness is not contrived, nor is it in any way the consequence of some self-serving enterprise. Being helpful is not about the (perceived) strength of the helper and the (perceived) weakness of the one being helped. It is not about one being able to help and another needing help. It is, properly, a matter of people

helping each other, unabashedly, without any sense of measure or judgment or quid pro quo. It is, properly, a function of family or community or humanity, of being able to help and of being able to be helped, of helping and being helped.

But some (most) people are relatively self-absorbed, and are not predisposed to be helpful in any unqualified way. Some people look after themselves without any real consideration for others. Some people look after their family, without any real consideration for those who are not family members. Some people look after their friends as well, without any real consideration for those who are not family or friends. And some are helpful only to the extent that it seems to serve their own (conscious or unconscious) purposes. But spiritual students tend to be (or need to be) helpful in unconditioned ways, without regard to the status or familiarity of those who are helped. As one grows spiritually, one tends to embrace helpfulness or neighborliness in the broader, unqualified and unconditional sense.

But while some embrace helpfulness in the broader sense, they remain unable to be helped by others. Genuine helpfulness works both ways. In order to be truly able to help others, one must be able to be helped. What often stands in the way is ego or pride (a product of ego). But true helpfulness is also graciousness, in helping others without condition and without need of compensation or recognition, without calling attention to oneself, and being able to be helped by others, just as graciously. Thus helpfulness properly transcends individuality (ego) (pride) ((specious) perception of strength and weakness) and is a matter of (higher) collective consciousness. It is about transcending the self-serving lower nature, of transcending the illusion that we are isolated one from another and that karma is personal. To the contrary, karma is properly collective and there is no (substantive) measure or balance between (individual or collective) peoples. The balance has to do with collective evolution, and while (individual) people contribute to that balance (evolution in consciousness), it is the collective that matters. And so any consideration for offering help without being able to be helped is simply a matter of ego.

There is never a penalty or adverse consequence for helping others, except in the sense of (illusion of) separateness. And likewise there is never a penalty or consequence for allowing others to be helpful to oneself. Helpfulness (in giving or receiving help) does not create a burden or debt in any (true) sense.

Helpfulness is not something that can be (properly) imposed, it is not about (presumably) knowing what someone needs, but rather simply helping others however those others perceive the need, and (naturally, uncontrivedly, cheerfully) consistent with one's ethics and principles.

† Commentary No. 1369

## Samaritism

Derived from the parable of the good Samaritan, samaritanism is the attitude and natural demeanor of helpfulness at a higher, more noble level than the ordinary. A Samaritan is a native or inhabitant of Samaria, Palestine. But a samaritan is simply one who is ready and generous in helping those in distress, particularly in the sense of helpfulness to strangers and without regard to apparent or potential consequences in one's own life.

The distinction between helpfulness and samaritanism is a matter of degree or extent, where samaritanism is exceptional (extraordinary) helpfulness, or helpfulness in exceptional (grave) circumstances, generally above and beyond the ordinary, helpfulness in circumstances where most people would not stop to render aid. For most people, helpfulness is limited to the expectations of immediate society, e.g., with regard to family, friends, and community (e.g., based on race or religion or some other dimension of community). The good Samaritan rendered assistance to someone beyond his own ethnic and cultural and social context, beyond the boundaries of his conditioning. And that made it quite very special.

In modern times there have emerged a number of charitable organizations that have embraced this principle of samaritanism to some not inconsiderable extent, of rendering emotional support to those in crisis, without judgment, without imposing, in the spirit of true friendship, in which there are no strangers. Some of these, e.g., "Befrienders International" and "the Samaritans" specialize in suicide, i.e., seeking to prevent or discourage suicide through provision of immediate emotional support. Among their principles and practices are (1) availability, (2) listening and befriending, (3) respect for the right of a person to make his or her own decisions, including the decision to end one's life, (4)

confidentiality, within the organization, and (5) non-imposition of personal beliefs or convictions.

Samaritism is in marked contrast with intervention. Intervention tends to be judgmental, imposing, confrontational, and disrespectful. Samaritism is non-judgmental, non-imposing, non-confrontational (supportive), and respectful. In short, intervention is based in the ego, and samaritism comes from the heart. Samaritans do not presume to know what is best for another, but simply offer emotional support in a crisis. This allows a person to work through whatever issues there may be, without having to also deal with the (necessarily selfish or self-centered) demands (impositions) of others. This support from the heart is crucial, as it tends to evoke the heart nature of the person in distress, and thereby facilitates self-healing, while in intervention the "support" comes from the head or ego and tends to evoke the ego and reactivity of the person in distress, which is generally counterproductive.

One of the principal keys to samaritism is the non-judgmental nature or substantial disregard for karmic factors. A person's circumstances are indeed of his or her own making, but knowing that or focusing on that does not help a person to reach the point where the issues can be dealt with or resolved. Moreover, while all circumstances are consequential, they are also collectively so. So the heart has no concern for attribution or blame, but instead simply embraces the quality or emotional energy of the person and his or her circumstances and seeks to restore harmony, relieving whatever pressures there may be so that a person can move forward. The objective is healing in some broader sense, personally and collectively, and samaritism simply encourages healing.

## Reciprocity

Reciprocity is defined as the state or quality of being reciprocal, of attitudes, behaviors, feelings, and other expressions shared and felt and demonstrated by both “sides” in a relationship. Reciprocity “implies an equal (or comparable) return or counteraction by each of the two sides toward or against or in relation to the other.” It is an expression of equity or balance in human (individual or collective) relationship.

In the lower sense, reciprocity is contrived or reactive, either through the head-centered nature or through the emotions, and is an expression of one’s sense of fair play (equity) (justice) (balance) (righteousness). In the higher sense, reciprocity is an uncontrivedly natural expression of balance. There is, in this higher sense, a principle of reciprocity, within the broader context of karma (action and consequence) (learning), in which one naturally responds in kind to whatever energy is presented, provided that that energy is also resonant (existent within or consistent with one’s own consciousness). Thus a refined person does not respond in kind to coarse energy, indeed, a refined person responds with refined energy to every circumstance. But in human relationship, one’s ability to respond is often tempered or conditioned by the principle of reciprocity (both in the lower sense and in the higher sense, depending on quality of consciousness).

Oftentimes expectations are inconsistent with this principle of reciprocity. For instance, if one expects others to be open and honest, and one is not being open and honest, then that tends to discourage others from being open and honest. If one is offering help and assistance but unable to accept help and assistance, then that also tends to discourage others from allowing one to be helpful. Much of this occurs subconsciously, and oftentimes it is a matter of incongruity within one’s own consciousness, i.e., conscious or unconscious denial, of not being aware of the truth of something, of believing that one is being open and honest when one is in fact not so, of believing that one is genuinely helpful when in fact one is only superficially or conditionally so.



These incongruities or inconsistencies tend to complicate human relationships. They create barriers where there need to be no barriers. More properly, it is the ego which creates the inconsistencies and the ego which creates and sustains barriers in consciousness. Indeed there may be consistency in some very substantial dimensions, and inconsistencies in other ways that tend to undermine the whole (relationship). In some cases (some) inconsistencies are complementary and helpful, in some cases not so at all. For example there can be great and abiding love between two people all the while there is no real communication or rapport. But once the barriers are removed, gently, there is the possibility of true rapport.

True (genuine, harmonious, meaningful) relationship then is based on gentle, natural, uncontrived reciprocity in consciousness, of there being no substantive barriers to inhibit the flow of complementary (balancing) energy. In the smaller sense this is true for two people. In the larger sense this is true for all peoples, as all peoples are naturally complementary, one with every other. In some sense opposites (complements) are attractive. In another sense similars are attractive. If one is open and honest then one tends to attract (and recognize) people who are open and honest. If one is warm and wonderful, then likewise. One must "be" what one wants in order to succeed, provided that one's karma is not preclusive (which simply means that one is missing some insight). In the final analysis, one is simply open and the universe is responsive.

† Commentary No. 1371

## Meditation Cycles

The rotation of the Earth and the passage of the Earth around the sun, the relationships among planetary logoi, and the relationship of the sun to other systems, provide for a number of natural cycles of significance to meditation by virtue of the particular energies and potencies and qualifications that are made available through those cycles. As the student embraces and cooperates with these energies, the experience and expression (work) of the spiritual student is enhanced.

The most immediate natural cycle is the daily or diurnal cycle. There is a natural ebb and flow of energy (prana) associated with the daily cycle. Meditation in the morning, before one becomes engaged or entangled in activities, can be quite effective in qualifying all of the day's experience and work and is crucial to the student's remaining awake (aware). Meditation at mid-day can be quite effective in extending the momentum of meditation throughout the remainder of the day. And meditation in the evening can be quite effective in the assimilation of experience, especially through retrospection. Meditation triangles, i.e., daily meditation where there is a deliberate and reciprocal linking up with two other meditators, can be particularly effective in sustaining the momentum of the spiritual student and providing a service through the planetary network.

There is also a natural, weekly cycle. Daily thematic meditation, with correlation to the energies and qualifications of the seven rays, can be quite valuable, as each day facilitates qualification by the associated ray. Group meditation on a daily or weekly basis is also quite valuable in evoking needed energies. Part of the intent is to strengthen the spiritual momentum, and part of the intent is to facilitate service. Meditating according to the natural cycles and guarding against inadvertent complacency (ordinariness) is really quite important. Most students are sincere enough, but tend to sleep (lose awareness of what they are supposed to be doing). Thus earnestness in meditation, coupled with the natural vibrancies, is necessary if the student is to succeed.

The lunar cycle is perhaps the most potent of them all, as there are energies that are available at the time of the full moon that are particularly unimpeded (by the moderating moon). The twelve (sometimes thirteen) lunar festivals each year are the times of collective, planetary meditation involving the spiritual hierarchy and associated lifewaves. Thus full moon meditation is part of the foundation of the disciple, and affords linkages and potencies otherwise not readily available. Each of the twelve festivals has a particular (astrological) energy, but there is also an underlying energy of the full moon (period) itself (i.e., the energy of the solar logos) both with and without the context of the particular full moon period.

And the solar cycle, acknowledging the four seasons (spring equinox, summer solstice, autumnal equinox, and winter solstice), is perhaps the most magical of

all the meditation cycles. They are more subtle, but quite potent. There are other cycles beyond these daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual events, e.g., an eleven-year solar cycle and various alignments, but they tend to be rather specialized and involve only the associated working groups (despite the glamour promoted by the unenlightened). The spiritual student should be careful not to succumb to the glamour of these specialized cycles, as being englamoured with any of this undermines the effectiveness and efficacy of the whole process of meditation.

† Commentary No. 1372

## The Solar Logos

What indeed is the significance of the Solar Logos? First of all, for all practical purposes, the Solar Logos is God, that immanent and transcendent and unifying entity that animates and enlivens, indeed constitutes, everything which exists actually and potentially (and historically) within the solar system and solar scheme (the current solar system being simply a partial manifestation and indication of the solar scheme). The Solar Logos is of course only part of some greater, universal framework, but all of what is within the solar scheme is so qualified by the Solar Logos that extra-solar influences are (very) secondary by comparison.

Every atom within the solar system, every life, every human being, is simply some (small) part of that God-Logos. The Solar Logos is the collective life and consciousness and appearance, of everything within its systemic domain (arena of manifestation). It is immanent in the sense that it lives within all. It is transcendent in the sense that it exists as well on a plane of consciousness vastly higher than anything the human being is (yet) capable of apprehending. And yet it is also that creative life that every atom (and every human being) is evolving within and toward. It is underlying and overarching, both within and beyond.

The real significance of meditation is that it is the only practical means of achieving union with the God within, to some extent, in consciousness. And the significance of solar meditation is that it is the most potent means of consciously touching the Solar Logos and being touched, consciously, by that

overarching life. Many celebrate the four points of the solar cycle without apprehending this deeper significance. Most celebrants focus on the effect of the Logos upon the Earth, the changing of the seasons, the influx and outflow of natural energies, etc., i.e., being Earth or nature based, without really appreciating that that is simply the superficial dimension of solar meditation. So “active” solar meditation is superficial, not without some significance or meaning, but not true solar meditation. True solar meditation is a letting go of all attachments, all actions, and allowing the (human) life to be quietly and gently embraced by something really quite profound.

So the four points of the solar cycle are both the significant points of planetary life and the (more) significant and quiet times of higher consciousness. The soul does not engage in celebrations of the four points. The soul simply listens to the energy and quality of the (solar) Logos, recognizes its inherent unity with that life and consciousness, and feels that life and consciousness, albeit in relatively gentle and subtle ways. The lower magic engages the seasons and natural energies, the higher magic engages the soul and the Solar Logos.

In (some) other words, the human being in incarnation (the personality) lives in a planetary context, while the soul on its level lives in a solar context. It is the soul, not the personality, that is the cell in the body of the (solar) Logos. It is the soul that evolves in consciousness, not the personality. It is the soul that achieves union with the Godhead, not the personality. The personality is an instrument of the soul, and a (modest) part of the expression of the soul, but not really central to the higher existence. Consequently, it is the role primarius of the somewhat enlightened personality to approach the soul, and subordinate its apparent existence to that of the soul, as the soul does likewise in some (much) greater context. And it is primarily through (proper) meditation that this is achieved.

## Synergy in Meditation

Synergy refers to combined or coordinated actions or operation. It may be complementary in the sense that the two or more elements (participants) are contributing in different, complementary ways, or supplementary in the sense that the two or more elements (participants) are contributing in the same or similar ways, but synergy is more generally both complementary and supplementary.

Synergy in meditation refers to the substantially greater-than-the-sum-of-the-parts import of meaningful structure. If one meditates periodically in the same place there is additional import due to qualification of that place by the energies evoked through meditation and additional import (momentum) due to the reinforcement of successive meditation periods. If one meaningfully utilizes proper mantras, there is additional import. If one meaningfully utilizes a meditation form, likewise. The key is for the form (pattern) (structure) to be embraced consciously and not incidentally. Periodic half-hearted meditation in the same place is of little consequence due to the half-heartedness. If one is merely repetitive but not actually consciously engaged in the process, there is no real synergy.

There is also a great (potential) synergy in group meditation, either in the sense of an individual meditator linking up in some group context, or in the sense of people actually meditating together in the same place at the same time. Group meditation is potentially quite potent due to the diversity of complementary contributions. It does not really matter if the participants are aware of their specific contributions (indeed it is actually more effective if they are not aware in that sense); what matters is that each person contributes something and each person is generally contributing in different ways. It is the meditation form or structure that facilitates the synergism of collective efforts. Thus the keys to success are the "heartedness" or active sincerity (conscious engagement) of the participants and the efficacy of the meditation form being embraced.

A group of people praying or meditating or working together, coherently, is much more effective than that group of people praying or meditating or working

independently. Even two people working together meditatively and coherently is substantially more effective than two people working independently, even if there is commonality in method or purpose. And three or more people even more so. But with (very) large numbers of people it is almost impossible to achieve coherence, especially if they are operating at the ego or personality level (as most people do). The reason is that people tend to function (collectively) at the lowest common denominator rather than the highest level that most are capable of functioning. In a relatively small group, a dozen or so people, these limitations can be overcome as the various auras are balanced, but with larger groups that is not practicable and so larger groups tend (necessarily) to function at relatively lower levels.

The real value of a meditation form is to increase synergy by compensating for individual distractions and limitations and thereby facilitate coherence. The process or procedure (of each form) is (properly) designed to bring each participant to the same place, gently and clearly. Each stage has significance and import, especially collectively, even if a stage may not seem to be so for everyone (in fact it is (properly) so for everyone). And each stage in an individual form (properly) leads to (largely unconscious) needed adjustments which improve the coherence (synergy) of meditation.

† Commentary No. 1374

## Apprehension 1

Apprehension is defined conventionally as the act or power of perceiving or comprehending something, more properly as the act or power of correctly perceiving and comprehending. It also refers to the process of perceiving and comprehending. There are four primary dimensions or aspects to apprehension, namely external impression (perception), internal impression (instinct, intellect, and intuition), bias and other conditioning, and (actual) comprehension.

Unfortunately, most people necessarily and unconsciously rely rather heavily on external impressions (their senses), unconsciously accepting sense perceptions at face value, as if they were actual and true. But external impressions are not necessarily nor generally actual or true, although they are generally superficially

true. Internal impressions are potentially more valuable than external impressions, except that both instinct and intellect have considerable limitations and are not generally reliable. Indeed, instinct and intellect usually serve to filter external impressions so that what is actually available to be apprehended is generally distorted. And all sorts of emotional and mental bias and conditioning serve to compound the problem of apprehension. Not the least of these difficulties is the process of reasoning, of unconsciously making assumptions, making interpretations, and drawing conclusions (consciously or otherwise) without actually understanding either the source (information, perception) or the nature of the process (perception, interpretation, apprehension).

For most people, progress comes through learning to discriminate between what is (relatively) true and what is (relatively) not true. Through experience, through developing capacity for honesty (in being true, and in being committed to truth), one gradually learns to overcome one's bias and conditioning such that truth may be more properly (and increasingly more properly) apprehended. But discrimination is for most people a matter of intellectual ability, of applying the trained mind to perception and interpretation, and while this is an improvement over unconscious reliance on lower (animal) instinct and emotional distortion (reaction), it does not lead reliably (correctly or fully) to what is true, nor to properly apprehending what is true.

The actual (true) intuition is much more reliable than either instinct or intellect, but most people have not developed their intuitive abilities, and even most people who think or believe that they are embracing intuition are actually deceiving themselves as the intellect or instinct is interpreted as intuition. Intuition can only emerge through having sufficient experience and sufficient (and not inconsiderable) quality of consciousness. Psychic impressions can be external or internal, but in neither case are these a matter of intuition, and psychic impressions are no more nor less valid than any other kind of sense-impression.

Thus actual comprehension (proper apprehension) comes from a combination of experience and development (developed abilities, and more properly, from a tempering of one's bias and conditioning). To the extent that one is true, to the extent that one is actually and (more or less) wholly embracing the truth of

oneself, then one can truly apprehend. Correct (proper) apprehension is ultimately quite important, for life is about learning and growing (and serving) and actual progress comes from assimilation of experience, the apprehension of what is experienced and the translation of that experience into character and (quality of ) consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1375

## Apprehension 2

The apprehension of an archetype such as that of the Bermuda Protocol is exceedingly difficult, in part because it exists on very subtle levels that can only be reached when all of what is personal has been transcended, in part because what one already knows or believes (or wants to believe) constitutes limitation both to apprehension and to reaching those subtle levels, in part because of dimensionality (human consciousness has fewer dimensions than an archetype and consequently it is akin to a planar (two-dimensional) entity (having length and width, living in a universe of (merely) length and width) attempting to perceive and comprehend depth (a third dimension) or time (a fourth dimension)), in part because when one brings what is apprehended at that (higher) level down to the level of the mind and conceptualization and verbalization, it is necessarily constrained and therefore necessarily distorted.

Many people imagine what a future might be like, indeed many imagine a better future. But imagination is necessarily heavily biased by one's own worldly experience and values and toward what one wants (indeed perhaps even how one wants others to be), and has in itself no capacity for discrimination or apprehension of truth. Some people have even designed (conceptually) the future, imagining and intellectualizing what they believe to be a better framework than the present. But this also is necessarily heavily biased and limited by worldly experience, knowledge, and values. Projection and design are both largely personal projections, however rationalized and reasonable they may seem to be. And yet these projections and designs have some value, because they represent ideas and concepts, some of which may represent (incremental) progress rather than merely the imposition of one's own ideas and concepts.



Another (supposed) avenue is that of various psychic visions and perceptions, including prophecy and prophetic dreams, and various “insights” and “directions” from various psychic entities. But true prophecy is merely symbolic. The future is not predetermined in its details. And even qualified psychic vision has its limitations. The future is a cloud of uncertainty. Perceiving the future necessarily changes the future. And all psychic impressions are necessarily distorted by one’s own consciousness (bias, conditioning, etc.). Psychic entities are notoriously unreliable. The truly “higher” beings do not communicate through psychic impression. So any “insights” gained through various internal and external psychic processes should be viewed cautiously.

In other words, intention evokes bias and conditioning, and passive non-intention evokes gullibility. The only effective path to apprehension on the higher levels is non-passive non-intention, which necessarily requires well-developed character and (higher) quality of consciousness (and no personal interest). Archetypes can be apprehended, in principle, but usually at best one can only glimpse a part of an archetype and what one brings down into consciousness is necessarily limited.

Consequently what one can “know” about the Bermuda Protocol is necessarily partial and otherwise limited. Indeed, it is sometimes difficult even to sense where one’s embrace of the higher “sense” ends and one’s own imagination and design begins. The Bermuda Protocol non-extensive, and is radical in the sense that it is not derived from the conceptual present. But one’s conscious embrace of the Bermuda Protocol is necessarily rooted in the present and one’s conceptual embrace of the present and its projected extension.

## Employment

In the context of the Bermuda Protocol, following one's primary and secondary education, one joins a guild based on one's interests and talents, and the need by the guild for new members. There will always be opportunities for joining one or another of the various guilds because each guild council anticipates the availability of new members and the broader needs of the community and how best to apply their membership. As the needs and priorities of the community change, so does the availability of memberships in the various guilds.

In joining a guild, the new member receives further education and training specialized to the interests and talents of the member and the needs of the guild. Thus what is comparable to current post-secondary school education and training, including vocational training, falls within the auspices of guild membership. The guild then provides their qualified members with "jobs" and vocational assignments in various agencies, companies, ministries, etc. Each assignment is consensual, in the sense that the member, the guild, and the employing agency are all in agreement regarding the assignment, its nature, and its duration. There are even opportunities for employment in individual or otherwise "small" enterprises, nonetheless sanctioned by the guild. Thus a widespread diversity of interests and opportunities is continually fostered. All of which is possible by virtue of abundant energy and collective goodwill (a necessarily very different situation than the present).

Employment is in a sense a matter of dynamic balance. Instead of being driven by individual or collective profit motive, employment is driven by a balance of personal interests and community needs. The guild provides the needed education and training, encourages the development of the member's career, protects the member from unemployment, and serves the interests of the community. The member exercises not inconsiderable freedom of choice in terms of additional education and training, employment and work assignments, etc. The member may qualify for membership in more than one guild and move from one guild to another according to interest and need. And ultimately, the guild provides for comfortable retirement of its members (though senior members may still serve on the guild council if they wish).

Thus employment really has two fundamental purposes, to satisfy the needs of the individual for vocational development and expression (a framework for learning, growing, and serving), and to satisfy the needs of the community for the goods or services produced or provided by such employment. Full employment is virtually guaranteed because of the cooperative and collaborative nature of the guilds and their members. There will always be work to do, because civilization will always be advancing. And in times of relatively "slack" periods the hours worked each week may be reduced (and conversely, in times of greater "demand" working hours may be temporarily increased (always consensually)).

Much of the current workforce pressures (competition, dissatisfaction, tension, unemployment) are resolved in the context of the Bermuda Protocol, not so much by virtue of the "new order" as much as the progress made in developing human nature. Indeed, the "new order" and its abundant energy (resources) is only possible as humanity reaches the place in consciousness where the focus has shifted from individual self-interest (egoism, sensualism, materialism) to more altruistic considerations. Consequently, employment is widely valued for its evoked opportunities for learning, growing, and serving.

† Commentary No. 1377

## Prerequisites

So, what are the prerequisites for the (non) implementation or evocation of the terms and principles of the Bermuda Protocol (externalization of the Spiritual Hierarchy)? These prerequisites are, simply, sufficient development and realization and quality in consciousness on the part of both individuals and nations (nations being consequences of collective qualities of consciousness) (sufficient meaning whatever actually allows, encourages, and facilitates the emergence of higher terms and principles).

The detailed means of progressing from the present to the future are not apparent, indeed, are not determined nor even determinable, except in principle and generally (e.g., continued nurturing of the peoples and other lives such that

progress (evolution) in consciousness continues in various ways, remaining within the already established and evolving guidelines for evolution within the planetary scheme. The past exists. The present exists. The future exists. The archetype exists. These are all very real entities. But there is a very substantial difference (contrast) (tension) between the present and the (distant) future. From the perspective of humanity, the future exists only in its archetypal (archetypical) form.

The tension between the present and the (distant) future is what actually evokes the process of change. It is an intelligent condition (qualification) of manifestation, not part of some detailed and deliberate plan. Not even the most enlightened of humanity yet apprehend the detailed means and the methods of progressing from here to there. But what are known and understood are the particular methods and means of incremental progress, and so the role of the pioneers of humanity is simply to encourage that incremental progress, without being contriving, and without imposing. The details of the broader pattern will emerge however they need to. To actually know the details, were they to already exist, would be counterproductive in the sense that that would tend to evoke a more active and therefore interfering role. The proper role is to simply cooperate with the evolutionary process according to one's ability (conscious and unconscious understanding and realization). There is far greater wisdom underlying manifestation than most people can even imagine.

But one can, in some general sense, anticipate some of the prerequisites or conditions conducive to the emergence of higher terms and principles. One can perhaps sense how impractical the terms and principles of the Bermuda Protocol would be in the present society, given the limitations of current human nature (and relative quality of consciousness). One can perhaps sense how people would feel if these terms and principles were to emerge now, especially in the nature of ego and its defensiveness, and in the sense of inhomogeneous response (some welcoming, some not so). And then one can perhaps sense what the barriers are and what incremental advances would be needed in order for those barriers to dissolve gradually and naturally, comfortably. The solution is not for humanity to become homogeneous as well as more spiritually developed, but for humanity to remain inhomogeneous but in more harmonious ways.

Some people look for a Messiah and a dramatic change of events. But in fact the outcome (externalization) is a gradual process (and prophecies are largely symbolic and sufficiently vague). Christ (or by whatever name is comfortable) is already here, indeed has never left. The Hierarchy is real and functioning. The "drama" extends over aeons and aeons of years. And the externalization occurs so very gradually and so very naturally that most people will not even notice.

† Commentary No. 1378

## Relationships among Nations 1

While relationships among peoples are more fundamental than relationships among nations, relationships among nations are determined by the qualities of consciousness of their respective peoples and contribute to the experiential climate of those peoples, i.e., peoples and their nations are mutually and directly related. Each country has a diversity of (qualities of consciousness of its) peoples. People are "born" into various cultures in part because they need that particular environment and in part because they can contribute to that environment.

A relatively refined person who incarnates in a relatively refined country is there typically to encourage further refinement. A relatively refined person who incarnates in a relatively coarse country likewise, although the challenges in consciousness tend to be less subtle. But whether relatively coarse or relatively refined, each person contributes to and is impacted by the national environment.

In the context of the evocation of the terms and principles of the Bermuda Protocol, the two most obvious prerequisite categories are the (qualities in consciousness that lead to) the receptiveness of nations and (likewise to) the receptiveness of peoples. Nations (nation-states) are simply reflections of the consciousness of their peoples, except that the consciousness of the nation tends to be at a somewhat coarser level than the average consciousness of the peoples. Not at the lowest common denominator in consciousness, but somewhere between the lowest commonality and average consciousness. Similarly the relative maturity of a country, the extent of its integration and coherence as a country, is an indication of consciousness. Some countries (e.g., the U.S.) are

superficially strong but otherwise oftentimes rather incoherent. Both coherent and less coherent national environments offer opportunities for growth. Lack of coherence may imply progress through contrasting forces. Like a person, a country may be advanced in some ways and not so advanced in other ways. Ultimately a country needs the same overall experiences as a person, and evolves accordingly.

In the present humanity, nations tend to function at the ego level, oftentimes as if they were children, being somewhat self-centered, defensive, etc. Some are more evolved than others, being more cooperative and less self-centered, and some are particularly coarse in their expressions, in how they relate to other nations, and in how they relate to their own peoples. Progress in consciousness at the collective (national, racial, cultural) level is indicated (demonstrated) both internally, in relationship between nation and its peoples, and externally, in relationships with other countries (races, cultures). The more noble nations tend to work together for the good of all. The less noble nations tend to seek to impose on others and look out for their own (apparent) superficial interests.

The League of Nations (1920) and the United Nations (1945) are two historic attempts at facilitating world peace and constructive relationships among the various nations. These have met with limited success due to “personalities” (of both individuals and nations) but the experience has evoked considerable appreciation for some of the barriers which exist between peoples and between nations. The problem is that the present world order is ego-based or personality-centered. And what is needed, eventually, is a new order based upon enlightened consciousness both at the level of the individual and the level of the nation-state.

## Relationships among Nations 2

Before a nation-state is able to “join” the Commonwealth of Nations (in the context of the Bermuda Protocol), it must be sufficiently qualified and amenable to sincerely embracing the terms and principles of the Bermuda Protocol. It must be both willing (wanting) and able. It must have developed to a place in consciousness where its values are not inconsistent with higher values. And the majority of its peoples must have developed (collectively), in consciousness, to the point where being associated with the Commonwealth is more appealing than not being associated (not a majority of peoples in the democratic sense, but a majority of peoples in the higher sense of widespread consensus). Indeed, as the new order emerges there is a synergistic effect whereby all of the nations and peoples of the world are encouraged in the new direction (except of course that all of the peoples and nations of the world will have been moving in that direction anyway, and that “moving” is what would evoke the beginnings of the new order).

No doubt there would be provisional participations in the new order by countries (and peoples) who are themselves in transition between the old order and the new, as most would be, and over a (relatively long) period of time, virtually all of the (then) nations of the world would be joined together under the new framework (in some sense not unlike the present emergence of the European Union, but in some senses very different (e.g., being much less contrived). But this implies that the joining nation is not threatened by the terms and principles, that there are perceived and considerable benefits from association. For even while the “new” humanity as a whole will be much more along the way than is presently the case, most people will not yet have transcended the need for reasonableness.

For the Commonwealth itself there is no question of the liability of its members or prospective members, for the Commonwealth naturally and necessarily takes a global view of what is best for the whole, and embracing all nations and all peoples is essential for the next phase in human evolution (beyond that which takes humanity to this “commonwealth” level). Moreover, the Commonwealth will have the keys to abundant energy and advances in ways and means (and

culture) that will make it relatively quite attractive. But giving up a measure of sovereignty, even in the best interests of the global community, requires a certain confidence and quality. But while such “giving up” would be almost unthinkable in the present society, in the (distant) future it will come much more naturally.

Indeed, as countries mature they naturally work much more effectively one with another, and natural (complementary and supplementary) partnerships emerge likewise quite naturally. Some of the current pressures and tensions, e.g., derived superficially from the distribution of resources and material wealth will naturally dissolve. And the various distinctions between races and cultures (and other diversities) will not necessarily dissolve as much as evolve into more meaningful relationships (based on mutual respect and appreciation for differences, as each contributes to the whole in different ways and through different means).

An era of right human relations among peoples leads naturally to an era of right human relations among nations (and vice versa, as the two are interdependent and causal relationships are more collective). Much of the present experience, especially in terms of relationships among the various countries and cultures is part of the preparatory work for the new order.

† Commentary No. 1380

## Relationships among Peoples

In the final analysis, however, it is relationships among peoples, based on individual and collective growth in consciousness, that matters, and which contributes the most to the development and maturation of the various countries and cultures.

People who are functioning at the ego level (being personality-centered), as virtually everyone is today, tend to be relatively self-absorbed or at least relatively self-centered, and relatively insecure (even if they are not necessarily aware of these conditions). There is a tendency of the ego to resist change, mainly by virtue of its roots (in matter (more properly in the illusion of material existence)) and the ego's need to sustain its own artificial existence.



Consequently, people need time in order to experience and develop and adjust in the subtle ways that are needed to allow the higher consciousness to begin to be felt. Changes in consciousness cannot be imposed, although people and “institutions” can encourage change, especially through example and through subjective means (e.g., meditation). And changes in consciousness invariably take time, even though “breakthroughs” seem to occur, they are more properly the result of sustained and gradual progress over a period of time.

When people are expressing themselves in an egoistic (separative) manner (as most people do), they create and sustain barriers between people. As people develop and mature spiritually (in terms of character, ethics, awareness, values), these barriers naturally and gradually dissolve and the higher consciousness is then allowed (by virtue of the new circumstances in outer consciousness) to manifest, however modestly at first. As the barriers are gradually dissolved, defensiveness and insecurities are replaced by confidence and trust, both in the process and in people as a whole. Even as barriers dissolve, individual differences remain, but those differences tend to be perceived as complementary and contributive to the whole rather than separative or divisive.

As differences are respected and appreciated, as they are understood in non-threatening ways, human relations are advanced and the whole (humanity) is better able to incorporate through assimilation that which is implied and conveyed by and through these different and diverse contributions. But it is by virtue of how people relate to another that progress is achieved.

Enlightenment does not come from isolated contemplations nor from special disciplines. Contemplations (meditation) and other special (spiritual) disciplines are simply necessary to truly comprehending the lessons implied through experience and relationships among peoples.

Without the experience of relationships among peoples, without the diversity of humanity and the diversity of experience and feeling and thinking, progress would be very much less substantial. It is the tension or contrast (fourth ray aspect) evoked through people working together or living together or otherwise interacting that provides a fertile field for adjustment in consciousness. It is not that one necessarily adapts to or incorporates another’s ideas or nature but that one necessarily relates to the exposure and the lessons implied and conveyed through that exposure and relationship. Relating honestly and openly

facilitates learning and growing. Relating respectfully and with genuine (non-passive) consideration facilitates learning and growing. And as the way people relate to each other improves, so does the consciousness of those engaged, and so does the consciousness of the whole.

† Commentary No. 1381

## Depth 1

In the context of consciousness, depth refers to the quality or characteristic of being deep, the extent to which one is functioning at other than superficial levels, i.e., being (functioning) well below (or above) the level of the conscious (superficial) mind. Depth and profundity or abstruseness are closely related. The challenge for the spiritual student is to transcend superficiality and allow the inner depth to be properly engaged and realized (brought into manifestation).

However, depth is commonly used to refer merely to intellectual depth, which is simply a matter of uncommon intellectual capacity, and does not necessarily or generally imply or convey any real depth. Intellectual depth involves utilization of the mind in relatively uncommon ways but still necessarily involving the superficial mind and the ego. The mind itself is far greater than that which is superficial, but most of humanity are not yet able to utilize the mind in other than superficial ways. Any intellectual activity is, by metaphysical standards, superficial. And while intellectual development is helpful, to some extent, it ultimately becomes a limiting factor that tends to preclude or inhibit any real deepening. It is only where the mind is coupled properly with the (deeper) intuition (and the soul) that the depth of mind can be engaged, resulting in considerably more poignant awareness and insight. But whenever the mind is engaged in its superficial (intellectual) dimension, the deeper senses are lost.

For the spiritual student, the challenge includes not being entangled in that which is superficial, e.g., intellectual activity, mental attachments, having opinions, being focused in the external world, engaging materialism and egoism, etc., all of which are ultimately limiting. The challenge includes cultivating the inner senses through developing the quiet mind (more properly allowing the quiet mind (removing the barriers to intelligent (non-passive) quiescence)), so

that the presence of the soul may be realized (actively manifested). The challenge includes being able to engage both the super-conscious and subconscious dimensions of the mind (and consciousness) consciously and intuitively, without intellectual activity. Thus depth implies the ability to derive insight (awareness) (understanding) (wisdom) from both subconscious and super-conscious levels, which is not something that the ordinary (superficial) mind can do and which is not something the mind can do by itself. In fact, depth does not involve "doing" at all, but rather involves being.

More properly, depth is not something that one possesses. Depth is something that one embraces. And in order to embrace depth one must be able to bring the mind to a point of quiescence and be able to keep it there at will. One must be able to see without being entangled in what one is seeing. One must be able to "think" without being entangled in what one is thinking about (or in the process of thinking). One must be able to feel without being entangled in feelings. One must be able to live in the world without being entangled in the world. One must be able to live without reliance on ego. In short, one must be spiritualized, refined in consciousness and unimpeded by all of the ordinary human engagements.

This does not mean that one is not human and this does not mean that one is not functioning constructively in the world. But it does mean that one is able to function in the world while relying on something higher and deeper than the mind (personality) (ego). And in depth, one sees and hears and feels (and even thinks) in very different (extraordinary) and subtle ways.

## Depth 2

A person of depth is really quite rare, and uncommon in a number of ways. Most people are relatively shallow and superficial (which is what and how most people need to be). Most people are entangled in the world and entangled in their own necessarily superficial lives. Most people are entangled in both materialism and egoism (or at least in personality-centeredness). These are simply the ways that most people experience.

But a person of depth has feelings that go far deeper than the vast majority of peoples, and yet a person of depth is in touch with those feelings, as there are no substantive (artificial) internal barriers. A person of depth is neither shallow nor superficial, and yet may (generally) appear to be ordinary to the unenlightened (superficial) observer. A person of depth cannot be (properly) recognized as such by someone not of comparable depth. A person of depth may thus be engaged in (what appear to be) worldly activities but not entangled in them. But a person of depth is not enamoured with the material world nor with material things. A person of depth is not enamoured with his or her own abilities or accomplishments or appearances, though he or she necessarily has abilities, accomplishments, and appearances. A person of depth is simply not really enamoured. Because a person of depth can see through the veils of matter and ego. A person of depth can see and feel and touch the underlying reality and know (sense) what is real and what is not (so) real. For the person of depth there is no substantive maya or glamour or illusion.

A person of depth does not rely on ordinary intelligence nor upon the intellect. A person of depth relies on the inner senses and the intuition, which means that understanding supersedes knowledge and that wisdom supersedes understanding. A person of depth does not "have" knowledge or understanding or wisdom, but is able to evoke whatever knowledge and understanding and wisdom are needed. A person of depth is necessarily not extroverted (nor significantly introverted though he or she may appear to be relatively shy). A person of depth is personable but not gregarious. A person of depth communicates effectively but is not talkative. A person of depth simply speaks according to (felt) need and not in any contrived or superficial manner. For a

person of depth there are no facades, no acting, no playing of games. The (ordinary) barriers (of ego) (e.g., lack of honesty, lack of humility) are simply not there.

The mind of a person of depth is simply clear. A quiet mind that nearly perfectly reflects whatever is evoked from higher levels, being neither active nor passive. The mind of a person of depth is an instrument of consciousness and is not a participant in consciousness. This means that, in depth, the mind is used by higher consciousness, while for most people the mind is entangled in consciousness and serves as a barrier between higher and lower consciousness (which reinforces the illusion of independence). But in depth (evoked through quiescence), the mind is no longer a barrier (having self-interest), but a responsive instrument (serving only higher purpose).

In a sense, depth is the link between mind and enlightened perception. With a clear mind, without attachments and without entanglements, a person of depth simply perceives things as they are, clearly, without (significant) bias or conditioning. In depth the senses clearly convey what is perceived (rather than the senses themselves being entangled in the process of perception). Thus the development of mind leads to quiescence and quiescence leads to spiritual absorption and freedom.

† Commentary No. 1383

## Prosperity and Wealth 1

Prosperity is a relatively normal condition. Poverty is not. Wealth is not. Wealth implies affluence, an abundance that goes substantially beyond meeting one's needs. Wealth also implies responsibility and stewardship, for applying that wealth to the needs of others.

In a materialistic and egoistic society there is a problem of accumulation or hoarding of wealth. Of self-centeredness. Of seeking wealth as an end-in-itself. Of not really being concerned about the general or overall human welfare. That "wealth" is either earned through righteous effort, or unearned through inheritance or manipulation. In any case wealth is a karmic consequence and a challenge in consciousness. How one handles wealth determines much of one's

future circumstances. Those who are wasteful of resources, or who hoard wealth, or who otherwise fail to live responsibly in consideration of others (humanity and the planetary life as a whole) are likely to face rather difficult circumstances (destitution), while those who are more prudent, who live modestly, who are genuinely charitable, are truly contributing to human progress (and their own).

Indeed, those who live now in poverty are usually those who have not been financially prudent, either here and now or in past lives. And those who are now wealthy and englamoured by such are being tested in ways quite germane to a crisis in consciousness, e.g., either in learning what needs to be learned (charity, graciousness, non-materialism, being (becoming) genuinely and actively concerned about human welfare) and moving on, or remaining self-absorbed and in being thereby relatively indifferent if not antagonistic to human welfare, evoking forces of balance which eventually strip away these resources and comforts and associated illusions.

Wealth is of course somewhat (relatively) artificial. Money and material wealth are symbolic and represent capacities and opportunities (and responsibilities). Wealth is also a collective phenomenon at various levels (humanity as a whole, hemispheric, continental, national, regional, community, etc.). And consequently poverty and wealth are legitimate governmental concerns. In principle, governments are placed to look after collective human welfare (and the environment in which the community exists). But governments embrace or exhibit values much like people do, indeed governmental values are the integrated or collective values of the peoples affected. If society embraces materialism and egoism, engenders competition as an end in itself without much regard for overall human welfare, then there tend to be great distinctions between those living in poverty and those who are living in luxury. In a more enlightened society the "extremes" are more modest, there is no real poverty and no real (substantial) accumulation of wealth. There is, instead, balance.

But in a materialistic and/or egoistic society there is no real (stable) balance, there are contrasting forces (ultimately, inherently, a matter of harmony through conflict), and there is disparity. As people evolve so do their collectives (collective consciousness) and governments. Corrupt governments gradually become less so. As more enlightened people take part in government, the

actions and import of government become more noble. There may be tension or contrast between the (noble) intentions of government and the individual self-interests. But eventually these are resolved and a more suitable balance is achieved. In the meantime great challenges exist in consciousness, in progressing from the current circumstances to those intended.

† Commentary No. 1384

## Prosperity and Wealth 2

Within the framework of the Bermuda Protocol, in a suitably enlightened society, the role of government is not to take from the wealthy and give to the poor, but, in contrast, the role of government includes the encouragement of human welfare and balance such that all of the basic needs of people are provided for, and substantial opportunities provided for continued growth in consciousness.

In this context, the (governmental) rules are not simply imposed on unresponsive or unsupportive people, but responsive (qualified) people are attracted to a community in which enlightened processes (rules) (the Bermuda Protocol) are (is) in place. Consequently, there are (there) few people who are impoverished by their thinking and feeling and behavior, and fewer who are self-absorbed or englamoured by wealth (fame or fortune). The rules of (this enlightened) society simply encourage the proper balance. There are no great differences in income or relative wealth. Differences exist, but these are modest, and a matter of ability and qualification and contribution and merit and seniority. The basic needs are provided for all. There is food and shelter and clothing and health and (right) livelihood, for all. And society as a whole is engaged in collective (but not excessive) prosperity.

This is not simply a matter of noble or idealistic intent or principle, but a matter of collective consciousness, of attracting sufficient "wealth" at the collective level, and having in place a value system and administration such that all of the basic needs are fulfilled and sufficient opportunities provided for continued learning and maturation (self-fulfillment). And this "wealth" is not at the

expense of others (i.e., those who are not living under the Bermuda Protocol), but simply a matter of properly tapping into the universal supply of energy.

In a materialistic-egoistic society, wealth can be accumulated at the expense of others (wrongfully, through manipulation) or (also wrongfully) through catering to the materialistic-egoistic values of society. Great athletes and other entertainers, entrepreneurs, etc., tend to attract and collect wealth far in excess of their needs, and far in excess of their actual value to society (is any human being actually worth more to society than any other human being or do we simply contribute in different ways?). In an unenlightened society, markets are often created for the purpose of "making money" rather than serving the needs of humanity. And even where there is some charity involved, it is usually more a matter of (token) appearances or rationalization than having genuine (altruistic) motives. But in an enlightened society the principal motives are not materialistic or egoistic, but are more noble. To work in some endeavor that is worthwhile for others is indeed an end in itself. Not for fame or fortune, but for the good of all.

For those who are entangled in poverty or wealth, in materialism or egoism or both, there is no real solution in the Bermuda Protocol. But for those who are actually, genuinely emerging from these distractions and illusions the Bermuda Protocol offers a great deal of comfort. If by virtue of one's place in consciousness, one does not (need to) worry about either poverty or wealth (health, education, or welfare), of meeting one's basic needs, where there are basic comforts and no need for luxuries, one can then focus more properly, more effectively, on higher, more noble things. One is then free to evolve more consciously and directly (through conscious experience and active service), rather than unconsciously and indirectly.



## Wealth

So, whence comes wealth? Fundamentally and in principle, wealth is derived from the abundance of energy that is readily available to all (the only preclusions being karmic). While wealth is artificial, energy is not. Energy is real. As that energy is acquired and transformed (symbolically) into wealth (money) (capital) it can be traded for materials and services (which also represent energy).

In the present unenlightened society there are tremendous reservoirs of accumulated (hoarded) wealth. There are people who have acquired wealth far in excess of their needs, who live in luxury, and/or who do not engage in commensurate charitable work, i.e., who are poor stewards of wealth. There is a tremendous amount of artificial wealth in the various stock markets (some of which represents real value, but much of which is merely artificial). There is tremendous waste of money in various industries such as tobacco, alcohol, other drugs, gambling, prostitution, flesh foods, entertainments, etc. There is tremendous wealth appropriated through artificial markets (of products and services) (contrived materialistic and egoistic needs (vanity)) applied to naive and unrealized peoples.

The problem of wealth is that it conveys responsibility. If wealth is allowed to accumulate, or if wealth is expended to serve primarily one's own (artificial) interests, not primarily in stewardship, then that accumulation and/or expending is a potent force of tension that will inevitably evoke (generally perceived to be unfortunate) consequences, much like an earthquake or volcanic eruption that releases accumulated pressure, so shall any substantive abuse of wealth evoke commensurate consequences. So while wealth per se is artificial, the accumulation of wealth and the abuse of wealth are real, as is the more noble utilization of wealth to redress the needs of the whole. The principal consequences of accumulation of wealth are disease and poverty, both individually and collectively at some level (e.g., an impoverished nation-state).

If wealth is utilized wisely and not selfishly, by individuals, collectively by organizations, and collectively by nations, then much of the present condition

(poverty, wide disparities in economic health) will pass. Poverty and disease are conditions in (lower) consciousness that convey very powerful but difficult to realize lessons. As prosperity emerges, properly and not artificially, then the focus of learning and growing falls into other aspects of life in the world. If one learns how to learn, if one learns how to recognize lessons as they are offered, then the more dramatic (painful) circumstances (consequences) are not needed. The development of unselfishness and the proper stewardship of whatever resources may be available contribute very considerably to subsequent (consequent) healthy (prosperous) conditions.

Wealth per se (in the material and financial sense) is generally not needed. Those who seek wealth are necessarily blinded to real issues (seeking wealth is a particularly preclusive (attachment)). But those who live within their means and are proper stewards of whatever wealth there may be, sharing with those less fortunate, using wealth and resources wisely (in some greater-than-personal sense), not being concerned so much with their own welfare, those (relatively few) naturally attract energy and resources (a flow or continuum of energy). There is necessarily an abundance of energy and resources. It is only a matter of learning how to live gently and harmoniously in the lower worlds. True wealth is the resulting condition in consciousness (living from the heart).

† Commentary No. 1386

## Right Human Relations

The purpose of life is evolution in consciousness. The means through which this is accomplished is progressive incarnation (manifestation at the human level). Each successive incarnation places the human being in the world of matter and (to a large extent) deadens the senses to the higher worlds. The challenge, then, is to learn through experience and gradually transcend the limitations of the lower worlds. And in the process of transcendence realize the inherent divine nature of all of life and to participate fully consciously in that non-separative life.

There are actually three closely related aspects to this learning process. The first is simply to rise above the material plane. The second, similar but more

subtle, is to transcend the ego. The third is simply to develop and sustain proper, constructive human relationships. But this is not so easy. There is the weight of matter and the matter-induced illusions of separateness and individuality. Thus most people, being absorbed in the material world and identifying (wrongly) with the ego rather than the true self, act more or less independently. They tend to look after themselves and those who are close to them in some way (e.g., family) without much concern or consideration for others. Human relationships tend to be dominated by (the illusion of) self-interest.

Much of the present misery and suffering in the world, and much that is not consciously considered to be such but is nonetheless counter-evolutionary, is rooted in the conflicts and inharmonies that exist between people, between peoples, and between races, cultures, nations, etc. Karma evokes whatever circumstances are needed for growth in consciousness. If the lessons are not learned, then the circumstances are repeated in some sense, with greater intensity. The lack of harmony in relationships (and other unfortunate behaviors) simply evoke(s) consequences that progressively, ultimately, propel people forward in consciousness.

The more important lessons are really quite simple. Life is unitary. All lives are part of some greater whole. The way nations and groups and various peoples and individuals treat each other (and in the broader sense the way they treat animals and other lives) is the principal creative (karmic) force for peace and harmony affording growth in consciousness, or for conflict and disease (and more compound illusions). It is not enough to recognize these truths intellectually. One must also live in accordance with these truths, which means respecting other human beings, respecting other lives, even those who cannot comprehend the higher principles. It also means helping each other as if we were all of one kin (which we are), without imposing in any way. It means finding solutions to conflicts, generally through (mutual) respect and appreciation and consideration for others.

All conflicts are inherently material and driven by the illusion of separation one from another. Ego, pride, feeling embarrassment, etc., are all material (based in physical, emotional, and/or mental matter (which is inherently separative)). The human being who is absorbed in matter, either through seeking material wealth,

through feeling, or through the intellect and ego, is simply denying the underlying truth, and that inconsistency between truth and practice is a very powerful force. But the human being, the spiritual student, who embraces the oneness of life and learns to live gently, graciously, and in full consideration for others, inevitably achieves full and conscious union with the divinity within all.

† Commentary No. 1387

## Problems of Humanity

It is one thing to identify the various problems of humanity, another thing entirely for one to actually recognize and realize the underlying lessons to be learned. Problems tend to be superficial. But within each problem there are significant lessons and opportunities. Thus if the spiritual student focuses on learning rather than problem-solving per se, then resolution tends to emerge quite naturally.

If one is living (collectively and/or individually) constructively, learning and growing according to afforded circumstances, then problems are relatively incidental and growth is more of a continuum. But if one is living not really in accord with the evolutionary flow, then more substantive problems emerge, and growth tends to be more incremental. A problem is, in a sense, an obstruction or a constraint, that tends to focus the attention on how to get beyond the problem. But resolution comes not from getting beyond the problem but by learning whatever is the implied lesson and adjusting (oneself) such that the problem is placed into a more meaningful perspective.

The principal problem of humanity is the lack of widespread proper (right) human relations. Most problems are derived from a lack of appreciation for the continuity and unity of all life. People and nations tend to treat each other according to their consciousness and values, whether or not these are consciously realized. Those who are isolated in consciousness tend not to relate well with others. Those who are absorbed in mundane consciousness tend to relate to others through superficial values. But those who are relatively enlightened, who sense the inner continuity of life, relate to others through more noble principles and values. And those who are truly enlightened do not relate

to others, for there are no "others." There is only the one life. And so unenlightened relationships involve externals while enlightened relationships involve internals.

There are of course real, practical problems. Poverty and disease are substantive problems resulting from consciousness, which can only be resolved in consciousness. Problems of capital and labor, likewise. Similarly violence. But these are all masks for underlying problems in consciousness. People tend to live with barriers in consciousness, with psychological barriers between peoples, such that the illusion of independence is sustained. Thus for most people relationships tend to be defined more by conflict, contrast, differences, and tension. And these things evoke problems. It is easy to intellectualize and avoid concern for others' problems (circumstances), but in realizing that life is one, in living from the heart instead of the head, there is more compassion and consideration, and consequently much more facility for learning and growing in consciousness. Where relationships are defined by respect and consideration, through harmony and mutual support, then there are no substantive barriers to growth in consciousness.

But people who are relatively self-centered and who work separately are to some extent antagonistic to learning, collectively and individually. And those who are relatively not self-centered and who work more inclusively, without the obstruction of ego (individual and/or collective self-interest), are more receptive to learning and growing and (incidentally but significantly) facilitate or encourage others' learning and growing. This is a world of harmony through conflict, but with growth in consciousness the emphasis is upon harmony through contrast and unity-in-diversity. Ultimately, the various problems of humanity are resolved collectively, in consciousness.

## Separateness

The principal cause of separateness is the grand illusion of separateness, (the illusion of material reality) which tends to dominate most lives and consciousness on earth. People appear to be separate one from another. The personality appears to be real. The material world appears to be real. These perceptions encourage people and nations to act more or less independently, in their own perceived self-interest.

But the material world is not real. It does not endure. It is not as it appears to be. At the end of a cycle of manifestation, it dissolves. The personality is merely an instrument. It does not endure. At the end of an incarnation, it dissolves. What endures, what continues from death is the higher (non-personality) consciousness. The conscience. Whatever has been assimilated into conscience. But even during manifestation (incarnation) what is real is the higher consciousness that lives through all. The world, the personality, are merely facades, shadows of reality. The one life lives through all lives, simultaneously and wholly. Distinctions within that one life are necessarily artificial (and may be convenient). It is conveniently merely an artifact of (the delusion of) matter that people perceive themselves as separate and more or less independent.

What is real is energy. What endures is higher consciousness. As the ordinary (lower) consciousness is developed, there is a growing appreciation for the connectedness of all lives, but this appreciation tends to be primarily on an intellectual level or rational basis. As the student becomes more responsive to higher consciousness, there is a growing feeling of connectedness, of relatedness. But it is only when one actually achieves union with the higher consciousness that one actually transcends the sense of separateness. And yet behavior based on rational appreciation for connectedness is better than behavior based entirely on one's (largely unconscious) sense of separateness (self-interest). And behavior based on real understanding is better than that based on intellectual understanding. But best is behavior that comes from living from the heart, where there is no separation, no separateness, no separateness.

In the meantime the sense of separateness tends to condition all of experience and all relationships with people in the world. The sense of separateness is derived from matter. Consciousness is embedded in matter. The unconscious identification of consciousness with matter is a powerful conditioning force. Matter cannot "see" beyond itself. Consciousness that is absorbed in matter cannot "see" much beyond its own near field. And when "others" are perceived they are perceived (superficially) in relation to oneself (in relation to how one unconsciously perceives oneself, i.e., as a separate somewhat-to-substantially self-serving entity).

With some experience and insight, people tend to see things in a broader context, tend to see how people affect one another, tend to see relationships between people, between people and events, between (superficial) causes and (superficial) effects. As that context continues to broaden, more and more of life in the lower worlds is placed into some higher, metaphysical framework. And as that framework becomes more metaphysical and less physical, then real understanding is possible. As the ego is (progressively) transcended, the underlying reality is progressively revealed. Without the barrier of ego the delusion of matter no longer prevails. And relationships become progressively more harmonious and enlightened.

† Commentary No. 1389

## Friendship

Friendship is defined as the state in which there is genuine and kindly interest in and goodwill toward one to another, an amicable and comforting state based on mutual appreciation, respect, and consideration. Friendship implies an absence of hostility or tension. True friendship is a relationship between two or more people that involves some genuine affection and true appreciation for one another.

Depending on consciousness and culture, for most people friendship is external to family, and friends constitute an extended family of relatively more meaningful acquaintances. Family members tend to be accepted as they are, and to some extent this is true (for most people) for friends as well. Yet for

some people friendships are more meaningful and enduring than family ties. Family members are by virtue of blood relationship and marriage, while friendships tend to be more natural and voluntary. Family members are by virtue of karma, yet so also are friends.

The primary role of friends and family is to draw the otherwise isolated human being into more proper consideration for others, an encouragement to be less self-absorbed, less self-centered. The caliber and nature of friendship is a result of (quality and nature of) consciousness. For some people, who are relatively superficial, friendships can hardly be other than superficial, although many friendships have merely the facade of something other than superficial friendship. For others, who are less superficial, friendships can be quite meaningful and valuable. Friendships add a dimension to human experience, that of (potentially) relatively close relationship. It is through (family and) friendships that people learn to trust one another, and to learn to sense the degree and extent and quality of that trust. It is through friendships that people learn to accept others as they are, as allowances tend to be made for (family and) friends that would not otherwise be made. But friendship can also be abused, if it is not genuine, if there is not sufficient respect and consideration. Thus friendship can be a poignant arena for experience and expression (and growth).

There are two dimensions of friendship for even more poignant growth. There is the progressive expansion of friendship to include progressively more and more people, not necessarily in the sense of close friendships, but in the sense of respect and consideration for people in general and as a whole. This may begin within one's neighborhood or community and gradually extend to all peoples and cultures and races (and lives). With genuine goodwill, one naturally overcomes the separative and counter-evolutionary tendency to perceive people as either friends or enemies, instead perceiving all peoples (and ultimately all lives) as friends at some level or another. The keynote of this dimension is goodwill toward all lives. To treat everyone with respect and consideration. To embrace the brotherhood of humanity and the brotherhood of all life.

The other dimension, no less significant, is a deepening of particular friendship, such that the normal barriers between people (even friends) are lowered or dissolved, so that close friends can be more open and honest one with another



than either is generally able to be with others. This of course is the beginning of being able to be generally open and honest, with oneself, with one's friends, with all. In the case of male-female relationship, a genuine and deepening friendship allows much more meaningful (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual) intimacy and connectedness (on both inner and outer levels). The more meaningful relationships include genuine friendship.

† Commentary No. 1390

## Partnership

While true friendship can properly evolve into more intimate relationship without losing the dimension of friendship, so can more intimate friendship-relationship evolve into genuine friendship-relationship-partnership (true partnership). Most intimate relationships (marriages) are relatively superficial (and are superficially intimate), because the participants are themselves living primarily through superficial (ego-based) (self-centered) (separate if not separative) consciousness.

But people (spiritual students) who are able to be truly honest with themselves, who are able to lower the (normal) barriers of ego, have the potential for real partnership. Which means that in the context of the friendship-relationship, the normal barriers that exist between people must be naturally (not artificially or contrivedly) dissolved. While each contributes something to the friendship-relationship-partnership, there must necessarily not be any measuring or comparing of roles and contributions. True partnership is not about worldly or personality factors, but about genuine connection, where neither person dominates simply because neither person is operating or functioning primarily at the (normal) ego level.

In a genuine (intimate) partnership there is a blending of two healthy auras, such that the resulting (marriage) aura is healthy and more potent (spiritually) than the auras of either of the partners. The relationship is necessarily both complementary and supplementary, with complementary differences (constructive contrasts) and a pooling of similar strengths. There is necessarily a significant set of (uncontrived) core values, as well as differences that are

respected and appreciated. True partnership is synergistic and does not involve imposition or contrived influence. There is simply a heightening and deepening of the senses (especially on emotional and mental and intuitive levels) such that both parties are able to sense through the marriage aura more effectively than through their own auras. Indeed, in a well-developed marriage aura it is not clear that the individual auras even exist.

In true partnership there is a balancing of energies to be the benefit of both parties. The normal tensions that exist between people are simply not able to function in a proper partnership. This is of course as much a consequence of the quality of consciousness being embraced by both parties as the quality of consciousness of the partnership itself. There is a natural protectiveness involved in such an aura, that tends to dissolve or balance any potentially inharmonious energies, either external or internal, such that the partnership continues to function naturally and without external conditioning or the presence of ego factors (personality-centeredness).

Without considerable effort, individually and together, over the course of a number of lifetimes, this true partnership is simply not possible. Considerable progress in consciousness must be made before a person can even conceive of this true partnership. And considerable experience together is necessary for the two auras to be able to begin to resonate properly. Thus where a genuine partnership emerges in a given lifetime, it is necessarily preceded by many lifetimes of effort, together, working out all of the more ordinary separative forces and factors. Barriers are not simply dissolved. It requires considerable investment of time and energy. But two people, working together over the course of a number of lifetimes, can achieve this genuine partnership. And this partnership-resonance naturally evokes relatively considerable spiritual potency.

## Metaphysics Proper

Metaphysics proper is metaphysics without (new age) flakiness, without substantive glamour, and without excess gullibility. Metaphysics proper is also metaphysics without the rational speculations of academic philosophical and religious thinking. Metaphysics is properly simply a matter of studying that which is not readily apparent to the senses, of looking at the underlying truth and reality of life and manifestation. It is experiential in the sense that its truths must be realized through experience, and not merely through intellect. It is also rather expressive, in the sense that in embracing metaphysical principles the student (properly) applies those principles to every aspect of life in the world.

In effect metaphysics is a combination of mysticism and occultism. More properly mysticism and occultism are the two dimensions or aspects of metaphysics, mysticism being the heart-centered domain of (lower) emotional and (higher, deeper) intuitive experience and occultism being the head-centered domain of intellectual considerations and focus of mind. Theosophy is properly simply a broader, more comprehensive framework than metaphysics. Indeed, metaphysics proper is the practical dimension of theosophy, that which is implementable in the daily lives of metaphysical (spiritual) (theosophical) students and those who are not actually spiritual students but approaching the path and becoming more amenable to metaphysical principles, even if they are not recognized as such. Thus metaphysics is an important bridge between the world (of worldly peoples) and theosophy proper (which is inherently spiritual, not academic).

The true value of metaphysics is the psychological framework of metaphysics, where the student is not entirely deceived by the senses, where the student is able to see (slightly and increasingly less slightly) beyond and beneath the merely superficial dimensions of life in the lower (objective) world (of matter and ego). It begins with the unconscious realization of the existence of underlying truth and reality, and grows through experience until the various (proper) metaphysical principles are actively and consciously embraced. The metaphysical framework makes much more sense of life in the world than more

conventional psychological frameworks (which tend to be heavily biased by the delusions of matter (form) and ego (personality)). Metaphysics is a dimension of life in the world that facilitates understanding and growth in consciousness rather than absorption in the senses or in the mind. It is the framework for awakening from the sleep of materialism and egoism.

Thus in a sense, metaphysics is a stepping-stone toward the spiritual path for those who come from the world (being absorbed in matter and ego), who gain some modest metaphysical insights, and who gradually become more spiritual as the various glammers are realized and overcome (as the outer, lower life is conformed more and more to metaphysical principles). In another sense, metaphysics follows and broadens the more conventional (religious) spirituality for those who emerge onto the path through the various religious traditions.

The key to metaphysics proper is spirituality. That is what is generally missing from the academic approach to metaphysics and that is what is generally missing from the (popular, self-centered, trendy) new age approach to metaphysics (i.e., true spirituality, not the glamour of spirituality (the false spirituality of sense experience)). Spirituality is about selflessness. And metaphysics (and theosophy) is (properly) about evolving in consciousness to and through increasing selflessness.

† Commentary No. 1392

## Cannibalism

Cannibalism is the practice of a human being eating another's (human) flesh, or of a species that devours its own kind (compared with vampirism, in which only the personal energy is appropriated). Human cannibalism is widely regarded as unsavory while most people have no such difficulty with animals eating other animals or with human beings eating various (animal) flesh foods (meat, fish, fowl). In a sense, the human being eating animal flesh is a form of cannibalism as the human body is an animal body and the only real distinction between human and animal is at the (not particularly significant) level of mind.

The practice of cannibalism at the (primitive) human level has some occult basis in the sense that for cannibalistic peoples there tends to be a strong tradition of

usurping the perceived strengths of a person or animal through killing them and eating their flesh. This is not simply a myth but an actual appropriation of energy (consciousness) qualified by the creature being consumed. The more violent or coarse the creature, the more "violent" nature or "coarse" nature is appropriated. The problem is that for most animal-flesh-eating people it is not the strength of an animal that is appropriated, but the weakness in the sense of coarseness and animalistic consciousness. The various species of the animal kingdom are more prone to violence and coarseness than are human beings. But human beings who eat (animal) flesh foods are necessarily coarser in some sense than those who are vegetarian.

This does not mean that vegetarians are necessarily more advanced, just that they are less coarse by virtue of their diets (indeed, they may be more coarse by virtue of other factors but in general vegetarian peoples tend to be less coarse (in consciousness) than carnivores and omnivores). The vegetarian diet is essential to (deeper) spiritual activities as the coarseness conveyed through a flesh diet precludes much in the way of meditation and realization. The basic challenge for the spiritual student is to conquer his or her own (animal) nature, and so eating flesh foods is simply counter-productive and undermining of these more spiritual efforts.

A vegetarian diet conveys the much more easy-to-assimilate "plant" energies while animal foods require much more effort to overcome and indeed needlessly so as a proper vegetarian diet is much more wholesome (a proper vegetarian diet resolves legitimate nutritional concerns, without nutrition being an end in itself). Of course people who eat animal foods can in principle rationalize their preferences as well as vegetarians can, but it does not change the fundamental dynamics and moralities and energy and karmic relationships. Humanity is creating a considerable karmic burden by virtue of its unwholesome treatment and consumption of animals.

In the final analysis, there is not much difference (in energy and consciousness) between cannibalism (eating human flesh) and eating animal flesh foods. Which is of course not what most people want to hear. But there is a substantive difference in consciousness and energy between non-vegetarian and vegetarian diets. Regarding the morality of diet, conventional mores consider animals to be "inferior" and therefore the killing of animals for food is not

immoral. But in the spiritual context there is simply no more justification for killing animals than there is for killing human beings (generally, neither can be properly justified). Moreover, humanity contributes to the evolution of the plant kingdom through the cultivation and harvesting of vegetable foods, but the “farming” of animals for food is counter-evolutionary. It does not contribute to their evolution in consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1393

## Scripture and Rightness

A scripture is an inspired or sacred writing. Inspired in the sense that the author was in touch with something greater than himself (herself) and that the resulting writing is not based entirely on the intellectual capacity of the author. And sacred in the sense of there being some higher, divine qualification of the process. A scripture is not a scripture by virtue of some democratic or authoritative process or sanction, but by virtue of its quality and value. Which means that a writing may be a scripture to some but not necessarily to others. And that a writing that is a scripture to vast numbers of people is not thereby or necessarily any more or less inspired or meaningful than one that is a scripture to only a few.

Anyone who approaches God, that which is divine, in consciousness, through prayer and meditation, deliberately or otherwise, may be inspired or meaningfully stimulated by the connection. What is thereby evoked, which may or may not be formulated into words, is based in part on the qualification of the source, in part on the qualification of the process, and in part on the qualification of the vehicle. If the source is divine, through the soul or higher Self and not merely psychical, if the process is unimpeded by ego or intellect, if the vehicle is somewhat spiritually-attuned and not overly coarse or intellectual or self-serving, then the resulting work or product may have some measure of added value. It is not really important for one to determine what is or what is not inspired, sacred, or scriptural. What is important is the quality and value of what is conveyed.

Unfortunately, scripture is often considered authoritative and is utilized in the futile attempt to settle questions of import. Scripture is indeed authoritative,

but only in the qualitative sense. The words are limited by the intellect of the vehicle, and the words are limited by the relative capacity for comprehension and the relative inclinations of the reader or listener. And yet, wonderfully, scripture has the facility to provide "answers" to the seeker according to the needs of the seeker. Thus a reading of scripture may be interpreted in many different ways and means, by different people, all with potentially good (meaningful) result. If there are differences in understanding, then the "truth" is simply otherwise broader and deeper.

Questions are not settled properly by democratic process, nor by appeal to some artificial authority, nor through interpretation or logic or intellectual process or rationalization. Indeed, questions are only properly settled through conscience and understanding and appeal to wisdom, according to the quality of consciousness and associated capacity of the seeker. What is a rightful interpretation or understanding for one may not suffice for another, and yet both may be "right" in some sense or another. Those who seek definitive or authoritative or absolute "answers" are simply deceiving themselves and are not likely to find enduring satisfaction. But those who embrace the wisdom qualitatively, who are able to learn and grow and adapt to what is learned, are simply closer to the truth.

In the final analysis (which is not an analysis), what is right and true is simply that which feels right and true, for the time being, according to one's conscience and consciousness. This may be compounded by what one wants to be right and true (self-serving self-deception), but if the seeker is earnest then the resulting sense of what is right and true will be meaningful. And the student and seeker will be able to grow, and as the student grows, to move on to broader, greater, deeper, higher truths.

## Persecution

Persecution is defined as the act or practice of persecuting or harassing or otherwise causing to suffer those whose origins, actions, beliefs, social outlooks, and/or values are substantially different than or otherwise threatening to those of the majority or controlling authorities. At best persecution is annoying and character-building, at worst it is grievous and afflicting and obstructive.

A considerable distinction exists between persecution and prosecution. While proper (reasonable and warranted) prosecution, under law (and hopefully as a matter of justice), may not be wrong, persecution is always wrong for the persecutor, if not also for those being persecuted. Usually, the persecution of people involves the collateral suppression of ideas that are somehow threatening to the status quo. Through persecution there is the implied but futile hope that in focusing on the person or persons being persecuted the ideas or principles that they represent will somehow be suppressed or otherwise banished from further consideration.

Instead of respecting the diversity of perspectives and values that enrich humanity, many people are so insecure in their own principles and values and outlooks that they feel threatened, consciously or unconsciously, by those whose principles and values and outlooks inadvertently (or otherwise) call their own into question. In other cases persecution is about maintaining power or control. But in any event persecution is generally harmful, wrong, and impositional. One might think that if someone or some group is being persecuted then that means that they are deserving, that that persecution is consistent with their karma. But that is not necessarily true. Persecution may not be inconsistent with one's karma, but it may not necessarily be consistent either. Karma is a broader-than-merely-personal phenomenon, with a number of dimensions, both in terms of time (cause and effect) and collective (people being units of a greater life). Many who suffer do so not necessarily by virtue of their own (personal) karma, but by virtue of the karma of humanity.

Usually, new (evolutionary) ideas emerge according to need, both in terms of the individual's need and in terms of humanity's need, and the persecution that



sometimes follows is the natural resistance to change, the inertia of matter at the personal (egoistic, personality) level. That does not justify persecution, but simply places it into some broader perspective for understanding. New religions emerge to gradually replace those which fail to continue to meet the needs of developing and evolving peoples. New mores likewise. An open-minded, civilized culture allows ideas to emerge that are different, to allow people to consider them, consciously or otherwise, and to freely embrace whatever ideas feel comfortable (subject to considerations of harmfulness (except that while some "new" ideas may be potentially harmful, people should be allowed to determine for themselves the relative propriety and truth and value of new ideas)). And while some "new" ideas are atavistic and self-serving, most people should be able to move beyond these temptations.

Sometimes it requires great courage to live according to one's understanding, to suffer persecution while not attempting to impose on others one's understanding of things. Sometimes there are great lessons conveyed through persecution, for those being persecuted and for those committing persecution. But one should learn to respect all peoples, and to treat all peoples with consideration and compassion, even if there seem to be substantive and contrasting differences in perspective or understanding.

† Commentary No. 1395

## The Church and Rightness

Which religion is right? Which church is right? Which faith is right? For many these are important questions and there is an effort to determine the answers. But the problem is not a simple matter of one being right and the others being wrong, but a matter of all (or at least most) being right in some regards and for some peoples (and for some times).

Many people embrace religion in a separative and exclusionary manner, in terms of perceived or believed rightness (and in terms of perceived or believed righteousness). Each religion has its own basis, of beliefs and principles and values. Each church or denomination or sect, likewise. The actual differences (and the actual significance of those differences) between the various faiths are

relatively superficial, yet to adherents those differences can seem to be very (very) important. Usually these relatively superficial differences are important because they provide a basis (rationalization) for one's beliefs. Many people rely on these rationalizations instead of recognizing intuitively the underlying truth and the significance of that underlying truth. In basing one's religious commitment on superficial factors, however important they may seem, the adherent is able to avoid the real issues and associated dharma.

Those who sincerely argue or promote the belief that their church or faith is right and that other churches and faiths are either not right or are lesser, are simply self-deceived. No religion, no church, has a monopoly or "exclusive" on God, or on divine presence, or divine blessing, or salvation. Scriptures that are interpreted in absolute or separative or exclusionary terms may very well be valid scriptures, but these interpretations are simply lacking broader wisdom and insight. It is relatively easy for the mind to find fault with any belief system, because human beings and their belief systems are necessarily partial and imperfect. But these belief systems may nonetheless have not inconsiderable value to their adherents. But a faith does not actually have value because of these superficial factors, but by virtue of underlying principles, and the principles which underlie God-centered religions and churches and faiths are all essentially the same.

Some would ask a seeker to accept as true the outer teachings of a faith based on the historical validity of some prophet or visionary and the "authority" that is presumed to ensue. For example, some Christian faiths rely on the historical crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as a basis for their faith, when in fact, it does not matter whether or not Jesus was actually crucified, nor that he was actually resurrected, because the actual teachings are conveyed through the symbolism of these events. Others rely on the historical validity of a prophet, e.g., if he was truly inspired then everything he said or wrote must be (absolutely and infallibly) true. The problem is that no human being, inspired or otherwise, has perfect understanding nor is infallible. Every "teaching" is true only to the extent that the truth can be intuitively realized within oneself. If one statement is true for someone or in some way, another statement by the same prophet may not necessarily be true.

But for some it is easier not to think about these things but simply to accept as true that which is prescribed by some presumed authority. For many the mind is either too weak or too strong to enable the intuition to enlighten. For some there is value and goodness in authoritative religion because that is the only spiritual stimulation that they can embrace. But the spiritual student must go beyond the superficial dimensions (exclusiveness) and embrace the underlying principles (inclusiveness).

† Commentary No. 1396

## Vampirism 1

Another rather unsavory practice is that of vampirism. Vampirism is the (psychic) practice of preying on others, of drawing energy (prana) (vitality) from other people or from animals. In this sense there is little difference between human and animal, as either may prey on their own specie or upon members of other species. Some animals prey (etherically) on humans, some humans prey (etherically) on animals. But usually vampirism occurs within a specie.

There are various degrees and aspects of vampirism, from a casual and unintentional, incidental drawing of energy, to a deliberate and malicious evisceration and ultimate or eventual destruction. In each case of vampirism there is a deprivation of vital force, and an associated psychic imposition. An extreme case of vampirism involves the drawing and consumption of (physical) blood, but most cases involve the drawing and consumption of prana (etheric vitality). Vampires are not a species. But members of various species may embrace some elements of vampirism. There are human vampires and there are non-human (sub-human) vampires. Some are alive in the sense that they are incarnated and live in the physical world. Some are not alive and reside on non-physical (psychical) levels.

Vampirism is related to health and the healing process, and it is the opposite of sharing vital energy. The healthy body draws prana naturally and comfortable (and unconsciously) from the (etheric) atmosphere without detriment to other lives. There is, in principle and substantially in practice, an unlimited supply of prana. But a diseased or injured body is impaired in its ability to draw prana from the etheric regions. The healing process involves learning and

(superficially) involves the restoration of the body's ability to draw prana naturally and properly.

There are actually two dimensions to vampirism, namely vulnerability and ethics. A person is vulnerable to being preyed upon either because the body is sick or injured (on some level), or because that person's auras is open or unstable in some way, or because there is a sympathetic relationship to someone who abuses the relationship. The vulnerability may be on an etheric level, on an emotional level, or on a mental level, or some combination of these. But in each instance, the vulnerability manifests itself through a loss of vitality. All instances of vulnerability are rooted in the past. In fact, many (but not all) instances relate to a person's having engaged in unsavory psychic practices in an earlier time (or lifetime). The most depleting experiences are generally where one has received occult training and has abused the privilege. Thus most (human) vampires have had training along occult lines but do not have either the health or consciousness to behave respectfully and considerately toward others.

Vampirism is extremely unethical, but there are cases where the practice is at least understandable if not warranted. For instance, the case of an unhealthy person who cannot draw energy (prana) naturally and who (generally unconsciously) draws energy from those around him (or her), especially from those with whom he (or she) is related. This is not limited to a lack of physical health, but includes those who are emotionally or mentally unhealthy as well. Thus a casual (incidental) vampire may appear healthy when in fact he or she is not. Those who are more deliberate about preying on others, and those who have occult training and have fallen from grace (i.e., who are coarse and self-serving), are actually much more dangerous. But one who is healthy, physically and spiritually, is generally not vulnerable to vampirism and need not resort to specific defensive practices.

## Vampirism 2

One of the dangers inherent in occult training is the increased potential (power) of the student, for good or ill. This is why proper occult training is provided only to qualified students. But there remain lesser schools which teach some of the more basic techniques without qualification. Without qualification, without deeper understanding, without ethics, and without some measure of wisdom, occult training can be very dangerous, both to the student and to his or her potential associates (victims). There is also the fortunately rare circumstance of a qualified student losing his or her spiritual composure and reverting to a more self-centered, coarser focus. The force for evolution is ever balanced by the inertial forces of matter and ego, thus providing additional challenge for the spiritual student.

In any event, the spiritual student should take great care with whatever talents and abilities are afforded, for with increased power (for good) necessarily comes increased responsibility. Whenever one encounters a healthy person there should be no substantive change in either energy level. Encounters (interactions) between people should properly and generally be encouraging to all, and should not be depleting in any sense. If there is a depletion of energy, that implies that the depleted person is not entirely healthy, or is vulnerable in some way, and that the other person is deliberately (at worst) or unconsciously (at best) drawing energy from the less-than-healthy or vulnerable person.

Given the relative power of a well-trained spiritual student (occultist), particular care must be given to all encounters and relationships, to be aware of others' vulnerabilities, and to be sure that there are no ill effects from the encounter. Proper training includes developing this awareness and proper safeguards to one's talents and abilities. But one must remain vigilant. Thus with vigilance, and a proper sense of ethics and propriety, consideration for harmlessness, etc., the talent and ability and energy of a spiritual student shall always be utilized for good, and always in a necessarily non-impositional manner.

The healthy spiritual student, living according to spiritual principles, should never feel depleted of energy and should never cause others to be depleted in any sense. To the contrary, the healthy spiritual student should be a force of incidental encouragement (energy-wise and emotionally) to everyone encountered in the course of daily life. The spiritual student should always respect the aura of anyone encountered, by not drawing energy, by not imposing energy, and by respecting the privacy of whoever is encountered. When a spiritual student encounters a vampire it is generally inconsequential, for the student is not (properly) vulnerable and the vampire will not find the student appealing. Spiritual students do not generally confront vampires (or other demons), but are simply protected by virtue of their qualification. Spiritual students do help others, however, and sometimes this entails interacting with those who have fallen into the dark side.

There are also places which have a greater propensity for vampirism, i.e., which attract those who prey on others. Graveyards, for example (one of the reasons why cremation is encouraged) tend to attract "people" and sub-human entities which prey on whomever is there and vulnerable. Prisons, likewise. Wherever there is coarseness. The spiritual student should simply be aware of these places and their dynamics and work with light and love to help dissipate the negative energies and associations.

† Commentary No. 1398

## Violence 1

Violence is defined in the broader, metaphysical sense, as the conscious or unconscious exertion of physical, emotional (astral), or mental force so as to cause harm, injury, or suffering to oneself or to another being (person, animal, plant, or mineral). Violence per se is a relatively extreme form of imposition, but even relatively mild forms of imposition (violence) are necessarily destructive and harmful and therefore counter-evolutionary. Something is harmful not merely because the harmful effects can be seen and determined, but also in many (most) instances where the harmful effects are not so apparent, yet nonetheless injurious on some level.

Most people who think of violence think of violence in physical terms, but emotional and mental forms can be just as harmful as physical forms of violence. Secular law generally prohibits physical violence, at least to the extent that it results in physical injury to another human being, but spiritual law is much broader in its import and extent. Many people are beginning to be aware that emotional assault is harmful, but few realize that mental assault is also quite harmful. Many think of violence only in the sense of deliberate or intentional harmfulness, but incidental behavior, on emotional and mental levels, can also be quite harmful. Violence need not be dramatic to have serious consequences or import.

There is much violence in the outer world and on psychic levels, due mainly to behavioral consequences and attachments in the material (egoistic) realm. The root of violence is the same as that of other forms of materialism and egoism, namely coarseness and selfishness arising from identification with material (superficial) existence, which corresponds simply to a lack of manifestation of (higher, deeper) quality of consciousness. People generally fail to realize the interconnectedness of all life. People generally see themselves, consciously or unconsciously, as separate and independent of other lives. People are generally relatively coarse and self-absorbed. And so "violence" (especially incidental violence of which a person is simply lacking awareness) is (wrongly) not properly considered. No one has the right to impose on others, to hurt others by virtue of behavior or feelings or thinking. And no one is free from the consequences of such behavior.

It all begins in the mind. Unkind thoughts tend to lead to ill will and other (harmful) feelings, e.g., resentments. Even unexpressed (unspoken) criticism is unkind and leads to tension. Tension between peoples leads to harmful emotional expression, even on unconscious levels. And all of this leads to the exchange of impositional energy on some level or another. Impositional energy is harmful and separative. It separates people one from another. It strengthens the illusion of separateness. It obscures and undermines the potential for learning and growing. And it evokes more (relatively) violent circumstances. Violence breeds violence. And it is only the deliberate and determined will to break this cycle that can resolve matters.

The spiritual student needs to be particularly aware of the potential for incidental violence, through thinking and feeling, for with spiritual (and occult) training and development come increased potencies for good or ill. The student must (should) continually (if not continuously) focus on self-purification (qualification) (refinement), and endeavor to be gentle and kind in all aspects of daily life, on all levels (physical, emotional, and mental), to be a gentle expression of harmony and peace and respect for all lives. To transcend violence and encourage good will.

† Commentary No. 1399

## Violence 2

The consequences of violence are often (usually) disparate and considerable. Firstly, there is an increased propensity for further expression of violence, i.e., a person who exhibits violence on some level will tend to be less inhibited with regard to further violent expression. Secondly, there is an increased attractive force for violence, i.e., a person who exhibits violence on some level will tend to attract more violent people and more violent circumstances. Thirdly, there is a collective consequence in the sense that violence sends an energy wave through the collective consciousness, stimulating others to violence (i.e., those who resonate with the coarse energy). And fourthly, there are larger-scale and longer-term phenomena in the form of earth changes, i.e., sustained violence (coarseness) on some collective (racial) (ethnic) (cultural) (local) (regional) (religious) (national) (karmic) level tends to attract or evoke violent natural outbursts, e.g., volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, etc.

Thus while violence breeds violence, the consequences of violence are progressively more severe and if unchecked eventually result in widespread destruction. The entire range of phenomena is necessarily a matter of karma and the consequences a result of the inexorable nature of karmic law (and the need for balance). But violence is so counter-evolutionary that the consequences tend to be more dramatic, more intense. And while many seem to be the not-apparently-involved victims of violence, there is nonetheless a factor of collective consciousness as well as individual (related) and collective karma. And while one should never consider a victim as "having deserved" the



consequences, there are necessarily karmic links between all causes and all effects and consequences.

One's response to violence should always be compassionate. For any lack of compassion, i.e., any judgment or reaction, breeds further confounding of the causal chain (i.e., one can become (destructively) involved in the chain of violence by virtue of not being compassionate). Susceptibility to violence, either as a active participant or victim, is generally the result of living at some coarse level (including being fearful) or having dabbled (badly) (ignorantly) in occult matters on some level (and in some lifetime). Even some of what are considered to be natural emotions, e.g., anger, tend to bring about a propensity for violence.

Violence is inherently occult (super-physical and necessarily head-centered). Even physical violence has its roots on metaphysical levels, in the ethics of thinking and feeling. Thinking ill of someone is a sending forth of "violent" energy that must necessarily run its course, bringing consequences to both the recipient-target and the sender. Likewise having bad feelings for someone. These things (thinking and feeling badly) are intensified where the mind or emotions are highly focused, and the effects and consequences therefore and thereby are more considerable.

With occult training it is (potentially) even worse, for with occult training there is an intensification of the focus of thinking and feeling. One simply knows how to evoke energies and forces, even without deliberate intent. Thus a spiritual student, who has received various occult trainings, must be especially self-vigilant, must be especially gentle in all relationships with other lives, in order to insure that one's potency and talents are not misused. By becoming more heart-centered, by living in harmony and not reacting to other people, the spiritual student can be a potent and encouraging force.

## Adoration

Adoration usually refers to the worship or honoring of God or some divine aspect (person) of God. It is a vital part of the devotional experience. But adoration can also refer to considerable fondness of one human being for another (more properly of two human beings for each other), to the reverent admiration and devotion of one human being with regard to another, both at some higher, spiritual level, and at some lower, more personal level.

Adoration is actually an aspect of love in its higher (more divine) sense. Love is often used in the lower sense (personal, selfish), but love in its higher sense, rooted in love for God and all lives, and in God's love for all lives, transcends the more personal and selfish dimension. Adoring God tends to soften and purify the (relative coarseness of the) personality nature, because it builds and strengthens the bridge in consciousness between lower and higher aspects of the human being, between the (relatively self-centered) personality and the (necessarily God-centered) soul. Adoring God encourages and facilitates the development of the heart (divine) nature. God's love for all creatures is unconditional. In adoration of God there is a fuller participation in that unconditional love.

In some cultures and in some faiths, adoration is properly reserved for one's relationship to God and (the word) cannot (should not) (in some faiths and in some cultures) be applied to human relationships. But there is nonetheless great and wonderful potential in adoration of another human being, whatever words are used to describe the phenomenon. Such adoration is necessarily (properly) reciprocal, based in mutual love and respect and commitment, and (properly) an extension of the love that one feels for God. While God lives (equally) through all lives, meaning that all lives are divine in some higher and deeper sense, it is also quite natural for human beings to meet in partnership (marriage) that naturally reserves a more personal form of love for one's partner (and children).

In some faiths there is encouragement for adoration of one's spiritual teacher, and while this may lead to not inconsiderable stimulation for learning and growing (guided spiritual development), it is also generally (potentially and

eventually) undermining of one's more proper commitment to God and the spiritual path (the teacher plays a role but should never in practice eclipse God nor the spiritual path itself). Thus adoration in human relationship (partnership) (marriage) should properly be part of one's spiritual life and not simply an unspiritualized adoration (which is adoration in its lesser sense). In adoration, one should remain steadfast in one's commitment to God as well as to each other.

Thus in proper (personal) relationship, adoration for one another is also an acknowledgement of God living through each other and through the union of two people. Adoration naturally softens the personality nature and encourages the emergence and cultivation of other heart qualities (e.g., gentleness, kindness). Perhaps more significantly, adoration tends to sustain and encourage the efficacy of the connection (union), despite differences at the personality level, despite (natural, human) imperfections and limitations. Thus allowing and facilitating a fuller expression of love. Relationships that endure as loving partnerships tend to be those where there is mutual adoration. Where the love for each other and commitment to each other is strong enough to weather all manner of challenges. Where two people in partnership are growing together spiritually and psychologically and personally.



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