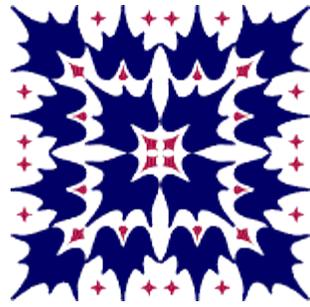


The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 3.4

Philosophy

The Study of Truth and Reality



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Philosophy

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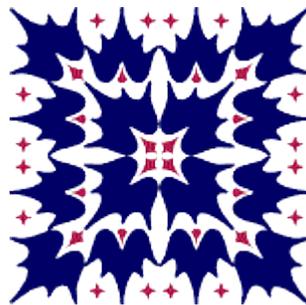
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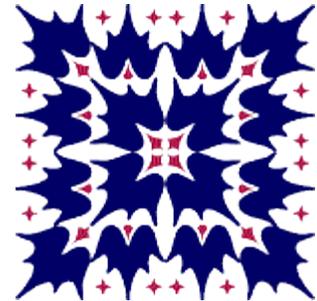
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Chapter 3.4

Philosophy



The Study of Truth and Reality

- Philosophy is a branch of learning which is given to the pursuit of wisdom, the search for truth, and the understanding of knowledge. In the higher sense, philosophy is the art and science of relative perfection, the path of self-realization. Exoteric philosophy relies upon intellect and involves interpretation, evaluation, and utilization of knowledge. Esoteric philosophy relies upon intuition and leads to self-realization.
- All in all, the common thread of truth can be found in virtually every aspect of philosophy and religion, by virtue of the underlying wisdom and through correlations in the context of the fabric of manifestation, thus transcending the limitations of language.

The Nature of Truth

Truth is an indication of reality, via perception, interpretation, and the capacity for understanding. The source of truth (in its unlimited or absolute form) is reality (God) itself, which is found in the realms beyond the illusionary world of personality, beyond the form-worlds of the physical, emotional, and mental planes. As reality existent in the mind of God, truth is untouchable by ordinary consciousness. But truth can be touched in part on various levels short of the constancy of God. Truth perceived on the various levels of consciousness (and through the multifarious perspectives) is truth constrained or limited to that level or perspective. Generally, the higher (deeper) (broader) the degree of perception, the more pure (and greater) is the essence of truth perceived. At the source, truth is a unified and coherent (singular) energy; on human levels, truth is (through dispersion and limitation) fragmented and colored (distorted) by human consciousness.

A particular truth (fragment) can be perceived, interpreted, and understood in a myriad of ways, depending very much upon the quality of mind and the plane or level (and method) of consciousness within which the truth is recognized. The comprehension of truth depends on the spiritual maturity of the student, the degree to which experience has been assimilated and transformed into quality (wisdom). The understanding and interpretation of truth depends also on the type and quality of the soul and personality rays. The highest contact with truth is a direct realization (on soul levels), uncolored by mind or emotion.

But the spiritual student is expected to recognize truth with every experience in life as well as to achieve such recognition on the highest possible plane. Truth can be perceived (by degrees) in response to external observations (sense impressions) though such must be abstracted from the illusion of the lower reality and sense-world. The voice of the silence (the spiritual intuition and the realization (awareness) of the contemplative self) is the internal means of truth perception, through the higher self (soul).

Truth can be found in all things and on all levels and through all perspectives. The aspirant must cultivate the discernment of truth uncolored by reaction to

the personality means. There is no authority for truth. Truth belongs to no one and to no group, but to all. The various personalities and groups are merely instruments and (lower) mechanisms. No truth is exclusive or confined to a single channel. Truth must (properly) be perceived without attachment to the person or organization through which a truth is (superficially) reached.

The truth discerned (and interpreted) by others should be respected. Each person perceives truth in a unique way; such perception varies so much that comparisons and judgments can only be biased (and relative at best). What is truth to one person may mean very little to another. But the student of life can learn from the experience of other persons. The beliefs of others need not be accepted, but those beliefs can be considered and respected. The student should feel no need to impress his or her views upon another, for each must discern truth for himself. Beliefs may be shared, but with the realization that each can only know that truth which is right for himself, and not that which is right for someone else. One should not cling to or be attached to beliefs or opinions; for in spiritual growth, beliefs should become clarified in or replaced by higher truths. An open mind should be encouraged that the student may remain adaptable (but not passive). As the conscious mind is improved, spiritual truths are further recognized and assimilated.

† Commentary No. 76

Philosophy

Philosophy is a branch of learning which is given to the pursuit of wisdom, the search for truth, and the understanding of knowledge. Philosophy is one of four major and interrelated and perspectives (along with art, science, and religion). In the lower sense, philosophy embraces art, science, and religion through its seven divisions: metaphysics, logic, ethics, psychology, epistemology, aesthetics, and theurgy. In the higher sense, philosophy is the art and science of perfection, the path of self-realization.

The philosophy of that which is real includes metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and cosmology. Metaphysics is the domain of the study of relationships between the divine and the human. Metaphysics considers reality through ontology, theology, and cosmology. Ontology is the theory of reality and the

nature of being; theology includes religion; and cosmology includes science in the metaphysical sense, the philosophy of nature. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, and it considers the nature of the existence of knowledge, including its limits and validity. Logic is the science of reasoning, the doctrine of reasonableness, while psychology is the philosophy of mind, the science of consciousness and behavior.

The philosophy of that which is ideal includes ethics and aesthetics. Ethics considers the philosophy and ideal of conduct, the nature of morality and character, and the nature of good. Ethics is that branch of philosophy which embraces practical or personal philosophy. Aesthetics is the idea of art, the philosophy of that which is beautiful and harmonious. The philosophy of the absolute deals with the ultimate synthetic reality, theurgy. In the abstract sense, theurgy considers the nature of absolute reality-ideality and is a synthesis of the products of the other branches of philosophy. In the practical sense, theurgy considers the living wisdom, the true purpose of philosophy.

Philosophy involves interpretation, evaluation, and utilization of knowledge and therefore considers the relevance and value of knowledge. In a sense it is the science of quality, the science of values and the applications of values in the process (art) of transforming knowledge into wisdom, the process of perfecting the human self through enlightened living. In another sense it is a medium or perspective through which the teachings (knowledge and understanding of life) can be transmitted, encompassing the knowledge of God (religion), the knowledge of self (psychology), and the knowledge of nature (science). The esoteric philosophy is the frontier of human (soul) understanding, and requires a high degree of developed buddhi-manas (the intuitional and abstract mind). The esoteric philosophy is the most difficult to express as it is beyond thinking, in the domain of soul-realization. The theosophical philosophy is an interpretation (so far as possible) of the esoteric teachings. The theosophical teachings are that part of the divine wisdom that has become exoteric, a body of knowledge revealed over the centuries to man by his elder brothers, and is the frontier of human (mental) understanding. The metaphysical philosophy is simply the higher philosophy made more practical, through translation, interpretation, reduction, and adaptation into that which can easily be assimilated.

Whether through conventional, metaphysical, theosophical, or esoteric philosophy, the philosopher is one who so loves wisdom that he becomes its servant. The search for truth and its expression is a never-ending quest for deeper wisdom and greater understanding. The science of perfection implies ever living in the reflective (contemplative) (meditative) (intuitive) attitude, ever seeking truth and ever seeking to absorb truth through intelligent application.

† Commentary No. 1115

Philosophical Basis 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

Philosophical Basis 2

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

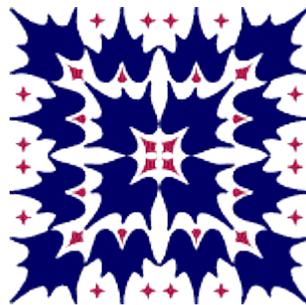
Natural systems are themselves subject to interpretation, though the wise rely on the intuition for insight rather than the intellect for interpretation (which may or may not be consistent with insight). Astrology, for example, is a natural system, albeit subject to great misunderstanding and misinterpretation.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

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

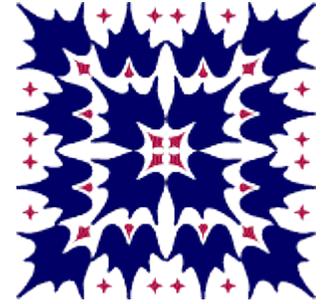
embrace or incorporate whatever teachings “feel” right but consider what feels “right” to be provisionally valid. A distinction needs to be made between what is actually true (unknowably so) and what is presumed to be true. Facts may be observables (at best) but these are also (really) presumptions based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

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

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



Section 3.41



Aspects of Philosophy

- In the lower sense, philosophy embraces art, science, and religion through its seven aspects or divisions: metaphysics, logic, ethics, psychology, epistemology, aesthetics, and theurgy.

Metaphysics 1

Formal (academic) metaphysics is the branch of philosophy which deals with the nature of reality, the nature of being (ontology), the nature of God and the interpretation of religious faith (theology) (the nature of divine and human relationships), and the philosophy of nature. Where physics (in the most general sense) (science) is the study of the visible (apparent) universe, metaphysics (beyond physics) is the study of the invisible universe. Where physics deals with visible forms and effects, metaphysics deals with the underlying principles and (invisible) causes.

In the formal sense, metaphysics includes religion; in the informal (popular) sense, religion includes metaphysics. Metaphysical religion is the frontier of religion, religion that is (in its reasonably pure form) relatively free from the crystallized structure and limitations of the orthodox churches. The popular metaphysical movement is a very broad and loose synthesis of metaphysical philosophy, metaphysical religion, and metaphysical science, embracing many degrees and levels of maturity and perspective. Where the individual approach is not self-centered (and is on mental levels), there is metaphysics in its higher (spiritual) form.

Formal metaphysics is somewhat impractical (being abstract and abstruse), though it is the foundation and the frontier of academic (orthodox) philosophy and does provide considerable insight into reality. Informal metaphysics tends toward the practical application of philosophy in daily living. In this sense, it is a translation, interpretation, and reduction of the higher philosophy into a form that can be readily and easily understood and assimilated. Popular metaphysics is the bridge or link between philosophy, religion, and science. The intention or goal of metaphysics is for man to understand the universe and the place of humanity therein, to give mankind some (enlightened) purpose or motivation for living (and growing), to free mankind from the bondage of materialism (and glamour), and to provide a bridge between the orthodox world of appearances and the esoteric (superphysical) world of realities.

The higher metaphysics (beyond the popular or informal metaphysics) consists of two branches. The first is theosophy (and its link with the esoteric philosophy) and the second is classical (academic) philosophy. The two paths naturally overlap somewhat, as many of the great philosophers lived consciously in both worlds (the esoteric and the exoteric). It is within these two paths of higher philosophy that is found the key or clue to the mysteries of life. That key is simply the difference between (and the relationships of) life (reality), quality (consciousness), and appearance. In this respect, metaphysics considers the supersensible world, beyond that which is apparent to the senses. To most people, sense impressions (appearances) determine reality, but to the metaphysical student there is (or should be) a great deal of "reality" beyond appearance. Thus metaphysics attempts to answer the question of what is reality.

The "reality" of the observable (material) world is fairly well-known by orthodox science. But the world of causes is known only to the few, who through the evolution of consciousness and the cultivation of wisdom have attained first-hand self-knowledge of that greater reality. There are many who have received distorted impressions (and conclusions) (based on a lack of understanding) concerning metaphysical realms, but so few who truly understand. Perception without proper training (preparation) and understanding is of little value. The wise remain relatively silent.

† Commentary No. 92

Logic

Logic is one of the more practical departments of philosophy and deals with the principles of reasoning and the validity of inference. Logic can be a means to greater understanding, and as such is dependent upon knowledge, intelligence, and reasoning ability. Success (understanding) (correct or valid conclusions) depends very much on the logical method, the consciousness applied, and the validity of assumptions upon which inference is based.

There are three basic logical methods. Inductive reasoning is the reasoning of ascension, from a part to a whole, from particulars to generals, from the

individual to the universal, from the lesser to the greater. Deductive reasoning is the reasoning of descension, from the greater to the lesser, from the universal to the particular. Analogical reasoning is the reasoning of correspondence and analogy. Analogical reasoning includes symbolic reasoning and the proper study of relationships. Each of the three methods can be valuable, especially where combined into a broader perspective. Of the three, the study by analogy and correspondence is the more powerful philosophical method. The deeper study of the esoteric philosophy, for example, can only yield understanding where there is an appreciation (recognition) of relationships through correspondence.

But each application of the (singular or multiple) logical method depends on consciousness. The realm of logical thinking is mainly the exclusive domain of the intellect (concrete mind). But the testimony of science often indicates intuitive realization and understanding (followed by intellectual correlation). And religion speaks of the mystical experience of direct realization beyond the intellect. Beyond the intellect (the mind of the personality) is the spiritual intuition (the realization of the soul as projected through the abstract mind). If logical reasoning is to be truly a path or means of understanding, the intellect must be uplifted into (and subservient to) the intuition (soul). Purely rational (intellectual) reasoning is limited by the capacity and experience of the mortal mind. The intuitive "reasoning" of the contemplative is only limited by the ability of the intellect to properly interpret the realization. Rationalization is quite inferior to direct realization.

Two further elements of logic are essential to success (understanding). The first is the reservoir of experience (knowledge) held by the mind and the validity (correctness) of the assumptions which initiate the reasoning process or upon which conclusions are expected to follow. That which is logical is not necessarily true, for conclusions may be only as good as the validity of each assumption at each stage in the process. If any of the assumptions are false, then the conclusion may be inconsistent with that which is true. Another essential element to success is the ability (through training and experience) to interpret realistically the conclusions or realizations obtained. Here the facility of language (the correlation between thought and words) is quite significant. If the logical (and intuitive) studies are to be meaningful, the understanding must be brought down to some practical (addressable) level.

Logical thinking can be practical and reasonable provided that all of the elements are both valid and consistent. Effective logic (intellectual and intuitive) requires the continuity (consistency) of ideas. Where the correct (reasonable) relationships do not exist, the conclusions reached will not (generally) be consistent or valid. The science of inference and implication can be a serious and consistent means with which to attain the greater understanding that complements the studies of the philosophical student.

† Commentary No. 97

Ethics

Ethics is the philosophy and ideal of conduct, which considers the nature of morality and character, and the nature of good. Ethics is the practical (personal) branch of philosophy, for it considers individual human rights and the values of human motives, thoughts, feelings, and actions. A standard of ethical conduct and morality can be relatively artificial, personal, or natural (universal). An individual standard of ethics should take into consideration the moral (legal and cultural) standards of society, the inherent (personal) standards realized or evolved, and the understanding of universal (spiritual) law which determines the ideal of conduct.

The spiritual student is encouraged to live in ethical harmony with the external (orthodox) world and the internal (personal) (spiritual) world, to express wisdom in human relationships, and to achieve consistency in the inner life. Though many ethical and moral guidelines are available, the ultimate responsibility rests with the individual to realize and achieve a personal standard. Each must determine for himself a practical ethical code, keeping in mind the consequences of behavior. The only real (general) guideline is that the consequences or results (effects) of conduct should be constructive (positive). Through observation, evaluation, and experience the student should become increasingly aware of the value of right human relations.

Human relations and the science of morality bring about the question of what is right and wrong, and what is the nature (and extent) of individual rights

(freedom). Individual freedom can only really be considered in relation to the rights of others. If the student truly respects the rights of others, then the student must determine where the individual freedom ends and the freedom of others begins. Individual freedom cannot remain unlimited if the human lifewave is to progress and evolve. What appears best for the individual must ultimately (spiritually) be subordinated to what is best for the group (universal). Self-centeredness (selfishness) must inevitably give way to selflessness, as the individual identifies with the God within (every form of life). Individual purposes are usually scattered (incoherent) with respect to the greater life, but such purposes provide experience. As the individual aligns himself more so with (coherent) group purpose, that experience is contributed to the group progress (humanity in its relationship to the greater life).

The natural, personal standard is both inherent (latent or potential) and acquired (developed through experience). Ethical and moral behavior is usually a consequence of intelligence (based on realization) leading to virtue. The science of ethics seeks to understand morality and to put that understanding into practice. Self-realization naturally yields an inner urge to that which is right according to spiritual law. The ethical (spiritual) student seeks to honestly observe and evaluate his behavior (and motives) and the effects of his thoughts, feelings, and actions. The student should recognize the ideal (code of conduct) and determine his practical relationship to that ideal.

The student may observe the behavior of others (and the effects) (with the intention of understanding), but without judgment, remembering that each can only determine what is right for himself. But the student can learn from the experience of others and seek to apply that learning in the individual life. The student can increasingly understand the virtues (as principles) and how they can be applied to ethical conduct (adherence to spiritual law). As the life of the student becomes the life of wisdom (in human relationships), so shall the practical (ethical) philosophy be assimilated and naturally manifested.

Psychology 1

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

Modern psychology is primarily the psychology of the mind and the personality, treating the personality as being more or less self-contained and with some external influence or factors. As such, psychology is somewhat limited in its scope of effectiveness to persons who are living strictly on a personality level (as most do). Treating the personality as the center of consciousness, however, neglects the karmic factor and a world of internal causes (the soul) which is increasingly significant as consciousness evolves. When the relationship between the soul and the personality is properly recognized, then the science of psychology shall be much more useful.

A major key to the higher (esoteric) psychology is the nature of the seven rays and the relationship of the seven rays to the soul and to the personality. The basic premise of esoteric psychology (as applied to human nature) is that each element of the human being is qualified by one or another of the seven fundamental rays (qualities or energies). The soul ray qualifies the higher nature (atma-buddhi-manas) and the personality ray (provided the personality is relatively integrated) qualifies the lower nature (the mind, the emotions, and the physical body). As the individual evolves, the soul ray (the primary) comes to dominate (uplift) the personality ray (the secondary). Thus the character of the soul ray is manifested through the character of the personality ray.

Another key to metaphysical psychology is the degree of activity of and the relationships between the various psychic centers. There are seven major

centers (chakras) within the human form; these centers may be active or inactive (or partially active), individually or collectively. The active centers may be under control or out of control (or somewhere in between), voluntarily or involuntarily. Each center contributes to the psychology of the individual. Improper psychic stimulation is the (intermediate) cause of many psychological (personality) disorders. With higher consciousness (based on experience and spiritual maturity) comes the understanding and control of the various centers (and oneself), so that (personality) resistance to the emerging energies of the soul is overcome and the nature of the soul is effectively manifested.

This mystical or metaphysical psychology is the science of consciousness, which considers all of these relationships and the effects of consciousness (or the lack thereof) on behavior. The conscious mind or waking-consciousness has a wide range of relative states of consciousness. The undeveloped, unevolved, or undisciplined mind often works on an instinctual, subconscious, or self-centered level. The highly evolved (developed and disciplined) mind often works on an intuitive or super-conscious level. If the waking-consciousness can function in rapport with the soul, the infusion of energy (quality) can provide a very different (higher) domain for psychology to consider. It is the quality of consciousness that determines the degree of interaction between mind and soul (or inversely), as the greater consciousness is manifested.



Commentary No. 107

Epistemology

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy which considers the nature and grounds of knowledge, especially with respect to the limits and validity of knowledge. The domain of epistemology includes the triplicity of the knower, the field of knowledge, and knowledge itself. The various types of knowledge and the means through which knowledge is acquired are also considered, as well as the relativity of knowledge.

Knowledge might be divided into two broad categories according to quality and means. Primary knowledge is relatively universal (sacred) and based upon an understanding of spiritual causes. Secondary knowledge is relatively particular

(profane) and is lacking the spiritual factor. Primary knowledge is knowledge (realization) gained through the spiritual intuition which relies upon the activity (consciousness) of the soul. Secondary knowledge is gained through the intellect and based upon the activity of the concrete (rational) mind. Primary knowledge is qualified by the second ray (love-wisdom), while secondary knowledge is qualified by the fifth ray (science and the concrete mind).

There are subtle differences between knowledge, truth, and wisdom, though the three are certainly interrelated (and sometimes interchangeable). Knowledge implies information and the domain of the mind. Truth implies a degree of consciousness (quality) and realization. Wisdom is a combination of experience and consciousness, leading to a state or capacity for manifestation. Knowledge is of preliminary concern to the spiritual student, for the goal which is wisdom requires a foundation of knowledge. And it is through the spiritual path that knowledge is transformed by experience into wisdom. The seeking of knowledge is a prelude to the path of consciousness. Such seeking is the lower aspect of the urge to wisdom, the urge to perfection in consciousness; but the seeking must ultimately end, as being is attained.

One of the classical questions about knowledge and consciousness concerns the existence of absolute and relative knowledge. Absolute or ultimate knowledge is perfect, pure, and unquestionable. But as such, absolute knowledge is beyond the human intellect, for human consciousness (the instrument) is rather less than perfect. One of the esoteric keys to life is the relativity of truth and knowledge. Through the extension (projection and upliftment) of human (soul) consciousness, there can be reached threads or glimpses of greater knowledge, but even that level is not absolute knowledge. True realization is of greater dimension than the human mind, and that concrete mind would still be a limiting factor. The existence of a cosmic mind (principle) does not really imply the existence of absolute truth. Is absolute truth absolute? Can that which is finite reach that which is infinite or transfinite?

Another similar concern is the nature of faith and knowledge, and the possibility of proof (certainty). The ultimate question in this regard is what can possibly be proven one to another. And in the eternal domain, is not faith as meaningful as scientific (objective) knowledge (knowledge that is based upon the illusions of material existence)? The wise seek not the demonstration of

validity (though concrete knowledge is of considerable value), for it is only the internal knowledge and understanding that can attain certainty. All of the assumptions upon which knowledge is based are relative, and the very illusions upon which objective experience is founded make absolute certainty an impossibility. Certainty can only be relative (which implies paradox). Truth can be accepted and knowledge can be tendered, but truth cannot be proven, one to another; truth can only be experienced and realized subjectively.

† Commentary No. 112

Aesthetics

Aesthetics is that branch of philosophy which considers beauty, the nature of that which is beautiful, the ideal of art. Each human being is endowed with some sort of aesthetic sense, depending on experience, consciousness, and temperament. That sense may be entirely human, being based within a wide range of human (personality) values; or it may approach the divine, being based upon more spiritual or universal values, where the aesthetic sense of the soul is manifested through the lower self.

The aesthetic sense may be weak or strong, pure and noble, or relatively crude. A weak aesthetic sense indicates indifference to that which is beautiful or harmonious; a strong aesthetic sense may indicate exaggerated values and the various problems of luxury. The basis of a strong aesthetic sense is the inner urge to perfection, and it is that inner urge that (if misplaced) can manifest through the unaligned personality as an urge to wealth and luxury (through glamour) (which implies superficial or temporal values). The drive toward increasing quality (consciousness) should be properly balanced with practical and humanitarian values. The true, pure aesthetic sense (moderation) is more concerned with beauty, nature, perfection, and harmony, without attendant glamour. Where mostly spiritual values are present in the waking consciousness, the aesthetic urge is turned toward God, virtue, and wisdom.

A pure aesthetic sense normally invokes cleanliness and neatness, both internally, in form (appearance) as well as in consciousness. The physical, emotional, and mental surroundings and atmosphere of the individual (and

group culture) are quite pertinent. Where there are beautiful and harmonious surroundings, that quality is induced within the human consciousness, in accordance with responsiveness and appreciation (openness to positive quality). Where the surroundings are not really attractive, then the student must turn inward for encouragement. The higher aesthetic sense is one in which God is perceived in all forms and in all lives, regardless of appearance. In such beauty is the basis of faith.

The realm of aesthetics encompasses idealism, with respect to human relationships and with respect to the artistic expression. Ideal human relationships are those which are constructive, cooperative, and harmonious. In a sense, the purpose of human life on earth is the cultivation of right human relations. The role of artistic expression is definitely related to human experience and development, and to the link between that which is human and that which is divine. Ideally, the various arts should contribute quality (spiritual inspiration) to the human experience, leading humanity from the imperfections and disorders of the lower life toward the perfection (perfect order and harmony) of the greater life and consciousness.

The quality of the greater life is evident within the natural beauty of manifestation, in the proportions of nature, and in the symmetry, rhythm, and balance of the universe on every level. The urge to perfection in the higher life is reflected in the creative and artistic impulse within human consciousness. The apparent inconsistencies of the lower life can lead to the frustration of imperfection; but where the beauty of life is realized with appreciation, the perspective is healed and inspiration is received. The appreciation of natural beauty (freedom from glamour) is essential to the refinement and upliftment of human nature. In harmony there is health and progress; in the alignment of the lower self (personality) with that which is truly beautiful (the God within all) comes encouragement onward and upward.

Theurgy

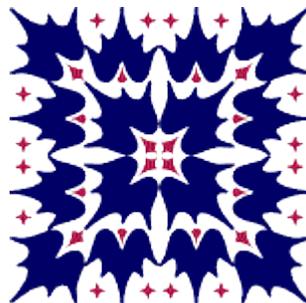
In the popular sense, theurgy is the art or science of bringing into activity some beneficent or supernatural power. In the spiritual or philosophical sense, theurgy is the department of philosophy (and life) which is concerned with the manifestation of divine magic, the wisdom from within. It is the living of wisdom that is the practical goal of life on Earth. As philosophy, this theurgy is the synthesis and culmination of all philosophical domains. As knowledge and understanding are transformed and synthesized into wisdom, then the life on Earth becomes illuminated in its completion.

In the living of wisdom is the end of the search for truth. As the life of wisdom is attained, the quest for fulfillment is completed. It is not that the theurgist is no longer concerned with truth; nor is it that the theurgist has accomplished all knowledge and truth. But it is that in the living of wisdom is found the source of truth, hidden within. And in the living of wisdom comes the application and manifestation of the eternal fountain of wisdom. The completed student no longer seeks, for he has learned where to find the relevant answers. The quest is over. Those who seek truth in the external world may find knowledge, understanding, guidance, and even encouragement; but those who finally look within find wisdom, as all earlier knowledge and experience is transformed, assimilated, and synthesized by the light from within.

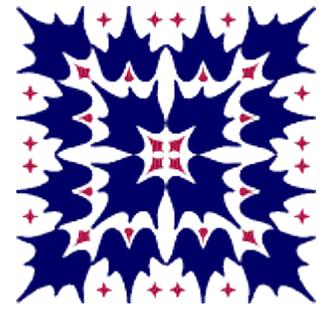
The way to the magical kingdom (wisdom) is the spiritual path in its many aspects and variations. Much preparation is required before the outer form (and mind) can respond to the inner life (the soul). On the path especially, knowledge and understanding require responsibility for the proper application of accumulated experience. The spiritual student must live up to the truth as it is understood; otherwise the conflict between what is done and what ought to be done will undermine the spiritual efforts. It is even more important for the student who has consciously tapped the inner source of revelation to live in harmony with its dictates. It is not easy for the spiritual student to allow that inner flow of energy to freely manifest, for it requires discernment. And spiritual inertia must be overcome before spiritual momentum can be built up.

There is a simple metaphysical injunction which sums up the idea of spiritual inertia and momentum: to let go and let God. On the approaches to the path, and even during the probationary work, the spiritual student learns humility and the reliance upon the inner self (the God within). On the latter reaches of the path this concept is refined as the student learns to consciously and intelligently cooperate with the inner fountain. The key is allowance, for so much of the ordinary consciousness and way of life disallows the conscious presence of God in every thought, every feeling, and every action. In the more absolute sense, God is present in all matters, but seldom is the waking-consciousness living in conscious harmony with the will and purpose of life.

The living of wisdom (when achieved) is the most beautiful expression of the human being in incarnation. The living of wisdom implies peace, balance, harmony, completion, illumination, and irradiation. It is a constant sharing of spiritual energies. The practical energies of light (enlightenment) and love (wisdom) are manifested without hindrance. There is an inner rapport with all lives, human and otherwise, for the place of the individual within the grand flow of the greater life is realized. There is a magnetic encouragement given to all; and there is a life of service to God and to humanity unhindered by the personal self. In the living of wisdom comes perfection, and in perfection comes the deepest communion with being and life itself.



Section 3.42



Classical Philosophy

- Classical philosophy is defined as conventional, exoteric, historical philosophy, without recourse (necessarily) to the esoteric. But much of what is considered to be classical in philosophy deals with metaphysical subjects or with less metaphysical subjects but with a metaphysical insight that increases the value. There are also many ideas in classical philosophy that can be more meaningfully considered in more metaphysical terms.

Angst

Angst refers to the relative anxiety “occasioned by man’s realization that his existence is open towards an undetermined future, the emptiness of which must be filled by his freely chosen actions.” In this sense, “anxiety characterizes the human state, which entails constant confrontation with possibility and the need for decision, with the concomitant burden of responsibility.” While these concepts are more popular in the existential point of view, they remain valid (in the esoteric philosophy) without regard to other existential concepts (which may or may not be consistent with the esoteric wisdom (higher truth)). Esoterically and exoterically, man (humanity) enjoys a measure of free will, bounded to some extent by personal, racial, and planetary karma. While some aspects of the unfolding life are somewhat predetermined (by a person’s previous activities and consequences), much of each life is relatively unbounded and subject to the personal (and higher) energy of the individual, through desire, intention, will, etc.

If a person assumes (consistently or otherwise) that all things are predetermined and individual initiative (effort) (decision-making) is futile, then such a person will flow through (incarnated) life without much benefit of the rich diversity of experience afforded and will consequently learn and grow only minimally. On the other hand (extreme), if a person assumes (similarly consciously or unconsciously) that life is entirely self-determined in real time (i.e., through absolute individual free will), then while such a person will probably experience (potentially) a great deal, such a person will thereby necessarily be relatively blind to the lessons afforded by the higher self (and by intelligent cooperation with natural forces).

The proper balance is a realization that the general parameters of an incarnation are relatively predetermined but that (relatively) a great deal of freedom is afforded for self-determination. The specific future is relatively undetermined, and a person can choose his future by default (inaction), by active self-will, or by intelligent consideration. Intelligent consideration is the way of the (evolving) spiritual student and affords maximal progress (contributory service) in life and upon the path. The individual (particularly the spiritual student) should

consciously accept responsibility for all current and future consequences, while actively and intelligently considering his or her response to the opportunities revealed. While decisions are needed in order to actively embrace experience afforded, the process of decision-making need not be traumatic or even rational.

With intelligent (reasonable) (open-minded) consideration of alternatives, the preferred (most suitable (appropriate)) path or choice is generally reasonably easily recognized, intuitively (preferably) or rationally (if need be). But in the final analysis any particular decision is not particularly important, because karmically an individual will always be afforded appropriate paths and opportunities (and what is merited is never lost) (one is still (nonetheless) responsible) (and the degree to which responsibility is accepted (not over-accepted) is the degree to which maturity will be achieved).

While the realization of personal responsibility and an undetermined future is relatively important, there is no need for anxiety (angst) or undue stress. One can learn to continually and comfortably confront one's (open-ended) life and the opportunities thus afforded. The future is not an emptiness but a substance to be molded and realized. Every action (and every lack of action) is consequential, and subject to the overriding (underlying) wisdom of karma.

† Commentary No. 557

Ankrates ke' Enkrates

Akrates ke' enkrates refers respectively to the morally weak man (akrates) and the man who can resist temptation (enkrates). The path from moral weakness to moral strength is the path of increasing quality and strength of character, which is also the path of conscience or wisdom. A number of stages of moral development portray the evolution of human consciousness from the perspective of moral strength.

At one extreme, the relatively coarse human being is morally weak and lacking strength of conscience. There is at this first stage no conscious or unconscious realization of prudence or propriety, and the person is generally absorbed in self-interest and desire fulfillment. Such a person is generally amoral, having no

moral awareness or moral values. Without moral sensibility, such a person cannot properly be considered immoral except in the sense of the cultural context. Morality then has two dimensions, the inner dimension of extent of realization (conscience) and the outer dimension of the extent and manner in which society interprets the collective conscience.

In the second stage of moral development, the individual is still generally relatively morally weak, but because of inevitable experience (and the gradual assimilation of experience) there is a growing presence of conscience (but not normally a conscious realization of conscience) that qualifies the experience and expression. However, at this second stage there is generally a weakness of the will (akrasia) such that behavior per se is not much improved over the first stage. It takes time for the conscience to be developed (from experience and assimilation) and it takes time for the will to be developed, but conscience and the will are not necessarily developed simultaneously or one necessarily before the other, so one can be morally weak due to a lack of conscience or one can be morally weak due to a weakness of will. In order to be morally stronger, one must have both some conscience and some strength of will.

In the third stage of moral development, the individual is morally stronger because the conscience is stronger and because of a stronger will. In the second and third stages, the extent of conscience is manifested more or less along emotional and mental lines, being more or less rational (rationalized in response to some more subtle conscientious urging or some more obvious cultural or societal (collective) pressures). During the second and third stages, the collective conscience plays an increasing role in the realization of the individual and that individual's relationship to the collective consciousness. Of course the collective conscience may be substantially more or less developed than that of a particular individual, resulting in further tension.

For those who are upon the spiritual path (which generally includes those whose moral strength significantly exceeds that of the general population), the third stage of more rational conscience becomes the fourth stage of more intuitive conscience, more refined awareness of prudence and propriety, and a more morally secure momentum and strength of (qualified) character. The spiritual student does not (should not) impose his moral conscience upon others, but rather should allow his realization (intuition) to guide and qualify his

relationships with others without being judgmental or imposing (inductive encouragement being far more prudent). With quality of consciousness (conscience) and strength of character, the spiritual student should relatively easily resist the sensual and personal temptations of mundane and personal existence, concentrating instead on the more useful (constructive) endeavors of the path.

† Commentary No. 527

Janus

Janus was an ancient Roman god (aspect of deity) presiding over gates and doorways, (in recognition of) beginnings and endings, commonly represented with two opposite faces. The significance of Janus lies in the symbolic value of gates and doorways (portals) (as reminders), each passage signifying the beginning or end of some cycle, and in the universal cyclic nature of creative manifestation.

All of manifestation is a manifold of cycles within cycles, levels within levels, and lives with lives, such that on every (apparent) level and for every (apparent) life, every moment (day) (year) (epoch) is the end of some cycle and the beginning of some new cycle. Each new beginning (however major or minor) may be consciously realized (qualified consciously by some intention) or otherwise, naturally motivated by (responsive to) some correlative force or self-motivated by some apparent need or intention. In every ending there is (implied) a new beginning, and at every such ending (beginning) there a release of power (potential) and it is that release of power (the existence of potential) that is symbolized by Janus (as an aspect of divine potency). Since that potential lies as well within every human being, then Janus represents the ability (potential) of each human being for initiative.

Without conscious or deliberate qualification, every new beginning is qualified only by correlative forces. But with conscious and deliberate qualification, that potency is magnified within the human being and collectively to the extent of the participating and responsive involvement. Every beginning (initiative) should be consciously qualified by the student's realization and earnestness, that the cycle shall be more effective by virtue of the individual's (group's)

responsiveness. Similarly, every ending should be consciously qualified by willingness to face the consequences of the forces released during that (ending) cycle and responsiveness to the lessons implied by the experience of that cycle (since each cycle is invariably linked in some way to succeeding cycles).

Of perhaps greater significance than the inherent human ability (potential) to qualify each cycle is the inherent human ability (potential) to initiate new cycles of experience. Every moment can be a new beginning. No matter how discouraged one might be with current circumstances or current performance (response to experience), one can always call upon the inner (divine) resources and evoke a new cycle, consciously qualified by renewed intention (determination) (energy), not ignoring the lessons and consequences of earlier experience but evoking an individual or group renewal (revitalization) unencumbered by previous (apparent) failures. With such potential, one need never feel discouraged.

The symbolic value of portals (gates) can be utilized in ritual qualification (and trigger (by habit (intention)) a reminder of that ritual qualification), as each passage through selected (qualified) portals can be programmed to evoke (qualified) energy for some purpose (e.g., renewal of openness to the lessons of new experience or the renewal of service opportunities in facing new experience). Every (proper) occult school or sanctuary has one or more qualified portals. The two (or more) faces of Janus signify that the energy flows both (or more) ways, that no portal is merely one-sided (even if one passes through in one direction only, the two sides are nonetheless related), and that each (person) is related to the past and to the future.

Ockham's Razor

Ockham's razor is the principle of ontological economy (law of parsimony), normally stated as "entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity." As a scientific and philosophic rule, Ockham's razor requires that the simplest of (non-compelling) competing (candidate) theories or explanations be preferred to some more complex explanation. The principle was popularized by William of Ockham, but has been used (and misused) by many through the ages.

The basic idea of frugality (wisdom) in nature is quite sound, since the basic structure of cosmic manifestation at all levels is quite simple. Simple as well are the relatively few basic laws of nature which govern that manifestation (providing purpose (evolutionary encouragement), (dynamic) equilibrium (balance), and closure (assimilation)). Natural (inherent) relationships are also quite simple in structure. Viewed archetypically, all of the diversity and multiplicity of manifestation can be reduced to a few basic ideas. Of course realization of that simplicity (relatedness) comes only after a lengthy struggle through ignorance (evil) and materialistic absorption.

The problem lies in the very limited nature of ordinary human consciousness. In order to fully appreciate (realize) the beauty (simplicity) (purpose) of life (consciousness) (manifestation), one must acquire (reveal) a considerable breadth of vision (only inclusively can the universe be properly embraced) and a considerable depth of intuitive understanding (likewise only with the participation of the inner self (the soul) can the spark of realization be tendered). Emotional and rational approaches to (greater) understanding are hopelessly inadequate, although where rational approaches are relatively unbiased and tempered by some intuitional insight some progress can be made. The problem is (simply) that the ordinary faculties are of a nature linear and therefore not of a matrix (correlative) nature and so only pieces of the puzzle are normally perceived. Where the proper breadth and depth (quality) of perspective and consciousness are lacking, simple things can appear quite (needlessly) (necessarily) complex and most any attempt at simplification is premature and therefore misleading (and may usually actually discourage or impede further correlation and understanding).

Consequently many rationalists argue natural frugality without perceiving the simple patterns of nature, depending on the paucity of compelling evidence to generate explanations that extend only as far as the empirical evidence. But empirical evidence is the least meaningful as far as metaphysical (theosophical) (esoteric) necessity is concerned, because empirical evidence is so limited (partial) (and therefore misleading without intuitional correlation). Therefore conventional (emotional and rational) attempts to explain natural phenomena are often futile (whereas intuitional approaches are much more compelling but only for those who so embrace the energy of the object (subject)). Some successes have been (can be) achieved nonetheless.

On a practical level, a simple explanation is preferred over a complex one provided that such is both sufficient (to explain the occurrence) and not merely rational (e.g., defensive avoidance). The great multiplicities and diversities of nature are easily and simply embraced by the principle of epigenesis and the reality of the group soul. Viewed inclusively, the apparent complexity and diversity of the esoteric philosophy can be reduced to a few basic ideas (nonetheless redundantly applied to a variety of perspectives). Although Ockham's razor can be misused by material rationalists (and the orthodox consensus), it can also serve to inspire respect for teleological necessity.

† Commentary No. 162

Plotinus and the Enneads

Plotinus was an Egyptian-born Roman philosopher who lived in the third century A.D. He was a student of Ammonius Saccas in Alexandria, Egypt and was exposed to the esoteric (theosophical) tradition which underlies all enlightened philosophy and religion. Plotinus is generally regarded as the founder of Neo-platonism, a philosophy which synthesized the metaphysical and spiritual teachings of the Peripatetic, Platonic, Pythagorean, and Stoic systems. Plotinus was probably influenced the most by Plato, but above all, the (underlying) esoteric tradition was the basis of his life and work.

Another student of Ammonius Saccas was Origen, the Christian theologian and foremost member of the catechetical school at Alexandria. Origen applied the esoteric teachings within the framework of orthodox (third century) Christianity, while Plotinus applied the teachings within a parallel (complementary) philosophical (rather than religious) framework. There was no real (inner) conflict between the two expressions, just as today, where many true Christians work within the framework of the orthodox church, and many others (true Christians) work without that orthodox framework. Both Origen and Plotinus developed the ideas of divine triplicities: Origen refers frequently to the Trinity; Plotinus refers often to the One and the Triad of divinity.

The philosophical mysticism of Plotinus has had a considerable influence on (orthodox) Christianity, since it has, as its basis, the esoteric Christian tradition. That esoteric Christian religion actually predates the popular (historical) Christian religion. The philosophy of Plotinus concentrates on the soul and its relationship to God and its relationship to the personality. For Plotinus, salvation was not something to be sought; it was something to be realized. He taught the reality of Christ (the soul) and the meditation through which the spiritual student can become aware of that (real) (inner) spiritual self (but he did not use the Christian terminology). Plotinus was not a sentimentalist, nor was he given to personalities or phenomena. As an esotericist, he maintained a rather strict control over the circulation of the teachings, being careful not to reveal any teachings prematurely (to unprepared or unqualified students).

The written papers of Plotinus are in the form of commentaries or discourses on the philosophy. The existence of a (the) metaphysical (theosophical) (esoteric) system of knowledge (philosophy) is assumed in each of the various commentaries. Each separate discourse or commentary is a development or clarification of a significant point or question. The papers were not written as consecutive or sequential chapters of a larger work; however, the commentaries of Plotinus were collected, titled, and organized by one of his students into a systematic work entitled the *Enneads*.

There are fifty-four commentaries in all, and they are organized as six *enneads* of nine tractates each. The First *Ennead* considers living being and the nature of man. The Second *Ennead* considers the heavens and the two kinds of matter.

The Third Ennead considers the cosmos. The Fourth Ennead considers the soul. The Fifth Ennead considers the nous and first being. And the Sixth Ennead considers the existent and the good or the One (including human and divine freedom). In reading the Enneads, care must be taken with regard to terminology, as many of the words translated from the Greek have somewhat different meanings than contemporary usage. The terminology can be reconciled in its consistency with the esoteric tradition (that depends on various keys) (without which much of the meaning would remain inaccessible).

† Commentary No. 139

Stoic Philosophy

The stoic school of philosophy was founded by Zeno of Citium in 300 B.C. The foundation of stoic philosophy is based in the subordination of the individual to the logos (law) (God) (nature). The Stoics held that the wise should be free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief, and submissive to natural law. Or in other words, the orderly nature of the macrocosm (universe) should be reflected in the self-disciplined lives of the wise. From idealistic and almost unattainable standards of conduct, Stoic philosophy developed over a period of 500 years into the practical philosophy of Marcus Aurelius. Though somewhat materialistic and deterministic, Stoic philosophy is not without its contributions to (derivations from) (and accord with) the esoteric teachings.

Stoic materialism is founded in the identification of monistic deity (God) with the entire (material) universe. That God is said to be the consciousness (creative fire) (reason) of the world, and relatively providential. Stoic determinism includes natural predisposition (tendencies), eternal change, relative free will, and eternal recurrence (a cyclical universe of manifestation). All of the parts and events of the universe are said to be mutually related. The individual human being (soul) is said to have within itself the spark of creative fire (divinity), and therefore a direct relationship with God. The Stoic universe is definitely ordered; thus the logic and physics (theology) of the Stoic is based upon that natural order.

But the real strength of Stoic philosophy is in ethics. Derived from the orderly (rational) nature of the universe, Stoic ethics tend toward inward tranquility and social duty. Stoic values are dependent on conformity with natural law, and Stoic ethics are therefore (ideally) self-sufficient (motivated without hope of reward or fear of punishment). The wise man is one who consciously follows (chooses) the path of (group) destiny (intention), by living voluntarily according to the laws of nature. The instinct of self-preservation is eventually transformed into self-perfection (self-mastery) under reason (the law of nature within man). Virtue is said to be the means of achieving that ultimate peacefulness (conformity of the human will with divine will).

The four cardinal virtues (of Stoic philosophy) are intelligence (moral insight), bravery (courage), justice, and self-control (temperance) (self-mastery). Each of these are said to be interdependent, requiring the others for consistency. As the Stoic system developed, a path was envisioned to allow practical (ordinary) humanity increasing degrees of wisdom. The discipleship of the Stoics implies the simplicity of gradual moral progress. Wisdom includes the inner freedom to choose (and attain) the higher values. The wise man of the Stoics is to be free from passion (pleasure, depression, desire, and fear) and (ideally) indifferent to pain (unruffled by circumstances). It is perhaps the standard of indifference to pleasure or pain that is the greatest contribution of Stoic philosophy.

The Stoics concerned themselves more with the merit (or demerit) of intention and motive rather than the action itself. With rational self-control (tranquility) there should be no resentment for received injury or injustice; and in discernment there should be wisdom based upon humility and honesty. Though rather head-centered, the Stoics set a standard for the resolution of the conflict between human reason (the mind) and animal passion (the body). The allegiance of the individual should be to the universal (God) and to humanity, rather than to the nation-state. The Stoics also developed a sense of social duty (behavioral appropriateness) that went beyond the cultural standards.

The Tropes of Agrippa

Agrippa was a Greek Skeptic who is credited with five tropes or ways of achieving doubt. Agrippa's tropes cast doubt upon the senses (sense perception) and upon understanding (reasoning), upon phenomenal and trans-phenomenal claims. Consequently, the tropes of Agrippa lead naturally to a relativistic philosophy in which sense perceptions are inconclusive and in which reasoning is similarly inconclusive. Or in other words, by refusing to accept as fact that which is necessarily unprovable and inconclusive, the skeptic (relativist) tends to avoid self-deception.

The first trope is that of conflict or discrepancy, and relates to variation of views concerning the same objects. Both the senses and reasoning are considered fallible. Perception varies widely according to the abilities, experience, and (natural) bias of the individual as well as the context of that which is perceived. The second trope is that of infinite regression, and relates to the infinite process involved in proving anything (i.e., premises are required to "prove" a given conclusion, but every premise itself requires proof, etc.). There is no criterion for conclusion, since no result of sense perception and/or reasoning is inherently or actually provable. Since nothing can be proven in any final sense, judgment must be suspended.

The third trope is that of relativity, and relates to the appearance of an object according to the relationships between an object and other things, between one's perception of that object and one's perception of other things. Or in other words, knowledge of some object (subject) generally comes indirectly by way of knowledge of relationships, rather than directly (and if the knowledge comes (purportedly) directly, then the process by which the information comes is similarly questionable (fallible)). Thus, one cannot know a thing in itself, since one is limited to the fallible senses and fallible reasoning. The fourth trope is that of hypothesis, and relates to the arbitrary character of (dogmatic) assumptions, assumed as starting points in order to avoid the infinite regression. Any "proof" that depends on unproven premises is inconclusive. Thus one must also suspend judgment.

Similarly, the fifth trope is that of circularity, and relates to the vicious circle or the necessity of assuming in the “proof” of anything the very conclusion that has to be proved. Neither plausibilities nor premises lead to any proof or conclusion (except (potentially) tentative or qualified conclusions). Although the avoidance of self-deception is not assured, the tropes of Agrippa may very well provide (unprovable) assurance of doubt, as the concepts are accepted as reasonable and/or sustained by intuitive insight (neither of which is in itself conclusive).

The net result of all this is the conclusion that nothing is actually ever provable, that if one accepts as fact anything, one has merely achieved some measure of self-deception. But if one (more reasonably) accepts something as a belief (vice fact) and one is aware of the fact (distinction) of that belief as a belief and not as a fact, then one has (in this instance) avoided self-deception (unless of course the subconscious accepts the belief as fact). One cannot prove anything to anyone (albeit one can potentially convince another of some presumed fact in the sense that another can accept as true that which is so presented, but no “proof” is involved). Though one cannot prove anything to oneself in any absolute sense, for all practical purposes one can prove something to oneself, relatively, to the extent that one necessarily accepts something as true.

† Commentary No. 450

Xenos

“Xenos” is a Greek word meaning strange or foreign (implying strangeness). The character of response or reaction of a person to another who happens to be strange or different or foreign (in the perspective of the first person) is often governed by the separative and independent nature of the ego. This nature (albeit natural in the sense that the personality is materialistic and not inherently spiritual) must ultimately be overcome, during the process of reintegration, where the separative barriers of the personality (ego) are destroyed (dissolved) (withdrawn) and the individual becomes an intelligent and responsive participant within humanity.

The appropriateness of individual and group differences (distinctions) is not so easily apparent for the relatively coarse members of humanity, who see themselves and their own culture and values as proper, and (naturally) fail to understand the culture, values, etc. of others beyond their own experience. This lack of appreciation (understanding) can lead to estrangement (xenos). But in fact, individual and group differences are natural and necessary and within the scope of evolutionary experience. The group (humanity) lives through its individual members and the various racial and cultural and national (regional) groups. Each (individual and group) has a contribution to make to the whole (albeit in part redundant (albeit intentionally so) and in part relatively (albeit not very significantly) unique).

The basis of xenos (strangeness) is in some cases a simple matter of personality-centeredness (pride) (arrogance) (conceit) (attachment to racial (cultural) (national) heritage) and in other cases a simple matter of fear (based either upon that which is unknown (and therefore not understood) or upon previous experience (of mutual strangeness (separative reactivity))). The separativeness on an individual level is linked to the ego and the materialistic (self-centered) nature. The separativeness on a group level is also related to existence in matter, but it is as well related directly to the racial heritage and the early methods of development.

In earlier cycles (primarily) (but to some small extent in the present cycle for relatively primitive human groups), each family (tribe) (nation) (race) was largely guided or directed by their respective group spirit. Much coherent experience and development resulted from these (early) methods (which were indeed appropriate or necessary to the primitive circumstances and levels of development), but they were inherently separative, as each group was necessarily isolated to some large extent from other groups. Much of this earlier experience (qualification) (programming) (habits) is carried on through the material heritage of the personality (in spite of much effort to interrelate the various groups), and must (eventually) be fully overcome.

With a broadening of experience, a more inclusive perspective (vision), and a more refined (properly qualified) personality, strangeness is accepted naturally, and those who are relatively strange are perceived within a constructive framework of an integrated humanity. The stranger's values are respected (not

necessarily accepted or embraced), being recognized as appropriate to the other's nature and circumstances. One's own values should not be considered as inferior or superior to others' but simply appropriate to one's own circumstances and nature (albeit with regard to needed improvement (adjustment and progress)). In this manner is the sense of strangeness fully overcome (and even the sense of otherness is dissolved) as the oneness of humanity (and all life) is consciously and properly realized.

† Commentary No. 607

Zeno's Arrow

Zeno's arrow is an argument to show the impossibility of motion. Attributed to the Greek philosopher Zeno was the assumption of discreteness in space and time. Given that assumption it follows that a flying arrow rests. Conversely if one assumes a spatial and temporal continuum, the flying arrow rests not, except in the reference frame of the arrow itself, in which case (from that self-centered point of view) motion is indeed impossible, since there is always a reference frame (attached to the object) (perspective) in which the associated object is at rest (i.e., in the reference frame of the flying arrow the arrow is at rest and the surroundings are "moving" (changing position relative to the arrow)). Thus it doesn't really matter if space and time are discrete or continuous (at least in this sense).

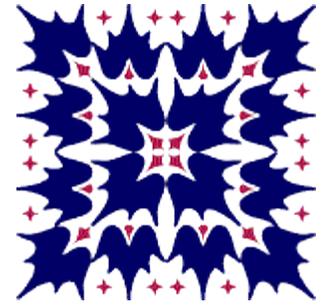
Motion is defined as the action or process of changing position. Since position is relative and only relative, motion is also a relative process (phenomenon) and depends entirely on perspective (point of view) (reference frame). Motion is also defined as the passage of a body or object from one place to another, but in this sense place (position) is still relative (and thus so is motion). This does not mean that one (an object) cannot change position, but it does mean that one (an object) can only change position relative to some external reference frame, that all sense of place (position) (motion) is merely relative. Being merely relative does not however convey or preclude significance, since significance is also relative. These arguments presume that absolute position is not conveyed to any aspect (life, consciousness, form) of (in) manifestation, but is reserved for the unmanifest. This is an interesting paradox, since the unmanifest has no external and therefore cannot be attributed any relativity.

Since no absolutes exist or are conveyed to the manifested universe, motion (in any absolute sense) is indeed not possible. A sense of motion is however quite common, as is a sense (perspective) of place or position (and change). One should therefore ever remember that all place (position) (motion) (change) is only relative and although progress (evolution) is nonetheless a noble goal (undertaking), one can never really properly measure such extent from any personal point of view. One can only properly measure such movement from the impersonal (higher) reference frame in which spatial and temporal factors (the karmic manifold) are integrated over (and therefore dissolved). Perspective is necessarily differential in horizontal aspect (nature) and hierarchical in vertical aspect (nature).

Corollaries of Zeno's arrow include "a thrown stone never falls" (Newton's law of inertia) and "all objects are always in motion" (i.e., there is always (at least within manifestation) a reference frame in which some given object exhibits motion relative to that reference frame). Aside from the implications for Zen (Zeno), the impossibility of (necessity for) motion serves as a reminder of extensive (pervasive) relativity and serves to undermine one's preoccupation with self-centered (inertial) reference frames. As a useful exercise, one should be able to project the focus of consciousness to virtually any impersonal (external) (internal) reference frame, however absurd it may appear to be (appearance is more often than not deceiving).

This discourse begs the question of Zeno's original assumption of discreteness (which does really matter in another sense), since space and time constitute a rather elaborate illusion. The dilemma is solved (evaded) by integration (Zeno's paradox).

Section 3.43



Modern Philosophy

- Modern philosophy is defined as conventional, exoteric, but non-historical philosophy, without recourse (necessarily) to the esoteric. Much of what is considered as modern philosophy is necessarily academic, but much also deals with metaphysical subjects or with less metaphysical subjects but with a metaphysical insight that increases the value. There are also many ideas in modern philosophy that can be more meaningfully considered in more metaphysical terms. And some metaphysical authors are able to bridge rather effectively between the conventional and the unconventional.

Integral Philosophy

One of the major aspects of the esoteric philosophy (wisdom) is integral philosophy. Integral philosophy relates all of the differentiated species to the whole, and focuses on that whole as a more significant and greater reality than its constituent parts, while differential philosophy focuses on the species and elements themselves. The three aspects of integral philosophy are pertainment, necessity, and operation.

Integral philosophy pertains to the whole, as each element (unit of consciousness) belongs to the whole as a constituent or component. The whole is considered to be greater than its collective parts. The whole is considered as a unitary organism (on its level) and therefore approachable and relatable as a whole. The holistic (integral) approach involves a succession of wholes (each on its own level), each successive whole being broader and more inclusive than its parts collectively and individually. The greatest whole is all-inclusive, embracing all within the ken of its beholder. Inclusiveness (oneness) is the basic keyword of integral philosophy. By viewing things (lives) in an inclusive manner, one begins to embrace the energy of the whole and the understanding that that implies. By viewing things (lives) in an inclusive manner, one is actually invoking (evoking) the integrative forces, strengthening on the lower levels what is already a reality on the higher (deeper) levels.

That which is integral is necessary to the completeness of the whole. Each element of a lifewave is integral, being at once elemental (on differential levels) and one with the lifewave (on integral levels). The whole is necessarily complete on its level, but may appear less complete (less well-integrated) on expressive levels (levels within its field of manifestation than within its basic causal field). Each element is necessarily an expression (qualification) (manifestation) of its whole, and each whole (the whole) that is differentiated (manifested) is necessarily the integrated result of the differentiated experience.

The whole is the result of the operation inverse to differentiation, namely integration. Integration is the basic evolutionary process (while differentiation is the basic involutory process). Every self-conscious organism (element)

(and every organism at some level analogous to that of self-consciousness) progresses (evolves) through some integrative process, through the assimilation of experience, through a broadening (deepening) of perspective, through integrating its constituents and aligning itself with its greater (more inclusive) life. As long as the element (individual) is not self-integrated and as long as the element identifies with externals and/or partials, then that element is at that level merely a differentiated (isolated) (absorbed) element, being part of the whole only on the higher (super-conscious) levels. The immediate (basic) evolutionary objective of the human organism for example is to integrate the various elements of the personality and achieve the alignment of that properly integrated personality with the (more inclusive) soul. At that (higher) level, the whole is the oversoul (of humanity) and the soul is already en rapport with that oversoul.

In differentiated existence where the parts lack the conscious awareness of the whole (where the parts are not aligned with the source on their level), the energy of the whole is diluted and scattered (relatively incoherently). As the manifested expression is gradually integrated, the coherence of the whole (on those levels of manifestation) is gradually achieved and thereby the potency (potential) of the group is enhanced and fulfilled.

† Commentary No. 516

Differential Philosophy

Another of the major aspects of the esoteric philosophy (wisdom) is differential philosophy, which focuses on the differentiated species and the differentiated elements of those species, as individual species and elements rather than collectively or relating those individual species and elements to some (greater) whole. While integral philosophy is the first ray (synthetic) aspect of the esoteric philosophy, differential philosophy serves as the third ray aspect. The three aspects of differential philosophy are individuality, relationship, and expression.

Differential philosophy pertains largely to the individuality (illusion of separateness) (relative uniqueness) of a differentiated species or element. From one perspective, all individual species or elements are essentially and inherently

similar, in the sense that each is chartered by the greater life, in the sense that each carries the life and (differentiated) consciousness of that greater life and therefore has the same, basic inherent potential of that greater life, and in the sense that each is considered equal, each (one) with respect to every other. From another perspective, all individual (differentiated) species and elements are relatively unique, in the sense that the environmental conditions (external forces) that each faces are necessarily slightly (somewhat) (considerably) different, in the sense that the character and quality of each is differentially (or significantly) different, and in the sense that the internal forces (accumulated from the point of differentiation) that each faces (evokes) are necessarily (relatively) different.

The significance of individuality (the freedom of differential experience and expression) lies in the value of integrated variabilities and in the potential for epigenesis (progress not explicitly programmed or specifically anticipated, but implied and anticipated only in the statistical sense, and without (necessarily) the foresight of realization of significance or specific implication or application). In the first case, the variability in experience and expression across some (differentiated) species or lifewave leads to considerably richer (diverse) accumulated experience than would be the case for undifferentiated experience; in the second case, individual elements sometimes make considerable breakthroughs which may be worth integrating for the progress (development) (adaptation) of the whole.

The aspects of relationship and expression are directly tied to that of individuality. Relationship provides consideration of differences (relating the resulting force to the requirement of equilibrium) (the expressive and consequential forces within some field of differentiated existence lead to further (and correlatable) experience and subsequent assimilation), while expression provides a release of accumulated or impelling (inner and outer) forces. The illusion of separateness notwithstanding, differential experience and expression is principally a collective manifestation.

The crowning achievement of individualized consciousness (differentiated self-conscious awareness) is the integration of that self-consciousness within the greater consciousness, meaning a subordination of the individuality (self-consciousness) to the next greater level of integration, while remaining potent

as a self-conscious element (or species). For this to be successful, a balance is required between individuality and conformity (subordination). Rogue (unintegratable) consciousness is ultimately destroyed; separative consciousness must be transformed before it can be integrated; but intelligently subordinated (purified) self-consciousness is relatively easily integrated.

† Commentary No. 524

Relativistic Philosophy

While differential philosophy deals with the manifestation of life and consciousness (experience), and while integral philosophy deals with the wholeness of life and the synthesis (assimilation) of experience, relativistic philosophy relates the two and deals with the various processes that bring about experience and the assimilation of that experience. Relativistic philosophy is the second ray aspect of the esoteric philosophy.

The basis of relativity is the lack of absoluteness in manifestation. The absolute exists, yet no aspect of manifestation (differential or integral) is able to embrace the absolute self-consistently. The field of manifestation has aspects that embrace finiteness, and aspects that embrace infiniteness, but none that embrace absoluteness, for all lives and all forces and all things within the field of manifestation exist relatively and are expressed relatively, meaning that they only exist and are expressed in some relative sense (i.e., in relation to other lives, forces, and things). In the absence of other lives, forces, and things, a given element could not exist, for all are interrelated and the greater reality is the more inclusive (albeit less relative).

One of the more relative processes within manifestation is perception. Perspective can vary considerably with time, from one person to another, by level and quality of consciousness, etc. With experience, the spiritual student learns to direct and qualify his perception as needed, taking into consideration the limitations implied in any particular perspective. Another very relative process is karmic adjustment, which must consider all aspects of an individual's history and present consciousness, the respective circumstances, and relationships at all levels and other aspects. Viewed internally (externally)

(from a particular perspective), karmic adjustment is a most complex process of weights, checks, balances, assessments, etc.; yet viewed externally (internally) (from a broader, more inclusive perspective), karmic adjustment is relatively simple and straightforward (wherever there is a deflection from equilibrium, there is a restorative force applied (which might trigger (stimulate) another deflection (experience) and associated restoration, but relatively less intense).

Since a wide range of perspectives is available, there are invariably some perspectives in which (relative) absolutes are embraced. For example, God (the solar logos) is often viewed as an absolute, and for all practical purposes that is sufficiently true, but in the context of logoc relationships, God is merely relative. If God is defined on a higher (cosmic) level, then the absolute recedes and God (again) is merely relative. The same is (relatively) true for truth. There is no absolute truth (short of the absolute itself (which is necessarily unattainable)); all truth is relative and any perceived absolute truth is (from this perspective) merely relatively absolute. Arrogance leads to (the delusion of) absolutes, while humility leads to the acceptance of relatives. Much of the world delusion relates to binaries (binary value systems) and duality, yet in truth all of manifestation is a continuum and even the extreme values are merely relative. Nothing is either one thing or another, except in context.

In the (relatively) final analysis, all things are relative, being neither absolute nor independent, being comparative and relational. All things are causally connected (yet not deterministically so), having antecedents and succedents as well as simultants. Relativistic philosophy simply embraces all this in terms of its three aspects, the absolute, process, and finiteness.

The Fallacy of Logic

Logic is the science that deals with the canons and criteria of validity of inference, of the formal principles of reasoning (and their application). Logic may be deductive or inductive, imperative or indicative, practical or otherwise, but nonetheless dependent upon some measure of objectivity and some measure of adherence to the established rules (structure) of (formal) logic which lead more or less deceptively to some conclusion.

The real fallacy of logic is its dependence on assumption (assuming objectivity and adherence), in the sense that one can make some assertion (premise) and proceed logically to some conclusion while that conclusion may be valid according to the rules of logic but wholly wrong (in truth) if the premise upon which it is based is not true. The danger of logic is the deception implied by drawing a conclusion without reinforcing in mind the provisional nature of all assumptions. It is all too easy to make an assumption, proceed logically (or otherwise), and draw conclusions, then proceed as if the original assumption was a fact. Of course reasoning without logic or reasoning in a biased manner is as bad or worse (and most reasoning is indeed biased by the emotions as well as one's belief or value system) (in general, people tend to believe whatever they want to believe and see and hear whatever they need or want to see and hear in order to reinforce whatever they want to believe).

Proceeding logically based upon reasonable assumptions leads to reasonable conclusions, but one should realize (and continue to realize) that no conclusion is absolute, due to the provisional nature of every premise. One difference between the rational human being (being more or less mentally polarized) and the esoteric student is that the rational human being makes (what he believes to be) factual assertions (and evaluative assertions as appropriate), proceeds more or less logically, and draws (what he believes to be) non-provisional conclusions, while the esoteric student realizes that all so-called factual assertions (premises) are themselves evaluative (based on values and judgment), proceeds (also) more or less logically (but relatively more openly in regard to intuitive

insight), but draws strictly provisional conclusions, allowing neither premises nor conclusions to be treated as absolute or compelling.

Another (related) fallacy (shortcoming) of logic is the tendency to treat truth in accordance with the principle of bivalence (however consciously or unconsciously), which states (falsely) that every statement (premise) (conclusion) is either true or false, that every statement has a truth value and there are just two truth values. More properly, every statement has a relative truth value and there is a continuum of values for most statements. Every statement is relatively (more or less) true or false, depending on the character of the statement and the context in which it is made. In the practical world one must draw conclusions and proceed, but it is better to proceed with the awareness of the provisional (tentative) (relative) (biased) nature of all premises, logical (rational) or intuitive processes, and conclusions.

In the final analysis, the spiritual student must proceed without being able to verify or validate the assumptions (beliefs) (knowledge) (premises) upon which his philosophy is based. In short, one should assume that an assumption is possibly true (false). Rational and intuitive processes are relied upon nonetheless, yet provisionally and relatively; sense impressions are recognized for what they are (merely sense impressions); and the work is performed in (relative) confidence, based upon a faith (inner knowledge) that is amenable to progressive realization.



Commentary No. 526

The Fallacy of Proof

One of the fallacies of life in the objective world (illusion) is the fallacy of proof. Proof is the cogency of (presumed) evidence that compels acceptance by the mind (or some dimension of consciousness) of a truth or a fact, and the process of establishing the (relative) (presumed) validity of a statement or formulation. The problem is the fallacy of evidence that leads (improperly) to factual assertions. The spiritual student should always treat evidence as apparent and indicative but not compelling or conclusive, since no evidence or assertion (assumption) (premise) can be proven factual or true.

In a sense, proving something means merely convincing someone (or oneself) that something is true, the degree of conviction indicating the degree of proof afforded. Proof is in that sense afforded by various means (emotional appeal, argument by means of formal logic or rational process (reasonably or otherwise), intuitive realization, etc.), but all result in the same basic fallacious process, that of acceptance of presumed evidence (experience) or assertion (premise) and conclusions as valid and true.

The first fallacy of proof is that of factual evidence. The problem is that the real world is psychological and subjective and vastly more complex (and unknown (to some extent unknowable)) than the apparent (objective) (physical) world. The human being is typically considerably biased by previous experience, abilities (habits), and beliefs. Sense-impressions are merely sense-impressions and cannot (should not) be accepted in any absolute sense, so that any evidence based upon observation or perception or intuition is only relatively and contextually valid. Any evidence of the senses (higher or lower) is properly merely information to be considered, tentatively accepted or rejected, etc., without compulsion or non-provisional conclusion. On a practical basis, even for the spiritual student, apparent evidence is best (and at best) tentatively accepted at face value. Provisional conclusions can (and frequently must need) be drawn nonetheless, provided that all conclusions (as all evidence) are (is) considered qualified (by some degree of uncertainty and relativity).

The second (and related) fallacy of proof is that of factual assertion and compulsive (conclusive) argument. Since (by occult assertion (or according to the esoteric philosophy)) all evidence is merely apparent and indicative, then all assertion is likewise merely apparent and indicative (of something, not necessarily of what is asserted). Thus all assertion is evaluative (subject to evaluation, qualification, relativity, context, etc.) and is not in itself conclusive. As the spiritual student evolves a more refined, spiritual, and intuitively responsive nature, a sense of discernment (realization) is naturally developed and revealed which affords a better means of testing for relative truth than merely rational means, but even the highest means of realization (truth recognition) results in merely relative recognition of truth.

In short, nothing is really provable. One cannot prove anything to anyone, although one can convince some people of some things (albeit folly to do so) and

one can convince oneself of anything. In a looser sense, one can (necessarily) only prove something to oneself (since someone else can reject any evidence or assertion), but that proof is merely one of acceptance (belief). Although this entire range of relative and provisional psychological experience is not as comforting as concrete, rational, materialistic (deceptive) existence, it is more useful to the evolving consciousness, the evolution of consciousness being merely a process of progressive self-realization as each level of deception (illusion) is overcome and the next level embraced.

† Commentary No. 984

The Fourth Way

The Fourth Way is the title of a book by P.D. Ouspensky which provides “a lucid explanation of the practical side of G.I. Gurdjieff’s teachings concerned with a new way of living, a way of inner development to be followed under the ordinary conditions of life.” The fourth way is contrasted with Ouspensky’s impressions of (and assumptions regarding) “the three traditional ways that call for retirement from the world, those of the fakir, the monk, and the yogi.”

Ouspensky was exposed to Gurdjieff’s teachings first-hand, as well as to theosophy and other approaches. He relied almost entirely on the concrete mind, rationalization, and his own first-hand experience, in reaching conclusions and developing the fourth way. And yet, even intellectually, Ouspensky has contributed substantially to the “field” of theosophical philosophy and psychology, by focusing on issues that really matter and ignoring much that is merely trendy, and introducing some quite valuable notions (as well as a few not-so-valuable (not substantiated) notions). In practice, the fourth way refers in general to the entire Gurdjieff-Ouspensky philosophical system, and in particular to those aspects of that system having significance for the evolution of consciousness and in the context of the spiritual path.

The scope (of particular value) of the fourth way includes the notions of the incompleteness of the human being, multiple personalities, false personality, eventual integration of the personality, four states of (lower, personality) consciousness ((1) the sleeping state, (2) the waking state, (3) the state of self-

remembering, and (4) the objective state), seven types of “man” (the lower four of which correlate to physical, emotional, mental, and intuitional polarization in consciousness) (and associated schools), self-observation, self-remembering (a method of awakening), the importance and nature of honesty and the psychology of lying, the role of the emotions, attitudes, and imagination, the problem of identification (attachment), the problem of mechanicalness and will, psychological buffers (impediments to development of conscience), psychological conditioning, the principles of relativity and scale, the illusion of “doing” and the role of will, the role of psychological shock, and personality sleep.

Another element of Ouspensky’s tradition involves multi-dimensional reality, higher dimensions, and ordering. Of particular value is the attempt of the student to conceptually embrace notions that defy the conditioning of the human personality, e.g., the conventional notions (delusions) of physical reality (as the only reality), the relative illusions of self-consciousness, self-will, cause-and-effect relationships, etc. Ouspensky’s approach to the fourth and fifth dimensions is particularly useful in this regard, even though it is essentially a conceptual extension of conventional reality rather than a realization of higher dimensions. Even though much of the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky system has a largely rational (rationalized) basis and rejects much that is true, there is still a great deal of value, both in many of the notions presented as well as in the psychological methods suggested [being rational and being true are not necessarily mutually consistent (one can be rational and true, rational and not true, non-rational and true, as well as non-rational and not true)].

In the final analysis, the value of any philosophical or spiritual system lies in its ability to facilitate the evolution of consciousness, i.e., does it help or hinder? The Gurdjieff-Ouspensky system does facilitate the evolution of consciousness, as it focuses substantially on the process of awakening.

Baconian Prejudice

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

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

Bacon's second prejudice was (is) individual conditioning. People tend to "judge matters on the basis of their own education, experience, and taste" without appreciation for the considerable diversity and variability of perspective conditioning. Without being broad-minded, one doesn't generally realize that one's own perspective, based as it is upon personal experience, is simply not necessarily correct, wholly true, etc. Judgment is therefore generally based upon one's own values, consciously realized or otherwise. If one is materialistic or egoistic, then one will naturally and unconsciously interpret experience in accordance with that bias. Furthermore, one tends unconsciously and indirectly (by virtue of one's perception and interpretation of experience) to attribute the same values to others, even when one knows, intellectually, that such is not the case.

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

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

† Commentary No. 1269

If Then

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

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

The invalidity and unreasonableness of reliance on the if-then “reasoning” process is compound. A person may or may not love another (particular) person. That person may or may not send flowers. The problem is inherently one of not really understanding each other, of not really communicating, compounded by the invalidity of the reasoning process. For example, there are many ways of expressing love, and loving someone does not mean that a person must necessarily express himself or herself in any particular way. Indeed, one can love another and not even be expressive. It is all about conditioning. People are conditioned differently, according to heritage and culture, according to experience, according to opportunities, according to (varying) (personal) nature. Some are more conventional, others less so. Some are inherently honest and open with their feelings, others less so. Love cannot be measured (in any way). It simply is. And people participate in love (and its outward expressions) according to their capacities and conditioning and natures.

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

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

