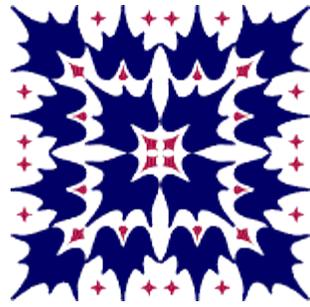


The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 3.6

Theosophy

The Ancient Wisdom



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Theosophy

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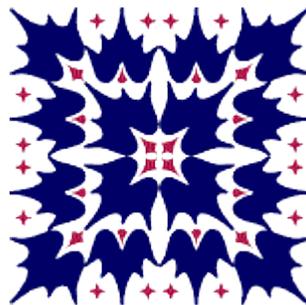
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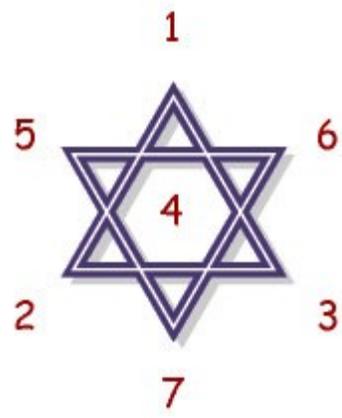
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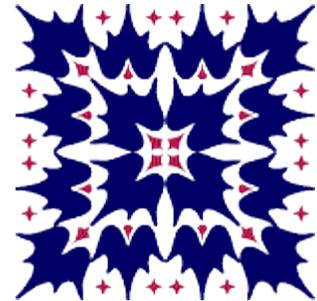
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Chapter 3.6

Theosophy



The Ancient Wisdom

- Theosophy is the study of the ancient, eternal wisdom, the study of underlying reality and how that (understanding) applies to life in the world. In the classical (proper) sense, theosophical truth is discovered in direct, personal (mystical) experience (realization), based on preparation and training. Unfortunately, in the more modern theosophical tradition, there is a substantial element of rationalization (intellect) and popularization.
- Theosophy is the middle ground between the esoteric and the exoteric, between the esoteric philosophy and popular metaphysics. In other words, the esoteric philosophy is that aspect of the ancient wisdom that can only be embraced intuitively, at the soul level, without recourse to the intellect (and without being able to be embraced intellectually), while theosophy is that aspect of the ancient wisdom that can be embraced intellectually and understood to a large extent, and (popular) metaphysics is that aspect that can be popularized and embraced emotionally.

Theosophy 1

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

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

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

completed the requirements at this level), and the others have withdrawn to even higher levels. But the body of esoteric knowledge continues from ancient times.

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

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

† Commentary No. 1175

Theosophy 2

Purely esoteric knowledge carries with it a great responsibility, as well as power that can be misused unless the recipient has a well developed conscience and sense of propriety. Therefore esoteric knowledge and insight is protected, inherently. It is not so much a matter of secrecy as it is a matter of most people not being able to comprehend it. However, as humanity evolves, knowledge which was once considered esoteric becomes, by degrees, exoteric and available to all, as humanity's consciousness, quality, and abilities grow. Today, for example, most of the lesser mystery teachings are generally and readily

available for a serious spiritual student to use to teach himself the basic principles. The greater mysteries, however, remain secret, except to a very small number of people who are able to work through soul contact.

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

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

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

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

† Commentary No. 1176

Theosophy 3

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

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

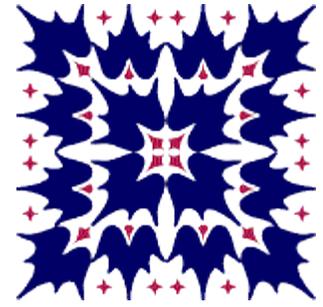
While theosophical principles have always been available to the enlightened, there have been cycles over the course of history where the teachings have flourished publicly and then declined. Declinations occur whenever the mass

consciousness becomes materialistic, sense-oriented, or personality-centered, naturally, in response to subtle pressures and qualifications. But a resurgence of the spiritual stimulation and restoration of the ancient theosophical teachings follows eventually (similarly, in response to subtle pressures and qualifications) (as humanity passes through a cycle of responsiveness (often following a period of great distress)).

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

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

Section 3.61



Purpose

And the Panorama of Manifestation

- Following are a number of commentaries selected from Volume 1 of the Upper Triad Material. These commentaries are representative of basic ideas in theosophy.

The Seven Planes

The world of human existence encompasses seven major levels or planes of consciousness. The first (highest) plane is the source of human existence; the second is the plane of the (human) monad; and the lower five planes form the present domain of human evolution and range of human consciousness. Most of humanity express themselves only on the lowest three levels, and have awareness on only the lowest (physical) plane. Each of the seven planes has seven subdivisions (sub-planes). Each of the forty-nine sub-planes is formed of matter of a particular density and polarization. Each successively higher sub-plane is formed of finer or more subtle matter. Each plane is a world or dimension in itself, having a distinct polarization, yet interpenetrating the other planes. There are no "higher" or "lower" realms, simply many coexistent dimensions. The terms "higher" and "lower" are used to refer to the relative quality (consciousness) of the matter.

The lowest world (the seventh or physical plane) has two major divisions. The lowest three sub-planes comprise the dense physical or chemical region that is characterized by the physical matter known to modern science. The upper four sub-planes comprise the etheric region. The matter of the four ethers is quite physical, but it is of a much finer nature. The etheric region is a world of physical plane forces and energies. Much of the phenomena in the physical world finds its force or intermediate cause in the etheric region. In fact, most of the physical life support processes are etheric functions.

The next higher plane (the sixth) is called the astral or emotional plane (the desire world). It is characterized as a sea of emotional energies; it also has seven subdivisions of matter. The lower sub-planes are of the coarse matter of the unpleasant (selfish) emotions. The higher sub-planes are of finer matter of the more mature emotions. This sea of emotional energies is interpreted through color by those who have astral vision. Each hue or tone indicates a quality of emotion. But the clairvoyant vision is quite colored by the individual's own emotional nature and perspective. The astral plane, like the etheric region of the physical plane, can be considered as an energy field. The

astral world is governed to a high degree by magnetic attraction and repulsion; similar emotions are attractive and dissimilar feelings are repulsive.

The world beyond the astral is the mental or manasic plane (the fifth). It has two major divisions: the lower region is that of concrete thought and the higher region is that of abstract (formless) thought. The loftier thoughts find themselves in the higher sub-planes. The fourth world is the plane of buddhi or intuition. Above (beyond) the buddhic plane is the plane of atma (spiritual will) or nirvana (the third plane). The second plane is the home world of the human spirit, the monadic plane. And finally, the highest plane of the seven is the world of God, the relative source of all lesser manifestation.

The physical plane is characterized by time and space. In the astral world there is only a slight, rather vague correspondence to time and space. Beyond the astral, time and space have little significance, if any. The essence of each plane is energy; spirit and matter are the two relative poles of energy. Spirit is the highest aspect of matter, and matter is the lowest aspect of spirit, by degrees. Matter is a momentary expression, while spirit is eternal. The highest worlds are created first, the lowest worlds last. The lowest planes are the first to disintegrate and pass into obscurity, while the highest planes are the last. The septenary manifestation of matter comes and goes with the breath of Brahma, but God, the absolute, persists.

† Commentary No. 14

The Seven Rays

The first differentiation of the logos (God) in manifestation is the logoc triplicity which constitutes the three major rays (the three aspects of the trinity): the father (Shiva), the son (Vishnu), and the holy ghost (Brahma). These are the three rays of aspect. The second differentiation of the logos is the logoc septenate (the seven rays): three rays of aspect (on a lower level than the triplicity) and four rays of attribute. These are seven great streams of energy, each with a characteristic vibration, life, quality, and purpose. The seven are equal in importance and each contributes a (different) basic vibration and experience to the greater life. On the first level of manifestation the life of the logos flows through three streams or rays (lives) of energy; on the second level of

manifestation the logoc life flows through seven rays of energy. Together they constitute all of manifestation.

The solar logos manifests through the seven rays, through seven planes or worlds of consciousness, through seven sacred planets (and five non-sacred planets), and through seven great cycles or days of manifestation (with seven lesser cycles within each greater cycle). Each plane, planet, and cycle is a manifestation of the corresponding ray (numerologically) and its reflection.

The fifth (sixth) (seventh) ray is the reflection into matter of the third (second) (first) ray (respectively). Each kingdom in nature (elemental, mineral, plant, animal, human, angelic, etc.), each lifewave, each department of manifestation or civilization, is especially qualified by one or another of the seven rays. Thus each of the rays has a domain of qualification through correspondence.

Since the spiral of evolution proceeds in a complex, cyclic manner, so do the rays governing or qualifying a cycle or sub-cycle change accordingly. Each unit is qualified by its individual rays, group rays, and cyclic rays. As a unit of life evolves, the dominating or primary ray will be succeeded by another. Man has within himself a blend of all the seven rays, but one or two will be more dominant than the others. The unevolved man is qualified by the ray of his physical body. The average person is qualified by the ray of the emotional body. The evolving man is qualified by his mental or personality ray (which begins to dominate as the personality becomes integrated). A soul on a particular ray will incarnate time and time again on each of the seven personality rays, that each may contribute to the experience of the soul. The spiritual student is becoming qualified by the soul ray which uses the personality ray as an instrument. The spiritual student eventually recognizes his soul ray (which gives the deeper motives and inner characteristics) and his personality ray (the ray of the outer or lower self).

The names and qualities of the various rays are but general indications of their nature. The qualities overlap, and each of the rays should be studied meditatively, with an appreciation for the relationships between the rays as well as for each ray in the broadest sense. An understanding of the rays is a qualitative one, and the complexities involved are often profound. The rays (3-4-5-6-7) are considered to be sub-rays of the third aspect of the trinity. The even

rays (2-4-6) form a special path or relationship, as do the odd rays (1-3-5-7). The first ray is the ray of power (will). The second ray is called the ray of love-wisdom. The third ray is the ray of active intelligence. The fourth ray is called the ray of harmony through conflict. The fifth ray is the ray of concrete knowledge. The sixth ray is called the ray of devotion, and the seventh ray is called the ray of ceremonial order.

† Commentary No. 21

Involution and Evolution

In the great cyclic panorama of manifestation, the law of evolution demonstrates as impelling evolutionary force on all levels of existence. The subhuman, human, and superhuman lives are all impelled onward along the spiral path of evolution. Each lifewave of a planet is created, in turn, to begin the descent into matter for further experience and expression. Creation and evolution are mutually consistent, for each lifewave is created (differentiated) within God (and by God) as a vast number of monads (sparks from the central flame). Each monad is created in the image of God (which is spirit). The forms that a monad might appropriate (through the intermediary of the soul) are normally quite different in appearance than the forms of the creator.

The created lives are at first quite unconscious. Consciousness and all of the characteristics and qualities of the Godhead are latent within the monad. The process of evolution is to cultivate and develop the latent powers within the monad (and its reflection) through experience, and to add to those qualities (and thus contribute further to the evolution of the greater life). The first half of the cycle of evolution is called involution (unconscious evolution). Involution is the period of the descent into matter until the life becomes indwelling and self-conscious. During this period, involutory forces (and greater lives) work on the various lesser lives and forms from without (externally). Following the point of self-consciousness comes the second half of the cycle, the path of ascent (evolution) or liberation (from matter).

During the involutory period, the work of evolution is done entirely as a group. Each lifewave incarnates together (as a group) (soul). Each group soul incarnates through a multitude of forms that are a part of the lifewave (and

kingdom) in nature. Presently there are a number of lifewaves and kingdoms within the planetary aura. There are several involutory kingdoms (elemental, mineral, plant, and animal) and several evolutionary kingdoms (human and superhuman lifewaves). The involutory kingdoms are the subhuman kingdoms. In the subhuman realm there are no individual souls, only the overshadowing group souls. As a lifewave approaches the human kingdom, the group soul is differentiated into individual souls (in appearance) which are simultaneously appropriated by the various monads. This process is called individualization.

Each lifewave inhabits each kingdom in turn; the lifewave which is now human has passed through each of the subhuman kingdoms, but at such an earlier period that the forms and characteristics of the present subhuman kingdoms are vastly different in appearance than they were. Since the process of evolution is continuous and cyclic rather than discrete, the kingdoms and lifewaves sometimes overlap (some monads choose to develop more rapidly or more slowly than the average). It is also possible for two different lifewaves to inhabit the same kingdom (but with different forms). In fact, each kingdom (and each lifewave) may span several levels or planes of consciousness.

The totality of evolution includes the evolution of forms and the evolution of lives (consciousness) (as forms support the experience and expression of all lives). As old forms (bodies) wear out (individually or collectively) they are replaced with new and improved forms, based upon the experience (and karma) of the indwelling or overshadowing life. Each kingdom and each lifewave (on every level of consciousness) contributes its experiences to the evolution of a still greater life. Thus does evolution proceed under law in a spiral (cyclic) progression. All lives evolve, from the subatomic lives to the great cosmic lives, progressing and expanding, onward and upward along the spiral circuit.

The Spiritual Hierarchy

The spiritual hierarchy of the planet is the esoteric government that guides the evolution of humanity. This group is known by many names: the great white lodge, the planetary hierarchy, the occult hierarchy, the elder brotherhood, etc. This esoteric hierarchy is the second ray planetary center, working with and for the first ray center (which is called Shamballa) and the third ray center (which is humanity). Shamballa represents the personality of the planetary logos (Sanat Kumara) and the power aspect (the plan, the purpose, and the will of the planetary logos). The hierarchy is the love-wisdom aspect, dealing with the evolution of consciousness through manifestation.

The hierarchy has three major departments with seven subordinate departments, corresponding to the three major rays and the seven rays respectively. The first department is led by the manu of the Aryan root-race, who is responsible for guiding the development of racial forms and characteristics, and their eventual combination and synthesis. The second department is led by the bodhisattva, the world teacher, who is responsible for guiding the development and expansion of consciousness. The bodhisattva is the leader of the hierarchy and is known as the Christ (Matriya). The third department is led by the mahachohan, the lord of civilization, who oversees the work of the third ray and the four rays of attribute. The seven minor departments work primarily with the energy of their own (corresponding) ray.

The members of the hierarchy are the masters (adepts), human souls who have achieved relative perfection and have fulfilled their individual earthly karma (and are no longer required to incarnate). They are the pioneers of the human lifewave, and are far in advance of ordinary man. These particular graduates of the human school of experience who work within the hierarchy are those who have chosen to remain here (within the planetary aura) for some duration of time, to lead humanity further along the path of evolution. Throughout the course of evolution, each lifewave is assisted, in turn, by the preceding lifewave. Those who lead, turn to offer a helping hand to those who follow. Thus, the hierarchy is one link in an endless chain of cooperative effort.

As the inner government of the planet, the hierarchy works primarily with consciousness, guiding and encouraging the aspirants and disciples of the world who, consciously or unconsciously, are their workers in the objective world. There is not any interference in the lives or wills of men, for man must create his own destiny. The hierarchy is bound by certain rules and principles according to karma and the intentions of the planetary logos. Thus the hierarchy is primarily a force of encouragement, and governs only in a loose sense (of indirect government).

The members of the hierarchy very rarely work openly among men (if at all), though the hierarchy may be externalized when humanity has been sufficiently prepared. The workers in the hierarchy work with souls rather than personalities. It is the task of the aspirants and disciples of the world to find and maintain a rapport of mind (personality) and soul, and through that soul contact, to respond to the plan and purpose of the hierarchy, that the spiritual student might more effectively serve the hierarchy and humanity. The means for establishing this soul contact is meditation. Through meditation and the paths of aspiration (probation) and discipleship, the spiritual student prepares himself for the life of service. Through selfless service and group (planetary) meditation, the disciple becomes the (impersonal) instrument and extension of the spiritual hierarchy of the planet.

† Commentary No. 43

Cosmic Law and Order

One of the keynotes of cosmic manifestation is ordered purpose. Cosmic law is the result of purpose on a macrocosmic scale. The scheme of evolution is a vast, complicated, yet ordered mechanism of which human observations are but a small fraction of the larger reality. The various cosmic, solar, and planetary laws (and their ancillary laws) determine the course and quality of evolution. As humanity learns and understands more of these natural laws, so shall humanity be better able to cooperate with the laws of life (evolution) and contribute further to the ordered purpose of the logos.

Cosmic law may be categorized in many ways, through a number of perspectives, both in an objective sense and in a subjective sense. Some

elements of cosmic law are consciously imposed by the greater logos; other elements are unconsciously imposed, being inherent qualities of the prevailing life or manifestation (presence) of cosmic life. That which is consciously manifested also generates ancillary laws. That which is consciously made manifest is analogous to the conscious human thought that qualifies or conditions the aura. That which is inherently manifested is analogous to the will or purpose of the indwelling human life which conditions the behavior of atoms or cells within the various elements of the human personality.

Certain elements of cosmic law are relatively uncompromising and inflexible (such as the observable laws of physics and chemistry). Other elements have various degrees of flexibility (as in the case of the law of karma which is especially qualified by wisdom and purpose). The laws of evolution (and the law of karma) encourage the evolving life to progress in a general direction according to a generalized purpose. If the evolving life goes contrary to the natural laws of evolution, then that life is guided and prodded back onto the desired (appropriate) (intended) path. The further the distance from the proper course, the greater will be the restoring force. The further along the path one goes, the less is one permitted to deviate from that which is best for the greater life. And yet, the further along the path one goes, the greater is the freedom, capacity, and opportunity for the individuality (soul), simply because the soul is then wiser and more potent.

The order and scope of the multidimensional universe is tremendous. From the highest conceivable macrocosmic absolute being to the lowest conceivable microscopic and intra-nuclear life, there is order and purpose. The objective universe is very highly organized at the present point in the cycle of manifestation. The exoteric (objective) universe begins and ends with chaos (unorganized primordial formlessness), but the esoteric universe maintains its ordered purpose throughout the various cosmic days and nights. The qualities developed during manifestation are abstracted in approximately the same way that the human soul abstracts the experience of each incarnation (according to evolutionary law). The cyclic manifestations of the various Logoi and the cyclic manifestations of the human atomic sphere are interrelated. A study of cosmic law and order is also a study of man's relationship to the macrocosm.

If the student is to evolve consciously, he must deepen himself in the relative understanding of the laws of the universe (and evolution) which affect him (and humanity) and to which he is related. A great deal of encouragement comes with the deeper understanding of life. Cosmic law fulfills. Cosmic law and order bring to man a purpose which transcends the mundane life and personality, carrying every human life (soul) (monad) onward and upward toward relative perfection and release from personality-centered existence.

† Commentary No. 57

Cosmogogenesis

The nature of the manifestation (the coming into being) of the universe is quite simple (perfect) in concept, but quite complex when regarded in its totality. The story of manifestation begins with the absolute (or absolute being), the boundless and unmanifested entity of which the universe is only the reflection thereof. Within that boundless and unquestionable essence is the result of earlier manifestation. From the absolute, at the very dawn of each great cycle of manifestation, proceeds the supreme being (a differentiated being), the architect of the universe, manifesting as a supreme trinity. Within that being is the essence of a host of lesser lives on many levels, the matrices of further manifestation based on earlier experience and development. Manifestation proceeds along two simultaneous lines of force, that of life and that of form (matter), together producing consciousness.

The universal root-substance is set into vibration (motion) and the various planes of consciousness come into existence (in a septenary fashion) as manifestation proceeds. Each major cycle (for form as well as for life) consists of differentiation (involution) (multiplicity), balance (karmic adjustment) (experience), synthesis (integration) (evolution) (unification), and obscuration (liberation) (abstraction) (perfection) (completion). At the fullest extent of manifestation, matter (spirit) exists in differentiated form on seven great cosmic planes of consciousness. Each plane of human consciousness (physical, emotional, and mental) is only one of seven sub-planes within the lowest cosmic plane. Each major level of differentiated matter is controlled (invoked) (created) (evoked) by the corresponding major level of differentiated life.

The differentiation of life proceeds from the trinity (the three rays of aspect) to the septenate (the seven rays), each being further differentiated by threes and sevens. The supreme being exists first as a triplicity and then as a septenate of supreme logoi. A universal logos differentiates itself into a triplicity and seven cosmic logoi (seven great centers of being). Each of the cosmic logoi is a constellation of forces. Each cosmic logos lives through seven solar logoi, using seven solar systems as its vehicle. The solar logos lives through seven planetary logoi (the seven spirits before the throne), using seven planetary schemes as its vehicle. Similarly, a man (human monad) lives through seven principles and seven psychic centers.

The duration of the existence of a solar logos is three successive incarnations (solar systems). The duration for a planetary logos is one solar incarnation. Similarly, the duration of the human monad is one planetary scheme. Each solar incarnation is a mahamanvantara (one-hundred years of Brahma). Each of the seven planetary schemes consists of seven chains (seven days of creation). During each chain, lifewaves within the planetary life unfold through seven rounds or revolutions about seven globes (planetary vehicles).

Each greater and lesser cycle of manifestation constitutes a day of activity and a night of rest and assimilation. There are universal days and nights, cosmic days and nights, etc. The seven days of creation are the seven chains of the Earth planetary scheme (of which the present Earth chain is the fourth day of creation). Throughout the cosmos, the cycles within cycles go on and on, as the breath of life is alternately sent forth and recalled. The entire structure of manifestation (from logoi levels through the various schemes, chains, rounds, and globes) (for each monadic impulse) is a single thread of life.

The Planetary Scheme

The story of creative manifestation is the story of the unfoldment of the solar logos, through differentiation and integration (synthesis), through the experience and activity of the seven great days of manifestation. A planetary scheme is the experience and cyclic progression (pattern) of a host of lifewaves bound together within a great life (a planetary logos) for the duration of a solar incarnation. The planetary scheme experiences the seven creative days as seven chains of cyclic activity.

Each chain (corresponding numerologically to a day of manifestation) is a chain of seven globes (planets) through (around) which the various inherent life-waves progress (evolve). A lifewave begins on the first globe of a chain, then experiences each of the globes in succession seven times, making seven rounds or revolutions of the seven globes to complete the chain. At the end of each chain there is a night of rest and the transference of the life onto the following chain, for further experience. The seven globes of a chain are centered on various levels (planes) of consciousness. The first and seventh globes are on the highest level for a particular chain); the second and sixth are on the next lower level; likewise for the third and fifth globes even lower; while the fourth globe is centered upon the lowest plain for the chain. For example, the planet Earth is the fourth (lowest) globe of its chain and manifests as low as the chemical region of the physical plane. The third and fifth globes of the Earth chain do not manifest on dense physical levels, but have the etheric region of the physical plane for their lowest expression (field of experience). Likewise, the second and sixth globes of the Earth chain are astral in lowest substance and the first and seventh globes are of concrete mental matter in their lowest expression.

Similarly, each chain of globes is centered on some plane of consciousness. The first four chains of a planetary scheme are chains of descent, centered on successively lower levels. The fifth, sixth, and seventh chains (ascent) are centered on the same levels as the third, second, and first, respectively. The physical Earth is the fourth globe of the fourth chain in our planetary scheme. The fourth (lowest) globe of the third and fifth chains (in our scheme) are etheric rather than dense physical. And it is the fourth globe of the second (and sixth)

chain which is astral (and it is the fourth globe of the first and seventh chains which is mental in substance).

Each lifewave passes through a kingdom of nature in each chain. During the first, second, and third chains, the lives that are now experiencing the human (self-conscious) kingdom passed through the mineral (trance-like), plant (dreamless sleep), and animal (dream) stages of consciousness (kingdoms). These passages through the lower kingdoms were quite unlike the experience of the present lower kingdoms, for the conditions earlier were far different and non-physical. Each turn of the spiral (round, globe, or chain) progressively offers new conditions for the evolving lifewaves.

Our present planetary lifewaves are in the fourth round (on the fourth globe) of the Earth chain. For humanity, each passage upon a globe may be divided into seven epochs or root-races. From root-races to rounds and globes to chains, each planetary scheme is an intricate and complex pattern (though simple in concept) of evolutionary experience for lifewaves of varying degrees of consciousness. The cycles of days (activity) and nights (rest) gradually merge into greater periods until comes the synthesis of the various planetary schemes and the ultimate withdrawal of the logos from the present incarnation.

† Commentary No. 95

Root Races

The longest major planetary cycle of practical significance for humanity is the passage of the planetary life upon a globe (planetary body). The present passage is upon the fourth globe (the present Earth) of the fourth round of the fourth chain. For humanity, this passage can be divided into seven epochs or root races. Each root race is a distinct collection of human forms that are evolved to provide humanity with vehicles of expression of certain characteristics. Human souls can then incarnate and express themselves, gathering experience to further the evolution of consciousness.

It is essential to recognize that the form evolves and that the life within the form (the human consciousness) (the soul) also evolves. The two evolutions (life

and form) are related only on a temporary (useful) basis. When a particular racial form has expended its usefulness, that form will quite naturally pass into extinction as new forms are developed to meet the growing needs of the lifewave. Each of the present root races may be divided into seven sub-races (and further into branch-races). Each division is a relatively distinct modification of the racial type, though the general characteristics of the root race are retained. The formation of a new root race is simply a major modification. The useful characteristics evolved in earlier racial forms are available for inclusion (and adaptation) in the patterns or archetypes of succeeding forms. In fact, even the older forms take on a measure of the new characteristics, and with the gradual blending and overlap of racial forms, it becomes virtually impossible to identify a pure racial type. The present Aryan root race, for example, contains valuable elements of all colors.

One might ask why so many racial forms are necessary in the human evolution. The answer is not a simple one. There was a time when differing races were not needed; and there shall come a time again when the diversity of forms is not needed. But the present is a time of diverse experience, in which the (human) race is evolving simultaneously in many ways. Each race provides experience of a (relatively) distinct nature. The perfect (most appropriate) human form is slowly being developed (as an archetype) as the significant qualities of each variety of racial expression are assimilated. It is pointless to consider one form as being superior to another, since each has its outstanding qualities and each contributes to the progress of the greater (human) race. Besides, each human being is a soul that has neither color, nor sex, nor race, nor nationality. The form is merely a temporary instrument. Each soul may incarnate directly a number of times in each root race, according to need.

The root races of the present passage are, to date, the Polarian (first), Hyperborean (second), Lemurian (third), Atlantean (fourth), and Aryan (fifth). The first two root races were not of the dense physical type and are long extinct; the third is almost extinct; and the fourth and fifth are still quite active (the sixth and seventh have yet to appear). The Atlantean and Aryan races are each contributing significantly to human progress. The Atlantean consciousness is essentially emotional, while the Aryan consciousness is primarily mental. But one cannot presume a level of consciousness directly corresponding to the racial form, for life and form follow different paths.

The majority of humans in Aryan bodies are Atlantean (emotional) in consciousness rather than Aryan (mental); and there are many in Atlantean bodies who are Aryan in consciousness. It is the quality and polarization of consciousness that matters, not the type of racial form. For mankind is one, a family of souls living through a family of forms, one soul living through many.

† Commentary No. 384

Kingdoms and Lifewaves

Life is an attribute and conveyance of the Solar Logos, in the sense that all lives within the ring-pass-not of the solar system are wholly dependent upon the solar logos for their existence, and more properly, actually comprise that solar life. The basic unit of life is the monad, a spark of the solar life that knows no differentiation. As monadic life is reflected into consciousness (and further, into matter), that (reflected) monadic life is composed of a number (continuum) of lifewaves, each having some sense or attribute of distinction (discreteness).

From the outpouring of the logos, the stream of lifewaves flows through the various conditions or aspects of manifestation. Each lifewave is a mass consciousness, related to the monadic life, to the preceding (succeeding) (parallel) lifewaves, and to the manifestation through which it must pass for experience, expression, and evolution. Each lifewave may be differentiated into relatively distinct lives (souls) and (various) groups of lives, the degree of distinction depending on the level of evolved consciousness and the character or quality of the lifewave. Individual lives (souls), group lives, and lifewaves all evolve interdependently according to the evolutionary plan and the available qualification (conditions, guidance, and stimulation).

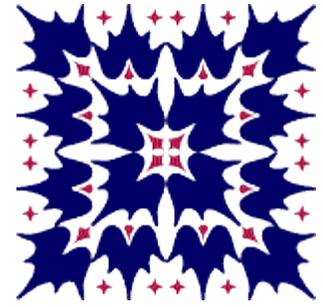
Elementary (basic) lifewaves tend to be reflected further into matter than secondary (advanced) lifewaves which remain largely in consciousness (with the potential illusion of their own reflection into matter). Elementary lives form the actual conditions in matter and consciousness, in the sense that they are composite lives that are manifested as (in) material forms. The physical plane, for example, is composed of a vast number of elementary lives (and numerous

groups of lives) which form the physical conditions (environment) for their own experience and for the manifestation of higher lives (e.g., plant, animal, human). A kingdom is that manifested environment through which a lifewave experiences. The animal (third) kingdom, for example, is the environment (conditions) (qualifications) through which the animal lifewave evolves. That kingdom is composed of elementary lives (forms) on physical, etheric, and astral levels. Both kingdoms and lifewaves are qualified in various ways by the seven rays and the various ordered cycles of manifestation.

In a sense, there is simultaneously a succession of lifewaves and a succession of kingdoms. The various kingdoms evolve as the composite (elementary) lives evolve and as the secondary lives provide the stimulation of their passage. The various lifewaves evolve by virtue of their experience in each succeeding kingdom (domain). The various lifewaves (kingdoms) evolve in various (particular) ways and at various rates. Lifewaves evolve relatively fast compared to the respective kingdoms. The lifewave which is now human (i.e., the lifewave presently inhabiting the human kingdom) will eventually evolve beyond the human kingdom, to the next (fifth) kingdom.

Some passage is possible (albeit limited) (for the individual lives) between the various parallel and successive lifewaves. Advanced lives (pioneers) may be permitted to evolve into the next higher kingdom in advance of their lifewave, thereby effecting transition into the preceding lifewave. Likewise, those who are unable to evolve at the same overall rate as the other members of their lifewave (i.e., stragglers) may effectively pass into the succeeding lifewave (not to the preceding kingdom). As a general rule, however, advanced lives remain within their respective lifewaves, though evolving at the respective leading edge (which effectively broadens the lifewave).

Section 3.62



Consciousness

And the Spiritual Path

- Following are a number of commentaries selected from Volume 2 of the Upper Triad Material. These commentaries are representative of basic ideas in theosophy.

Meditation

There are many varieties and stages of meditation. Some forms of meditation involve the personality; others may involve both the personality and the soul. As an exercise, meditation may include prayer (invocation), visualization, concentration, and/or contemplation. As a spiritual exercise, meditation is a conscious act of participation in being. As a way of life, the meditative disposition is the manifestation of the soul through the conscious personality.

The (spiritual) meditation exercise is normally centered in either the heart (mystical, aspirational, or devotional) or in the head (mental). The higher form of meditation is balanced between the head and the heart and involves the intuitive realization of the soul or higher self. Meditation in the heart is preferable until the strong (stable) (mature) devotional nature has been developed. Such a nature is characterized by humility, love, and goodwill; and is accompanied by a serious and sincere spiritual purpose (motive).

Meditation is the means by which the personality is made receptive and responsive to the soul. As a result of proper meditation (and discipline), the abstract ideas and intuition of the higher self are brought into the lower mind (and brain). One of the objects of meditation is the integration of the lower self and the alignment of personality and soul, resulting in stability, serenity, spiritual strength, and service (spiritual purpose). Once the rapport of mind and soul has been established, meditation becomes a process of renewal (soul contact) and manifestation (of soul energies).

Meditation requires a measure of self-control of the physical, emotional, and mental natures, and should encourage such control. Meditation can be dangerous without spiritual motive, as the resulting stimulation requires adjustment and progress in the spiritual life. Meditation should be prompted by the need to find the Self and to become that Self. The approach to meditation should be well-grounded in common-sense. Meditation should be a comfortable, yet disciplined process, without extreme or excess. Having attained some alignment of soul and personality, the spiritual student utilizes daily meditation to strengthen the spiritual life. The object is to live in the

higher consciousness consistently and continually, while simultaneously working through the lower instrument (mind and body). The meditative life does not imply isolation or withdrawal from the outer life; it simply means living a life of wisdom (spiritual quality) without being absorbed in the lower world.

There are many formal and informal methods of meditation, both heart-centered and head-centered. Care should be taken to determine the method and application best suited for the individual. Meditation is both personal (individual) and impersonal (beyond the personal); there is no one method that is right for everyone. Meditation normally requires quiet and comfortable surroundings. A candle may be lighted during the meditation, as it has a stabilizing effect and symbolizes the willingness of the lower self to cooperate with the soul. The back should be aligned vertically, and the physical body, the emotions, and the mind (in turn) should be stilled. No meditation should be a passive experience; while maintaining control of the lower self, the mind can participate in the higher consciousness. The meditation period should not be too long or too short. A short daily meditation is far better than a longer occasional meditation. Consistency of time and place is definitely helpful. A daily rhythm of soul-contact is needed in order to be spiritually effective. The experienced (spiritual) meditator learns to carry forth the meditation energy (light of the soul) into the daily life.

† Commentary No. 18

The Spiritual Path

The spiritual path is the path of conscious evolution. Though the bulk of humanity evolve gradually toward soul-consciousness, some souls choose to accomplish in relatively few lifetimes (incarnations) what would normally take many lives. The decision to tread the spiritual path is made by the soul, which then seeks to enlist the cooperation of the mind (and the entire personality). The soul must reestablish that cooperation and realization in each lifetime.

At first, the path is a most difficult undertaking. Each soul has an accumulation of karma to be fulfilled. The earlier lives generate much more karma than can reasonably be worked out in just a few lives. Normally karma

is fulfilled through a relatively slow process. Those who are on the path invoke the rapid working out of karma and minimize the production of nonessential karma. The spiritual student must overcome the limitations of living in the outer world, learn the required lessons for graduation, and become free and qualified to serve mankind in a much more potent capacity. For the disciple, new karma is fulfilled almost instantly, for the (spiritual) path is rather narrow (and a slight deviation evokes an almost instantaneous response). The soul that is not committed to the path is free to wander to some extent.

Though there is but one path, there exist countless differentiations within that one path. The path of enlightenment is different for every individual. There are certain general requirements (in consciousness and experience) before the student can attain liberation, however, and each lesser path within the one path yields a measure of development or experience in a particular field. A soul majors in the path that is the soul ray, and minors in each of the other six paths (rays). Some paths are mystical (devotional) and some paths are more occult. Liberation implies considerable balance between head and heart. The one path is also divided into three major stages or paths that each soul on the path must pass through. The first stage is called the probationary path, the path of purification, aspiration, and preparation (where the student is concerned primarily with physical, emotional, and mental discipline and purification). This stage once required a teacher for direction, but today there is a wealth of information available and the student is generally on his own. The probationary path may require a number of lifetimes for its completion, but when the student is sufficiently prepared, he can then pass on to the second stage (discipleship).

In the second stage, the student is primarily occupied with serving humanity according to whatever talents and opportunities have been earned. The disciple must be stable, strong, unselfish, and self-reliant. The student must depend upon the true teacher, the Christ-self or God within (the soul). The disciple is one who has aligned the personality and the soul, and who proceeds to do the work (service) that is before him. In the third stage, the disciple becomes an adept, a master of wisdom.

There are numerous (optional) schools and organizations (secret and otherwise) to help the evolving student. Each school is but a stepping-stone on the lower

stages of the path. No school can provide assistance on the later stages without soul alignment. In the lower stages, affiliations are not necessary, for the needed teachings are always available to the seeker. From probation to mastery, the spiritual path requires considerable determination and sacrifice. But the rewards are also considerable: the joy of giving, the joy of consciously serving God (and therefore humanity and all of life), and the joy of living in accordance with cosmic law.

† Commentary No. 124

The Spiritual Student

The spiritual student is a student of life who has made a subjective commitment to the spiritual path of deliberate evolution. The spiritual student may be a seeker, an aspirant, a probationer, or a disciple, for each who lives upon the path is a student. A student is one who studies and learns from the experiences of life, whether or not the learning process is formal or informal, conscious or unconscious, attentive or casual, objective or subjective. The spiritual student seeks to learn (evolve) the lessons of life consciously, thus speeding up the unfoldment and expansion of consciousness while simultaneously contributing to the experience and developing consciousness of humanity. The learning process is really never-ending; the scenes and the circumstances change (deepen), but throughout is maintained the position as a student.

The spiritual (metaphysical) (theosophical) (esoteric) scholar is simply a spiritual student who applies a greater than average effort toward advanced or more comprehensive studies. The scholar is a student of somewhat greater intensity of effort or completeness. There are places upon (within) the path for both the student and scholar, though the emphasis upon the path is on wisdom and service (expression) more so than knowledge and self-invoked experience. Among the immediate goals of the spiritual student are self-transformation (improvement) and effective (selfless) expression of the inner life. Thus the student is concerned both with the depths of the internal life (the subjective world) and the extent of the external life (the objective world).

When an individual becomes a spiritual student, the ordinary learning processes (and the field of experiential and expressive life) are changed as the forces which

provide the circumstances and lessons of life are transformed. Prior to commitment, the force of karma is relatively gradual and gentle; after the individual has embarked upon the path, the rules of life are changed (and continue to change) (by degrees) to increase the time-effectiveness of experience. The standards and expectations are increased as karma becomes a much more potent (evident) force in the life. Considerable karma is expected to be fulfilled in a relatively short period, so that the student might be free from limitation, and at the same time, be able to constructively channel and express the higher consciousness. Thus life becomes a rather enhanced learning experience.

In the totality of being, the spiritual student is an onlooker, a perceiver, and an actor. The onlooker is the spiritual monad or virgin spirit which is not limited by involvement in the lesser worlds. The perceiver is the intermediary (the soul) which subjectively translates the experience of the actor (the personality) and encourages the right expression of the personality in the lower worlds. In one who is not a spiritual student, the relationships between monad, soul, and personality are not so direct, so that considerable time is required between incarnations for the assimilation of experience. The spiritual student, however, is expected to assimilate much of the experience en route, sacrificing much of the time between lives.

The real emphasis in the spiritual life is the cultivation and expression of spiritual quality. Human spirituality pertains directly to the quality of consciousness and the relationship of the individual to the group life (humanity). The spiritual student is concerned far more with humanity and consciousness than with appearance and matters of mundane (limited) (individual) consequence. The spiritual student is not considered to be special, for the mission of the student is to be helpful from within the lifewave.

Spiritual Practice

There is an intrinsic condition implied throughout the esoteric philosophy, and that is the obligation of the spiritual student (and to a certain extent, ordinary humanity) to externalize the teachings wherever practicable (or practical). It is not enough for the student to merely read or study the philosophy; it is not enough to be a spiritual student or even a scholar. If the student expects to progress and to fulfill his dharma, he must actually put into practice whatever aspects and elements of the philosophy (the spiritual way of life) that are understood, accepted, and applicable.

This spiritual practice means the consistent application of ethical philosophy and spiritual principles, the application of meditation as a serious spiritual discipline, the application of right human relations and goodwill, and the right (sincere) (appropriate) expression of the various qualities and virtues, not merely their study or development. This entire process begins with the study and consideration of the various teachings. Sincere study leads (eventually) to understanding or realization (whether rational or intuitive). Once an understanding has been reached, there is the important matter of acceptance. If the student accepts a particular teaching, there is implied the responsibility to incorporate the teaching wherever possible in the daily life (or consciousness). The failure to accept a valid (meaningful or appropriate to the particular student) teaching carries with it its own practical consequences (in the form of encouragement).

The incorporation of the teachings depends on their practicality. The higher (greater) (more abstract) lessons (principles) can only be incorporated subjectively (in consciousness), while the lower (more practical) lessons must be objectively incorporated wherever possible (and reasonable). What is practical is what is capable of being put into purposeful practice. Spiritual practice implies the actual performance or application of principles in the daily life, through (1) relationships with other persons, (2) the mental and emotional life (quality of consciousness and the sharing of meaningful energies), and (3) the exercise of personal (spiritual) values.

Before any spiritual teaching or principle (or virtue) can be truly assimilated (resulting in permanent retention and potency), it must be properly incorporated or externalized. Externalization suggests manifestation (expression) or embodiment. The teachings must actually be embodied within the life and consciousness of the student if substantial progress is expected. Such assimilation is mostly a matter of consciousness, and the continuous exercise of the spiritual values wherever possible (appropriate). The actual process of study, consideration, understanding, acceptance, and application should be continuous (with possibly many lessons being integrated simultaneously).

Spiritual practice itself is a considerable and meaningful learning experience. The spiritual student should be a trained observer, expressing the philosophy with discretion, noting the effects (as realizable), and adjusting the approach appropriately. This implies flexibility and adaptability in the reasonable and intelligent application of spiritual principles. This practice is a personal (individual) exercise, according to individual needs (and consciousness) and experience, and not something to be advertised or imposed upon others. The student who sincerely applies the practical spiritual teachings (and incorporates into consciousness virtually all of the exposed teachings) soon becomes proficient and therefore contributes more effectively to the overall purpose of life (evolution in group formation).

† Commentary No. 285

Advancement

Every experience in the lower worlds has some relative (large or small) significance for the evolution of human consciousness. The entire realm of human activity is a stage for the experience, expression, and progress of the human being. That progress is based almost entirely on experience and is impelled from within and from without by evolutionary (and karmic) forces. Preliminary advancement comes through the development of various abilities and as a broad spectrum of experience is properly assimilated.

Normal, gradual advancement is impelled primarily by external, karmic forces which bring the experience earned by previous activity and needed for individual growth. But for the individual who is conscious of evolutionary purpose and

who willingly cooperates with that purpose, the advancement is naturally hastened as internal forces are brought to bear on the individual consciousness. Those internal forces are increasingly derived from the consciousness of the soul, as the soul commits itself by stages to the spiritual path.

Though the accumulation of experience is important (essential) to human progress and though the development of various abilities is similarly important, the true measure of human progress lies in the quality of consciousness, which relies heavily on the assimilation of experience and the reformation of human character. Considerable human evolution cannot occur without a deliberate effort on the part of the spiritual student to reform (improve) his own character, obtain greater self-control and self-discipline, and learn the needed lessons. Much can be learned consciously, from direct experience, observation, and study. Much can also be learned unconsciously, as experience is subjectively assimilated. And in each case where the student is open to his experience (and honest with himself), the progress is hastened. Human advancement naturally accelerates as consciousness is expanded and qualified.

Perhaps the most significant ingredient to human advancement is selflessness. Though the spiritual student is expected to consciously and effectively assist the process of advancement, the student must also take care to evaluate and reform the motives and expectations concerning his own advancement. Self-centeredness is a major obstruction to human advancement, regardless of ability and experience. Where the student is self-centered (to whatever extent), the student is naturally isolated from the more meaningful adjustments in consciousness which effectively mark the successive progress of the student along the spiritual path. One cannot obtain effective (proper) discipleship until considerable progress has been achieved in overcoming the self-centeredness of the human personality. Where the ego is for all practical purposes fully overcome, the student advances quickly and effectively (safely) through discipleship and the more esoteric stages.

A related factor in human advancement is the relationship between the individual and the race, and the balance of individual karma with the karma of humanity. One cannot progress in advance of the race without first contributing to the progress and advancement of the race. Further, one cannot progress at the expense of any other. Self-centered (but apparently selfless)

contributions are ineffective due to the lack of sincerity (rapport with humanity). Not only must the student (ultimately) become essentially selfless, but the student must also work within humanity for the sake of humanity, not for the sake of oneself. The greatest contribution of the esoteric student is his quality, in careful alignment with the quality of humanity. Thus, the advancement of humanity is deeply involved with those who pass naturally beyond the mundane consciousness.

† Commentary No. 289

Ascension

In the metaphysical context, advancement refers to a progressive upward movement (in consciousness) (along the spiritual path), while ascension refers to the final transition between the human stage and the next higher stage, the culmination of at least several lifetimes of conscious and deliberate evolution. Advancement can be accelerated as the student begins to master his own consciousness, but ascension remains a consequence of advancement and activity.

Many substantial prerequisites exist that must be fulfilled before ascension can occur, virtually all of which involve quality rather than specific achievements (quality is the integrated result of specific achievements and general accomplishments). All of the various prerequisites are interrelated and are normally fulfilled together, as ascension implies an overall, highly integrated balance of all pertinent forces. One of the most obvious prerequisites for ascension is the attainment of sufficient (earned) objective and subjective experience, both general and particular, and the corequisite karmic fulfillment. All individual karma must be fulfilled (released); ascension is not possible where any karmic ties and responsibilities continue to exist. The student must (ultimately) achieve sufficient detachment (freedom) and subjective polarization (the esoteric student is increasingly detached from objective involvement as he works on more meaningful (subjective) levels).

Another obvious prerequisite is self-mastery (and the mastery of the physical, emotional, and mental planes of consciousness). The candidate for ascension must have developed sufficient (objective and subjective) abilities and talents

for working in each of the seven ray domains (and have mastered each of the seven ray energies), and he must have completed several major initiations in consciousness. In addition to potency, the candidate must possess sufficient quality of consciousness. One can master a plane of consciousness with or without the sufficient quality of consciousness and conversely, one can develop sufficient quality of consciousness with or without sufficient mastery; both quality and mastery are required for ascension. In addition to the complete fulfillment of individual karma, the student must also contribute sufficiently to humanity and the planetary consciousness (he must fulfill substantially more than his share of racial (human) and planetary karma). The fulfillment of group karma in no way implies (or allows) the fulfillment of the individual karma of other persons.

One of the more difficult requirements for ascension is a lack of interest or desire for ascension (coupled with a lack of interest or desire for remaining within the human lifewave and/or lower worlds). This requires the achievement of a very delicate balance of desirelessness with service and a responsible commitment (to humanity and to the spiritual path). Since the student is denied interest in ascension (at least at the level for which ascension is possible), it follows that ascension cannot be evoked consciously by the student. Ascension is, however, an inevitable process that can be neither evoked nor deterred, a necessary product of spiritual momentum.

The role of ascension is to encourage the progress of the entire planetary life. The esoteric student, who, fully qualified, withdraws from the world of activity and begins the ascension in consciousness creates a (very potent) magnetic path that embraces probation, discipleship, initiation, and ascension (obscuration). That magnetic vortex (fully integrated and impersonal) continues as a subtle beacon of encouragement to all who are responsive to the magnetic currents of the esoteric path.

Consciousness

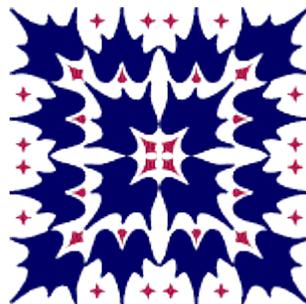
Consciousness is an induced quality, the intermediate aspect of the trinity, balanced between matter and spirit, and born of their interaction. More properly, consciousness begins as that interaction and develops as a consequence of that interaction. Consciousness is the quality of relationship (relatedness) and the means of equilibrium and evolution, being relatively intransient, potentially more permanent than matter but less permanent than spirit. Matter and spirit are the two extremes of consciousness, being relatively inert save for the activity of consciousness. Consciousness is relatively dynamic, though its domain covers a tremendous range of levels, types, and quality.

All matter (on any level) is infused with its spiritual counterpart (spirit) (from which matter is ultimately derived), but spirit remains a uniform (unitary), all-inclusive essence, while matter is highly diversified and differentiated. Consciousness provides relationship (communication) between matter and spirit, and for all practical purposes represents the life (spirit) aspect. By induction and infusion spirit provides the inherent life within all things, while matter simply provides the elements for the construction of (composite) forms. The life (consciousness) within each form evolves as the consciousness expands and improves in its various characteristics (quality) (its degree of refinement and degree of elevation). As consciousness is manifested on the (relatively) lower levels, the products of experience and manifestation are communicated via the more subtle aspects of consciousness to its higher counterpart. The paradox of material existence is that matter itself cannot exist without inherent consciousness, that every composite form is actually a superposition (integrated or otherwise) of various aspects of consciousness, each evolving on its own level. Consciousness can be defined as internal, self-consistent awareness on some level, having some relative quality. Atomic (and elemental) consciousness is necessarily limited in range and comprehension (compared with higher forms of consciousness), yet nonetheless a means of consequence of evolution on that level. On more human levels, consciousness is defined as the totality of conscious (and unconscious) states of an individual (or inter-related group). The waking-consciousness is normally characterized by sensation, emotion, volition,

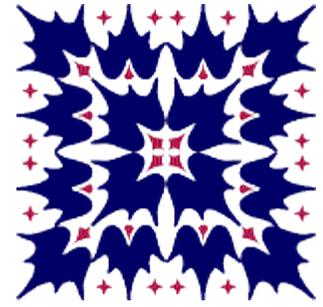
and thinking (including perception, cognition, and comprehension). But the (human) waking-consciousness is only the current focus of consciousness, and is therefore only a small portion of the individual's consciousness. That consciousness includes many (simultaneous, transient, and/or continuous) relatively conscious and unconscious states, both subconscious (above or beyond the normal threshold of the waking-consciousness).

Through experience and training the spiritual student learns to expand the conscious awareness far beyond the ordinary human (superficial) consciousness, at will and with conscious direction, being able to deal directly with energy and consciousness, while most of humanity deal directly only with the superficial and material aspects of human experience and expression.

Overall consciousness (the normal state and quality of conscious life (as a personality)) is an indication (albeit independently non-conclusive) of relative evolutionary development (achievement). The significance of consciousness (and its quality) lies in its relationship to evolution. As consciousness is improved on individual levels, so is the group consciousness improved. Consciousness provides the only effective means of health (harmony) (peace), evolutionary development, and liberation (freedom) (perfection).



Section 3.63



Truth and Reality

The Nature of Truth

- Following are a number of commentaries selected from Volume 3 of the Upper Triad Material. These commentaries are representative of basic ideas in theosophy.

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. 295

Meaning

One of the challenges of the esoteric philosophy is the cultivation of wisdom (understanding) (quality) through the presentation of ideas for consideration and application. The philosophy tends to address the more significant concepts (ideas) (principles) (teachings), which coincidentally tend to be more abstract and less easily conveyed than the relatively mundane (familiar) (more objective) (less significant) aspects. The problem of meaning can arise wherever attempts are made to communicate ideas. It can also arise with respect to the significance of life (experience) (philosophy).

In the communicative process, meaning refers to the idea intended to be conveyed and to the idea actually conveyed or received (understood). Problems arises from limitation, as the intended idea is translated into some symbolic

form or message (language) and as the received message is translated into some idea or understanding that the recipient correlates with the intended message. Problems are compounded by perception, prejudiced thinking (narrow-minded or premature assumptions), and selective interpretation based on disposition or habit. Consequently, the student should exercise considerable care (insight) in communication to ensure (to the extent that it is possible or reasonable) accuracy and proper significance. The student should also evaluate the possible interpretations of the message and consider the responsiveness and background of the recipient. As a recipient, the student should seek clarification of the meaning conveyed and evaluate the message or communication in context.

Context is important because it provides information which may clarify the intended meaning. Character and psychology both contribute to the context or framework of the communication. The words themselves are normally insufficient, because most words have several or more meanings (definitions) (denotations), some common, some not so common. The attachment that people tend to have with regard to particular definitions also contributes to the problem. Misunderstanding often arises from a failure to respect or understand the definitions of others, particularly where the individual (utilizing the concrete mind) associates only his own limited definitions of words (concepts) (actions). This is particularly a problem for spiritual students and for relatively subjective concepts. The concept of impersonality, for example, is frequently misunderstood by spiritual students, and communication often fails to impart the proper meaning. This is due to the limitations of language as well as to common preconceptions and predispositions (based on limited experience or ability).

The esoteric philosophy in a sense embraces a very particular terminology, where ordinary words takes on both academic definitions and connotations as well as special (subtle) associations and correspondences, making far greater use of the available language than ordinary communication. Consequently, the student must learn to recognize the context and implications of philosophical writing and pertinent communication. A broad vocabulary and an open mind are essential to the understanding of the various aspects of the esoteric philosophy.

The meaning of any idea (concept) (thought) can be properly conveyed, but only where the proper energy (qualification) is present and only where the recipient is responsive. Where serious philosophical writing is read casually (and where ordinary or common meanings are presumed) a great deal of the meaning may not be conveyed. Interactive communication (where feedback is permitted) is preferred, particularly where the interaction is simultaneous. The esoteric student should ultimately be in touch with the energy of the communication so that the entire meaning can be embraced with insight and confidence.

† Commentary No. 373

Personal Values

Individual consciousness may be described in many ways, from the level or plane of consciousness (physical, emotional, mental, etc.) upon which the individual consciousness is polarized (normally and predominately oriented) (stabilized), to the relative presence of the many and particular characteristics of consciousness (e.g., in terms of abilities, tendencies, attributes, etc.). An individual's consciousness is closely related to the individual's overall character, temperament, and values. An individual's personal values serve both as an interactive reflection of consciousness and as a means of achievement (i.e., as an evoking force for experience).

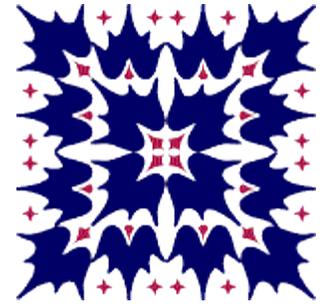
As a reflection or indication of consciousness, personal values are both the result of consciousness and a causative (albeit intermediate) force within the overall consciousness. Personal values can cover a rather wide range (things, experience, ethics, principles, knowledge, character, etc.). Actual personal values are those which are actually embraced in consciousness (typically to some extent consciously, to a large extent unconsciously), and as such are fairly good indications of consciousness. But the actual personal values may be masked by the superficial aspects of consciousness (which (aspects) are also indications of the character and quality of consciousness). Personal values embraced merely intellectually (conceptually) are not very accurate indications of consciousness, for to be embraced in consciousness, a personal value must be reflected or expressed by the personality in accordance with the value.

Where a person's professed (intellectual) values are not actually embraced in consciousness, the lack of harmony between assertion and actuality is a causative force in itself. In the case of conscious, sincere intention (to embrace the value), the resulting causative force will be constructive, seeking to enfold the value in consciousness (bringing about the (relatively ideal) actuality (and thereby resolve the inconsistency)). But in the case of profession without such sincere intention, the disharmony (hypocrisy) will resolve itself in other, less constructive ways. The spiritual student should thus endeavor to live in accordance with his beliefs (personal values), thereby bringing about more effective change (progression) in consciousness.

The overall character and quality of consciousness (and the derived temperament, values, etc.) are not so much a function of particular values as they are a function of the entire collection of values, as each value is weighted appropriately by the degree that it is embraced and its relative significance. The extent to which a value is understood (realized) is also a factor, for values may be held superficially, environmentally (unconsciously), or according to various motives. Likewise the degree to which a person is absorbed in his mundane environment qualifies the personal values (and consciousness) (or vice versa).

As a means of achievement, personal values (keywords) intelligently embraced in consciousness can bring about considerable progress, leading ultimately to (relative) perfection. To be effective, such values should be wisely chosen, continually (not continuously) studied (via meditation) and consciously embraced, enfolded, and expressed (to whatever extent is appropriate). The student should never embrace values concretely or in any absolute sense, for the student must remain flexible (receptive) and relative, in order to progress, as the perspective is ever gradually broadened. Some values will ultimately be discarded, others transformed and incorporated, as the awareness and realization of the student improves.

Section 3.64



Karma

The Human Being and Evolution

- Following are a number of commentaries selected from Volume 4 of the Upper Triad Material. These commentaries are representative of basic ideas in theosophy.

The Cultivation of Personality

The personality is the mechanism through which the human soul expresses itself on the physical, emotional, and mental planes of consciousness, the form or instrument that the soul inhabits and utilizes during an incarnation or lifetime of experience and expression. Experience is the means by which the life within the form evolves. Evolution proceeds as the soul gathers knowledge and experience. Through assimilation, that knowledge and experience is transformed into wisdom. Wisdom then manifests as talent, virtue, conscience, and consciousness. Gradually the human life evolves from unconsciousness through self-consciousness to super-consciousness.

This evolution advances as the law of action and consequence (karma) provides the experiences and opportunities necessary for further growth, experiences earned through physical, emotional, and mental activity. The greater the understanding of spiritual laws such as the law of karma, the easier it is for the spiritual student to consciously direct the personality actions in harmony with these laws and evolve more readily, smoothly, and usefully.

In order to make the best use of the opportunity for experience (incarnation), the personality must be properly cultivated. If the personality is finely tuned to the wisdom, intuition, and guidance of the soul, then the personality becomes a more perfect instrument for soul expression. The personality should not be suppressed or denied, but should be purified and uplifted to a greater usefulness. The personality should be used intelligently and be well taken care of. The instrument serves best when in full mental, emotional, and physical health. The fine-tuning or cultivation of the personality is a continuous process of purification, discipline, and upliftment. As the personality becomes purified it lends itself more and more to the spiritual discipline of the higher self. The instrument must be encouraged to cooperate with the soul, and will eventually become so aligned with the soul, that the soul energies will flow through the lower self (personality) unimpeded.

The purification process begins with right thought, right feeling, and right action. As thoughts and feelings and behavior are disciplined and intelligently

directed, the entire personality is brought into a single integrated and purified vibration (quality). This process of integration and refinement is a prerequisite for alignment with the overshadowing soul. The virtues and the qualities of the spiritual life (as well as can be recognized) must be unfolded within the personality expression. This is not an instantaneous or rigid process. It is a gradual cultivation and upliftment performed wisely and naturally (albeit requiring significant effort and determination). Observation and self-analysis are keys to the cultivation; for limitations, vices, and weaknesses must be recognized in order for them to be transformed into freedoms, virtues, and spiritual strength. Compensation should be made for misplaced energies, and adjustments made to correct inappropriate action, as each human being is responsible for his own behavior as well as the circumstances. And through the recognition of right action, that behavior should be strengthened.

The fine-tuning process is a rather personal one, directed, inspired, and assisted (subjectively) by the God-self within. Each person lives in a different perspective, learning from different experiences, though each (spiritual student) should strive to broaden his perspective within the Self and live the life in harmony with the spiritual laws as he understands them. With consistency, the aspirant develops a refined vehicle for experience and service according to earned talents, qualities, and opportunities.

† Commentary No. 6

The Monad and Its Reflections

The monad is the highest aspect of the human being, one of three major levels. The other two levels are the soul and the personality. The monad is the divine spark of God whose presence cannot even be glimpsed until the student has attained lasting soul-consciousness. The monad is the father or Shiva aspect which expresses itself through the upper triad of atma-buddhi-manas. Atma is the spiritual will; buddhi is the spiritual intuition; and manas is the abstract or higher mind. The reflection (manifestation) of the monad on those three levels of consciousness is the soul or higher self. The monad is constantly en rapport with the godhead, while the soul is the descent (reflection) of the monad into matter (consciousness).

The soul is that immortal essence that chooses to incarnate under the law of karma, time and time again, through the various personality rays, for the purpose of gaining experience and thereby evolving. Due to the interrelatedness of all life, the evolution of the soul contributes also to the evolution of the greater life. The soul is that essence which transcends the earthly worlds of consciousness and is the totality of individual experience, talent, virtue, and conscience. The soul is the individuality, and it functions through several vehicles or bodies. Each vehicle is attuned to a different rate of vibration of matter. These vehicles are the reflection of the soul into matter (which is the second reflection of the monad) and comprise the lower triad. With the dense physical body, the lower triad becomes a quaternary. The three aspects of the lower self or personality are the concrete mind, the astral or emotional body, and the energy body (the etheric or vital body). These are the instruments for the expression of the three lower human principles: mental, emotional, and physical. The physical body is simply an outer covering for the etheric body.

The personality (lower self) is the three-fold vehicle for experience during a physical incarnation. It is the creation (reflection) in matter by the soul. Upon the death of the dense physical body, there is normally a withdrawal of consciousness from the physical onto successively higher levels. The personality vehicles (etheric, emotional, and mental) are successively discarded and disintegrated. The individuality (the soul) then stands free of those earthly limitations and rests. After the proper assimilation of the experience of the past life, and after due preparation, the soul seeks another birth for further experience and expression.

A new personality is built or created by the soul that incorporates improvements in the physical, emotional, and mental characteristics (as earned or developed). These improvements are based on the past experience and karma of the soul, and the resultant personality is (of course) subject to the karma that has been evoked for the individual and for the environment of the incarnation. But the form should be distinguished from the life within the form. The form is matter, and the life within the form is (a much higher) consciousness.

The personality is energized or organized matter with a rather primitive consciousness. The soul is the higher consciousness and individuality, while the monad is pure spirit. The monad and the soul are both sexless; it is only the

personality that manifests as male or female. Each aspect (sex) contributes experiences to benefit the evolving soul. Often the soul will incarnate alternately male and female, or at least according to some pattern. The soul will normally incarnate a number of times in each sub-race of each of the great root-races, and through various national environments, each with its own special contribution of experience.

† Commentary No. 9

The Etheric Body and Healing

The etheric (vital) (energy) body of man is a vehicle of consciousness that interpenetrates and sustains the dense physical body. The etheric body is often called the etheric double, for it is the same shape and slightly larger than its dense physical counterpart. The etheric body is like a sea of sparkling points, a web of dynamic energy. Each spark or point of light is a focus for vital, sustaining forces to flow into the dense physical body.

The etheric or energy body has four levels, corresponding to the four etheric sub-planes of the physical world. The forces of the etheric body on the first or reflecting ether provide a vital function in relation to memory, for the reflecting ether is a realm of impressions in the form of etheric energies. The second or light ether is the realm of sense perception. The forces along the negative pole of the light ether permit the functions of sight, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling. The second ether forces of the etheric body also generate the blood heat by flowing along the positive pole. The forces of the etheric body in the third or life ether are the forces of propagation. The forces of the fourth or chemical ether provide for the growth and maintenance of the dense physical body. Without the etheric double there could be no growth, no motion, and no vitalization of the physical body; the cells of the physical body would simply die without replacement.

The work of the energy body is continuous; however, during the active waking state, the energy of the physical body is expended faster than the vital forces can keep up (usually). Thus the individual becomes tired and must sleep. During sleep, the vital forces of the etheric body can work unimpeded by physical, emotional, and mental activity (which expends energy), and the

physical body can be restored to its normal strength for a new day of experience. This action of the etheric body is very much related to the health of the physical body. The vital body is actually the body of causes as far as the dense physical is concerned, for the health of the etheric double determines (controls) the health of the dense physical. Karmic patterns appear in the etheric prior to manifestation in the dense physical instrument. Medical science will be greatly enhanced when treatment is performed on etheric levels (and on other levels of causes) rather than on dense physical levels (which are levels of effects), and especially when medical science has an appreciation for the law of karma.

Psychic or spiritual healing is generally performed on etheric or astral levels, for a dense physical healing requires etheric adjustment, and an etheric healing requires an astral adjustment. Similarly, an emotional healing requires an adjustment on the next higher level (which is mental). The causes of disease in a body, whether directly or indirectly karmic, will be found on the next higher level of consciousness. Thus, mental or emotional problems can cause a chain reaction of disease on lower levels. The effects may be displaced in time, but nevertheless remain related.

The spiritual student is gradually trained to look for and recognize the causes (on various levels), rather than to look only at the effects. Any form of disease can be traced back to some fundamental (general or specific) cause. The quality of thoughts and feelings usually has a rather direct effect upon health. Though the individual cannot interfere with karma, he can consciously adjust his mental, emotional, and physical behavior for the better, which should certainly improve his health and simultaneously enhance his ability to fulfill karma and to respond to dharma in a more enlightened manner.

Destiny and Free Will

Complicated by semantics and perspective, the paradox of destiny and free will has plagued thinkers throughout history. The problem involves the inherent limitations of human experience and consciousness, and the interdependence of events (cause and effects). A man is the dynamic totality of his experience and the totality of the (external and internal) forces acting upon or within him. Any decision (action) that a man undertakes is necessarily (and relatively if not altogether) dependent upon that dynamic totality of his being. Through karma (action and reaction) a man and his condition of consciousness are the result of past action and present being.

In a practical analysis, the problem of destiny and free will is relatively simple; it is the problem of freedom and law. Life is conditioned by natural laws which place bounds or limitation on freedom. All natural laws find some place and purpose within the evolutionary scheme. The overall purpose of natural law is to encourage and guide evolution. The unevolved man knows nothing of higher purpose and has minimal freedom. His actions are almost entirely the result of external forces. The truly enlightened man understands (to a certain extent) and intelligently cooperates with higher purpose, and has considerable freedom. His actions are based on realizations; for the most part he chooses his response to the various forces acting upon him.

But even the practical analysis is not without its difficulties. Science postulates a mechanistic universe that may even have an analogy in terms of consciousness. The (scientific) energy perspective is a very powerful one. The human being (soul) and its personality instrument are both affected by external and internal forces. Though the application of the various forces may be adjusted, what (ultimately) determines the adjustment? In an absolute sense, is not the totality of being instantaneous predetermination? Is there an energy output, not directly dependent upon conditioned energy inputs, that might be called new (unique) causation? Religion postulates an omnipotent (having unlimited influence), omnipresent (immanent), and omniscient (having infinite awareness) God. But cannot omniscience imply a consciousness beyond that of human mentality, an impersonal (nonhuman) (abstract) intelligence

unconcerned with trivial details (individual human souls), but concerned with a purpose and the means of accomplishment on a grand scale? Are not the various natural laws simply the (unconscious) consequences of divine purpose? And what about the philosophical doctrines of determinism (predestination) and fatalism (human powerlessness)? Are not these (limited) perspectives resolvable (more meaningful) within a broader framework of relative freedom? Even deterministic philosophy with its antecedent causes can be interpreted in relativistic terms.

The proper exercise of freedom, being dependent on external forces (destiny) (consequence of past actions) and internal forces (experience) (consequence of being), is an intelligent balance between free will and destiny (the bounds of law and consequence). Free will implies the ability to choose between alternatives such that the choice is creatively and consciously self-determined.

But what is self-determination? Relativistic philosophy reveals the middle path in which either extreme (destiny or free will) is simply a (valid) way of looking at (apparent) reality. But who can say how the little world of human consciousness appears from above (beyond)? The whole key to the paradox is the nature of creativity and the concept of new causation (epigenesis), of unconditioned energy (from the monad) used in an unqualified manner. In the absolute sense, the paradox of destiny and free will remains, a paradox.

† Commentary No. 94

The Elevation of the Lower Self

The path of aspiration (seeking) leads naturally to the probationary path. The path of probation (preparation) is only one of many steps along the endless path of further preparation and purification. The further a student progresses along the spiritual path, the greater is the degree of refinement (of faculties) expected. The physical, emotional, and mental bodies must be purified (refined) (sublimated) (disciplined) if the student is to achieve that relative perfection that is implied at the fulfillment (completion) of human evolution. All along the way the lower self (personality) must be improved as a controllable and effective

instrument and elevated such that the higher consciousness may be properly expressed in the lower worlds.

The process of refinement and elevation is a process of conversion and transformation of quality (of matter) from a lower state (a relatively coarse vibration) to a higher state (a higher, purified vibration or quality). This process is required in order to overcome the limitations of objective experience and to encourage the cultivation and manifestation of the spiritual consciousness demanded of evolution. The process of physical refinement and purification normally proceeds simultaneously with that of the emotional (astral) and mental natures as the three levels (instruments) are somewhat interdependent (though not necessarily cooperative at the earlier stages). The three bodies must be integrated such that the physical, emotional, and mental aspects function as a coherent (and controllable) whole. The integration of the lower self is a requirement for its elevation and alignment with the soul.

As long as the three elements of the lower self are permitted to function more or less independently, they cannot be properly controlled or effectively utilized by the higher self. The three aspects of the personality must be purified if they are to function harmoniously and cooperatively. Only relatively purified elements can be brought together to form a coherent and unified instrument. Such an instrument can then be elevated so that the soul energies may come to dominate the lesser life (the form).

As progress is made in the discipline of the lower life, the process of refinement becomes easier in some ways (and more subtle in others) as the "hold" of the personality is disengaged and as momentum is built up. Considerable and consistent effort may be expended over a long period of time before observable results or improvements can be noted. The strength of the elemental lives which form the three bodies is considerable. Even stronger is the personality-life of the integrated lower self (governed by the concrete mind) that is not quite responsive to soul direction. The resistance of the lower self must be fully overcome before the instrument becomes the faithful and cooperative servant of the God-self. The time required to achieve self-control (from the standpoint of the soul) depends upon the process and experience attained in earlier lives. The student who faces the spiritual path for the first time may need a number of

lifetimes to sublimate the personality and to achieve discipleship. The student of considerable experience on the path may need only a few years.

The student of life can experience and progress substantially without concern for conscious efforts toward personality adjustment and improvement. But there is a limit to the progress that can be made without consciously directing the purification and elevation of the mortal self. The unprepared personality cannot be spiritually responsive, but as the work of refinement proceeds on the mind, the emotions, and the physical body, so shall the lower self (eventually) be infused with the spiritual energies of the soul.

† Commentary No. 133

The Higher Self

The soul is the abstract and subjective expression of the monad, the upper triad of atma-buddhi-manas, and the unit of human evolution and synthesis. It is the true individuality, of which the human personality is but a shadow (reflection) (expression) (instrument) in the lower worlds.

Whereas the personality is mortal (temporary), the soul is relatively immortal, incorporating the patterns for personality development (incarnation) and assimilating the character, experience, and quality produced through the personality. As the higher self, the soul is relatively insensitive to the pain or pleasure of the personality; the soul is not concerned with specific events in time and space in any objective sense. The soul is only really sensitive to overall quality, which is the integration of personality experience. Thus, quality (the soul) is beyond (the transience of) time and space.

The three aspects of the soul form a trinity in consciousness. The first or highest aspect is atma, which implies spiritual will and purpose, the seat of identification. Atma is the aspect which is most detached or removed from the lower life, and provides a thread or link to the monad. The second aspect is buddhi, which implies spiritual intuition, the seat of union. Where atma provides the power of choice (in the divine sense), buddhi provides the power of insight. Buddhi is the real seat of spiritual perception, being the central element in soul-consciousness. In buddhi is found the dynamic quality of the soul itself,

which is love (inclusiveness) in its higher (impersonal) sense. The third or lowest aspect of the soul is manas, which is the principle of mind. Manas provides the thread or link between the soul and its personality, through intelligence and spiritual activity. Through the union of buddhi and manas (love and intelligence) (soul and personality) is produced wisdom.

The soul is the consciousness of life which is expressed through the three elements (physical body, emotions, and mind) and the seven major chakras (and the many lesser centers) of the personality. The chakras provide for the communication of energy between soul and personality. The personality is the agent (means) of experience and expression, while the soul is the method of consciousness (uninvolved and unentangled). The soul perceives the effects (as integrated experience and quality) of life in the lower worlds, but only indirectly. For those who are not on the spiritual path, the soul extracts (assimilates) the experience of each lifetime in the interval between incarnations. For those who are on the path, that process of assimilation becomes more direct as soul contact is achieved during the lifetime.

At the interface between the concrete (rational) (personal) (objective) mind of the personality and the abstract (impersonal) (subjective) mind of the soul is found a key to soul-consciousness. The concrete mind is limited by form, whereas the abstract mind is free of thinking entirely. In the soul, thinking is replaced by direct realization and comprehension. In the soul is consciousness without form, and the awareness of consciousness itself. The soul is thus characterized by internal recollectedness and constant (unstructured) meditation. The various personal attributes relate to the higher ones through the principle of correspondence, but to think of the soul in ordinary human terms can be quite misleading. Through identification (in actuality) with the soul, the meaning of the character of the soul becomes apparent. Words are not enough to describe the true mystical experience (realization) imparted through the inner communion. The silence of the presence of the soul must be entered, almost constantly, in order to appreciate or understand that nature of reality.

The Human Aura

The human aura is the energy field associated with the mind and personality. It has several aspects, including the etheric or energy body, the astral or desire body, and the mental aura. All of the sensations, feelings, experiences, thoughts, actions, and characteristics of the personality find their existence or counterpart within the human aura. Each of the several aspects may be considered an aura in itself, on its own level or dimension. Thus, in referring to an aura, one might be referring to any one or more of the several aspects.

The aura is a field of influence and a means of interacting consciously and unconsciously with the immediate environment. As a field, the aura may be large or small, potent or impotent, active or passive, transmissive or reactive, bright or dull, controlled or uncontrolled, dynamic or (relatively) static, stable or unstable, strong or weak, offensive or defensive, impersonal or personal. The aura may be constituted as any combination of the preceding variables or dimensions, and in varying degrees. The aura may be ever-changing or varying in one or more of these characteristics.

As the aura interacts with the external world, it serves as an instrument of experience. Through the aura the personality is influenced (to a certain extent, depending on the character of the aura) by the environment, and through the aura is the environment (and other lives) influenced to a certain extent by the individual. The bulk of information (experience) obtained by an individual comes through the human aura (and is perceived and interpreted) (consciously or unconsciously) by the personality. The aura is the primary element of sense-perception, because it colors or influences perception according to its character. A person is influenced more by the environment through the aura than through the (apparent) faculties of the ordinary senses. And how a person influences the environment is mostly a matter of the aura and its interaction with the external world.

As the individual progresses spiritually, the aura becomes more and more purified and disciplined and responsive to the inner self. The distortions of mundane emotional and mental life are minimized (if not altogether eliminated),

and the influence of the spiritually-centered student is then enhanced as the aura transmits the quality (potency) of the spiritual character. It is not so much what is performed in the outer world by the qualified spiritual student as much as the presence of such a spiritualized and influential personality. Such processes are mainly unconscious, a result of being, rather than a consequence of doing or trying.

The various aspects of the human aura (body) relate in various ways between the personality and its environment. The etheric or vital aura is concerned with etheric (physical) energies. The stability (balance) of the etheric body is essential to physical well-being and vitality. The astral or emotional aura is larger, more subtle than the etheric body, and inherently more interactive with the environment. All of the emotional characteristics, feelings, desires, tendencies, and vulnerabilities are contained within the astral body or aura. The astral body of the well-disciplined spiritual student is quite stable, clear, serene, and mature, being relatively undistracted by emotional currents. Similarly, the mental aura is larger and even more subtle than the astral body. If the aura is relatively pure and responsive to the inner spiritual potency, then the energies of the soul can flow easily into and through the clarified mental aura and its subordinate elements (astral and etheric counterparts) which together constitute a singular and effective spiritual instrument.

† Commentary No. 219

Karma

The law of karma is one of the most fundamental principles, if not the most significant force for evolution. Karma is the law of cause and effect, of action and consequence. As such, karma is the force which sustains the activity of manifestation, allowing divine purpose to be served.

Without karma there would be no motion or movement, no vibration, no activity, no life at all in the lower worlds; for in the fundamental sense, karma is the force of manifestation itself, the force (system of forces) which ties all of manifestation together as a means of experience and expression. Karma therefore promotes evolution and gives meaning to all of experience.

Basically, karma provides the urge toward evolution and enlightenment by serving as a super-personal teacher to each life, creating the experience and lessons and circumstances needed for the advancement of that life. From another point of view, equally valid, karma is simply the unresolved or unfulfilled personal force (or energy). For every action there is a sending forth of energy which must be resolved in one form or another, and simultaneously give meaning to the cycle of energy. The returning force may be delayed in time and space, and it may be transformed into any of the various forms or levels of force, so that the end result is a meaningful learning experience (or opportunity) for the individual who sent forth the energy in the first place. This process of action and consequence is complicated since each person is continually sending forth energies to be fulfilled and those energies are superimposed (and interactive) to create a continuous stream of returning energy. Thus karma is said to be the sum total of all unresolved personal energy at any given moment in time.

Karma is therefore a complicated and dynamic interaction of a continuous stream of causes (action) and effects (consequence). Furthermore, if a particular aspect of unresolved energy could be isolated, it would be seen to be modified in time by subsequent causes (experience). A particular consequence, for example, might be lessened or modified as a result of newly acquired understanding. Karma is not merely retribution for action; it is meaningful (earned) and serves evolutionary purposes. If a particular lesson is learned, there is no need for further consequence and the energy is fulfilled. The majority of karmic energy (effects) is received and assimilated unconsciously. As the spiritual student advances in awareness and consciousness, the process becomes more conscious and much more rapid. When an individual realizes he is responsible for all of his own actions, then the karmic process becomes much more potent, since the learning process is more direct as action and consequence are properly associated.

But in the early going (in lifetimes prior to being placed upon the spiritual path), an individual sends forth far more energy (causes) than can be fulfilled at the same rate or even during the same lifetime. Therefore, each individual accumulates karma during most lifetimes, working off as much as possible according to the degree of experience and consciousness attained. As the

individual evolves, it becomes possible to assimilate experience more readily and the accumulated (earned) karma can be resolved or fulfilled at a greater rate. The turning point comes when the individual consciously begins to moderate or discipline his actions, so that the vast stream of unconsciously generated force is tempered by intelligence and discretion. Ultimately, at some point along the spiritual path of conscious evolution, the student works off (fulfills) the last of the accumulated karmic force, and from that point onward karma is fulfilled at approximately the same rate that it is generated.

† Commentary No. 299

Human Sexuality

Sexuality refers to the quality (condition) of being sexual (or bisexual) in contrast to being nonsexual, and in the human sense, refers to the condition of the personality instrument. The soul is nonsexual, without regard to either sex, but able to integrate both male and female forces (principles). Consequently, the human personality matrix (from which the human personality is created or evoked into incarnation) is bisexual (hermaphroditic) (androgynous).

Though the personality matrix (archetype) is bisexual, the actual (manifested) personality (form) (body) is either male or female, as one or the other of the two sexual principles dominates the form. When a soul incarnates (as it is drawn into incarnation by karmic forces), it chooses the sex of its physical instrument depending on cultural conditions (opportunities), the need for particular experience (male or female), and proper karmic consideration. The soul incarnates (alternately or as needed) a sufficient number of times as a male personality to properly develop the male principles (and male character) and a sufficient number of times as a female personality to properly develop the female principles (and female character), in a balanced way so that ultimately the male and female principles can be fully integrated within the personality.

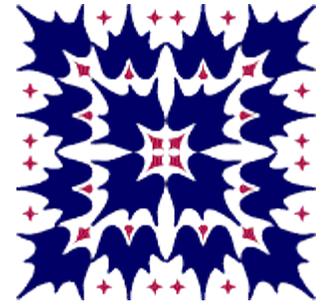
Every human form has both a male and female potentiality within itself, but (generally) only one or the other is developed in any one lifetime. A male personality is designed for the male experience (and conversely, the female personality is designed for the female experience), even though female (male) characteristics (principles) are potentially available. The soul, being impersonal

with respect to the personality, does not identify with either male or female, but the personality that is properly formed and balanced will naturally identify with the (physical) sexual nature, male or female as the case may be. With regard to consciousness, however, the spiritual student should accept the basic male or female personality as an instrument (of the soul) and identify with the soul nature rather than the nature of the personality form.

The natural (normal) human (personality) condition (orientation) is heterosexual, but due to the complicated (bisexual) nature of the personality matrix, the personality form may acquire (potentially) homosexual preferences. This can result from a lack of balance between the intended predominant male (female) nature and its subtle counterpart, or simply from strong personal affections (with regard to particular persons (due to previous experiences (in earlier lifetimes) where the sexual orientation (relationships) may have been quite different)). It is quite natural for individuals to experience a deep affection (brotherhood) for others without regard to sexual orientation, but the spiritual student should not be confused or distracted by any (strong) identification with the physical form, regardless of sexual orientation.

Any substantial sexual urge (desire), heterosexual or otherwise, is an indication of identification with the physical and emotional nature of the (lower self) personality rather than with the mental and spiritual nature. When the student is mentally or spiritually polarized (and where the lower nature has been properly qualified, the student is no longer vulnerable to physical and/or emotional distraction. Human sexual distinction is designed for the purpose of creation, both procreation (propagation) and upliftment of creative (sexual) force into mental and spiritual abilities (creative potential on mental and spiritual levels). As male and female creative forces are properly uplifted and balanced, the individual becomes a potent creator in mental, astral, and etheric matter (without regard to the particular sexual nature of the personality form).

Section 3.65



Knowledge

Leading to Understanding and Wisdom

- Following are a number of commentaries selected from Volume 5 of the Upper Triad Material. These commentaries are representative of basic ideas in theosophy.

Glamour and Illusion

The subject of glamour and illusion is a rather vital one for mankind as well as for the spiritual student, for both glamour and illusion must be conquered and overcome by humanity before man can attain enlightenment and liberation. The physical, emotional, and mental worlds of human experience and evolution are the realms of glamour and illusion that cloud human vision and impair the realization of truth. The evolving man must gradually and successively discern greater truths from the glammers and illusions of the lower life. Glamour implies illusion on astral or emotional levels, while illusion is essentially mental in nature. Glamour is illusion intensified by desire.

Each glamour (illusion) has its counterpart on the mental (astral) plane. Since truth is relative, so are the various illusions that must be faced in the lower worlds. The spiritual path is one of piercing the lower glammers and illusions and putting into practice the higher and greater truths as they are realized. The overcoming of glamour (and illusion) implies bringing the enlightenment of the soul into the lower life, resulting in greater awareness. Then matters can be seen in a broader perspective. The sense of values should be modified by the light of the soul, as the student begins to recognize broad and general causes instead of focusing on limited lower world effects or events.

Both glamour and illusion are individual and group problems. The spiritual student must deal with the glammers that affect him (that can be recognized) and mankind must deal (slowly) with the mass of glamour and illusion in the lower worlds. Glamour and illusion can be considered to be the (almost) inevitable result of limitation of consciousness and language, misunderstanding and misinterpretation (of life and the world in which humanity lives). Therefore the problem of glamour and illusion is quite formidable. There are many glammers and illusions that must inevitably be faced and overcome, including the glammers (and illusions) of materialism, power, destiny, ambition, self-importance, separation from God, good and evil (and all of the pairs of opposites), etc. There are also a number of special glammers that the spiritual student must face, including the glamour of the spiritual path itself, the illusion of the guru or teacher, and the glammers of superiority, authority, and idealism.

Three attitudes are said to be breeders of glamour: criticism, separateness, and pride.

Mental and emotional reactions and responses to the environment are based on a limited and distorted perception that is further impaired by kama-manas (desire-mind) and ego. Some of the glammers are environmentally conditioned; some are inherited; and some are self-induced. Wherever the student sees only part of the truth (which is practically all of the time), he must necessarily draw wrong (incomplete) conclusions. In broadening perspectives and in being able to expand or modify values and conclusions (through the open and illumined mind), the student encourages the dissipation of glamour (through illumination) and the dispelling of illusion (through intuition).

Since glamour and illusion are primarily based on the sense of duality, the process of release is called unity. As lives are broadened and as the spiritual student thinks more and more in terms of humanity (and greater lives), a greater contribution is made to the release of mankind from the world (mass) glamour and illusion. On one level, the Bhagavad Gita is a treatise that describes the combat of the individual (and the world) disciple (Arjuna) with glamour. As mankind enters the struggle and begins to grow spiritually, there is a transmutation of glamour, illusion, and ignorance into love and wisdom.

† Commentary No. 23

The Esoteric

In the classical sense, the esoteric teachings are those which simply cannot be revealed to the human mind, those which can be neither spoken nor written. Those teachings are esoteric because humanity has not yet evolved sufficient intelligence, awareness, understanding, experience, and responsibility; and because human language and mental capability (and maturity) are not sufficiently developed. The esoteric, arcane, or secret teachings are only available on causal (soul) levels and cannot be brought down into the concrete mind without serious misunderstanding or misrepresentation. The higher teachings bring greater and greater responsibilities, including power that would be misused if the recipient were not properly prepared.

As man evolves, the esoteric teachings are gradually revealed (and thereby become exoteric), first to individuals who have prepared themselves, and then gradually there is a dissemination of the teachings to the masses, as humanity evolves. This occurs as a person (spiritual student) (and humanity) develops the capacity to understand and the responsibility to use the higher knowledge properly (selflessly and wisely). This is true in all branches of knowledge: philosophy, religion, and science. Always there is a wide range (diversity) of capacity among humanity. The knowledge and enlightenment that a man can comprehend is always available to him (through karma, one way or another). As a person is prepared, he will be magnetically drawn into the highest teachings that he can responsibly and wisely accept, the teachings that have been earned as a consequence of his life and activity.

In contrast to the classical definition, the word "esoteric" is widely used to mean "metaphysical" or that which is (supposedly) above and beyond the orthodox teachings (and readily available). In this sense, the esoteric teachings are (by degrees) that which was once truly esoteric (though the quality of translation and understanding varies). The truly esoteric teachings remain beyond the ken of mortal minds. The highest teachings come in the form of symbols and are simultaneously quite simple and exceedingly intricate. The abstract energy exists first, and then the abstract thought. The abstract is gradually constrained to the concrete thinking and finally is clumsily revealed through language. In such teachings the student is encouraged to value first the energy behind the thought (symbol), then the thought behind the words. The orthodox metaphysical teachings do not fall into the esoteric category, since they are distorted by the personalities through which they are revealed.

Great care must be taken in translating from the abstract to the concrete, for emotional and intellectual approaches most often result in misunderstanding and the misrepresentation of truth, often in a glamorous and personality-centered atmosphere. The devotional, meditative, impersonal, and intuitive atmosphere is the safest in which to discern and disseminate truth. The serious student accepts a truth only when the inner authority recognizes the truth. The spiritual student should concentrate on living the spiritual life, through the study of the highest teachings available, through meditation and the alignment

of personality and soul, through purification and preparation, and through the unselfish application of the life in the service of God and humanity.

The esoteric teachings point constantly to an understanding of God (life) and living properly in the lower worlds, to the understanding of the spiritual self and relationships, and to the evolution of consciousness. May humanity prepare itself for the responsibilities which come with the esoteric teachings as they are gradually transformed into the exoteric domain.

† Commentary No. 29

Matter and Energy

Energy is the essence or real character of the universe; energy is life itself. All that is, is energy. Everything in the objective and subjective universe is alive with energy. From the subatomic and nuclear particles (resonant energies) to the great cosmic entities, all is energy. Matter is simply crystallized energy, energy or life that is constrained and limited to the expression of form. Matter is objective substance, energy in the form of building blocks, whether it is physical, emotional, or even mental matter. Matter is negative (passive) energy, that is moved or manipulated or transformed by positive (active) energy. Energy cannot be created or destroyed, but it can be modified or transformed from one form or domain to another.

From the objective perspective, the densest (physical) matter (and its associated forces and energies) is reality, and the superphysical is the realm of illusion. From the higher (subjective) perspective, the inverse is true: matter is illusion, and the world of forces and energies (the subjective realm) is the only reality. Spirit and matter are the two extremes of energy and constitute a duality (paradox) (pair-of-opposites). Spirit is liberated matter and matter is crystallized spirit. Thus is energy the common reality.

Energy is vitality, the capacity to perform work. Force is applied, directed, or focused energy. The task of the spiritual student is to work effectively and constructively with the various energies that are made available. The esoteric student bridges the gap (illusion) between subjective and objective realities. The esoteric student lives and works consciously with forces and energies.

Work is the transfer of energy from one form or aspect to another. The esoteric student works in the world of causes, responding to the available energies, and mentally transforming and directing them with purpose and wisdom into the objective world in order to produce the needed effects. Behind every effect there is a cause (energy). For every energy sent out, there are appropriate energies evoked, to accomplish the work of evolution.

The human being (like every positive life-form in manifestation) is a receiver, absorber, transformer, and transmitter of energy. From one perspective, the work of human evolution is to perfect this complex energy-mechanism through the cultivation of consciousness, where consciousness is the aspect that provides the motivation, purification, and control of the mechanism (the human personality and soul). The unenlightened and separative consciousness (of the ordinary man) is imperfect and careless; the enlightened cooperative consciousness (of the evolving esoteric student) is efficient and deliberately constructive. Energy is neither good nor evil, for energy is divine essence; but the uses of energy, the motives and purposes of the directing agent, determine the appropriateness or rightness.

As the human being evolves he begins to respond to the higher forces (applied energies) of the soul and begins to unconsciously (and eventually consciously) cooperate with the higher forces. The effect of energy depends on the nature and quality of the receiving apparatus (the soul, the mind, the astral body, etc.), and the coherence, purpose, and intensity of the force (which depends on the nature and quality of the transmitting agent and of the medium, atmosphere, or aura through which the energy must travel). Where there is little understanding and a lack of maturity, there are the dangers of uncontrollable and wrongly applied forces. With spiritual and esoteric maturity comes the understanding, wisdom, and ability to constructively and potently apply the various forms of physical and superphysical energy.

The Hidden Wisdom

For those who seek truth and enlightenment, there are two interdependent sources for the keys to wisdom. These keys are concealed from those who are unprepared and are revealed by degrees only to those who have prepared themselves with the prerequisite experience and consciousness. The primary source is within the human being. Hidden within man himself are the keys to the mysteries of life and the mysteries of the universe; for through the soul a man can reach levels of consciousness and sources of knowledge far above and beyond that which can be translated into four-dimensional thoughts or objective experience. The perfected man does not know everything, but he does know where he can find the answers to questions and he has developed the capacity to discern the answers (and the wisdom of appropriateness) (except that the spiritual student who has achieved perfection is beyond seeking).

The kingdom of God is hidden within, and in the course of evolution man must pass through that kingdom. Much of the ancient wisdom and esoteric philosophy deals directly with the steps that lead man to the inner experience and union with the true self (God). The greater the quality of a man's inner life, the greater will be the enlightenment received from within. But before the student of life can consciously find the inner experience, he must be guided in the preliminary steps. Various forms of religion and philosophy have guided man from the ancient of times, revealing the path to those who seek according to the degree of consciousness. Although religions and their scriptures are mostly designed for the masses, the scriptures must also assist individuals who are (relatively) the pioneers of contemporary consciousness.

Thus the secondary source of the keys to the wisdom is hidden within all true scriptures. The scriptures are written in a sacred symbolic language, within which are encoded the various keys to the spiritual path and self-enlightenment. The higher degrees or levels of symbolic hidden wisdom are revealed as the student begins to find the God within (as the aspirant qualified himself). Through the spiritual intuition, the higher keys are discerned and the deeper lessons of life are learned.

This symbolic scriptural revelation is derived primarily from the ancient wisdom teachings discerned by enlightened individuals who have found themselves and have been trained in the allegorical language. The basic symbolic language of all scriptures is the same, though specific perspectives and intentions (for which keys are also available) vary. Intuition remains the discerning factor, for a language of words implies limitation; and since times change popular meanings of words change also. There is difficulty also in translating scripture from the original language, since few of the translators have received the esoteric training or can discern the original intentions.

Because the translation, reading, and interpretation of scripture (as well as truth discerned within) is so colored by the personal life (the imperfect personality) (the mind and the emotions) (experience and capacity), the meditative disposition is the safest in which to function. There are no sources of authoritative truth; for the experience, consciousness, and perspectives of the writer, the speaker, the reader, and the listener are different. Truth is not absolute; truth is relative. There are many perspectives and levels of truth, equally valid. One can only discern for oneself that which is presently true for oneself. The greatest value of both forms of (the keys to the) hidden wisdom is the capacity to conceal and to reveal according to the perspectives and experience and consciousness of each individual.

† Commentary No. 46

The Ancient Mysteries

Throughout history and prehistory there have been divinely inspired religions and philosophies, and each of these has had an exoteric and an esoteric side. Each has had three levels or degrees. The lower degree is the exoteric religion itself, the religion of the masses. The intermediate degree includes the lesser mysteries, the link between the esoteric and the exoteric. The higher degree includes the greater mysteries, the purely esoteric. Though the lower and intermediate degrees vary according to the perspective and purpose of the particular religion or philosophy, the higher degree is common to all esoteric religions and philosophies. The ancient mysteries are the ageless mysteries of

the universe and the mysteries of life: an integrated esoteric philosophy (religion) (science).

In the earliest days of humanity, mankind was ruled and guided by great (superhuman) teachers. As the pioneers among men evolved sufficiently, they were instructed in the mysteries and became priest-kings who ruled during the golden era of Atlantis. As more and more of humanity evolved mentally, Atlantean mystery schools were established in order to train the more highly evolved of men in the lesser mysteries and the most highly evolved of men in the greater mysteries. With the decline and destruction of Atlantis, the mystery schools were reestablished (primarily) in Egypt. From Egypt (and elsewhere) mystery schools were established wherever there was human civilization. Initiated into the Egyptian mysteries, Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato each led Greece in a spiritual renewal. The Greek mysteries included those of Dionysus, Delphi, and Eleusis.

Abraham received the Chaldean mysteries; Moses received the Egyptian mysteries; and Jesus was an initiate of the Christian mysteries (through the Essenes). In ancient (historical) days there were many secret (mystery) schools, from the Druidic mysteries of Britain, to the Persian mysteries, to the mystery schools of the Orient. Not all of these schools remained in good public favor; in fact, all were eventually forced (by those who were refused admission) to either disband and dissolve or to go underground. The outer religions and the lesser mysteries were then degraded by the multitudes (who simply failed to understand them), and what remains historically is little more than myth.

The last outpost of the ancient mystery schools was in Alexandria (Egypt), where the Greek, Egyptian, Jewish, and Christian mysteries were blended. But even the Christian mysteries were ultimately forced underground by the circumstances of their times. Today the ancient mysteries are still available to the seeker. Even the orthodox scriptures contain the lesser mysteries (symbolically), and the greater mysteries are available through soul contact. Much of the ageless wisdom is taught and published openly today, for that which was once quite esoteric has now become exoteric. With inner wisdom, the aspirant can properly evaluate the metaphysical, theosophical, and esoteric (common) teachings and determine which of the teachings are of value.

Though the outer forms of the mysteries (religions) (scriptures) (schools) vary widely, the inner formulae are always essentially the same (though the formulae are evolving also according to the consciousness of the aspirants of the world). Thus the ancient mysteries remain ageless. The ancient mysteries, in both the lesser and greater degrees, offer a pathway for the evolving human being to find true enlightenment and liberation. All esoteric paths finally become one path. And all esoteric students finally become that one path, being consciously one with God and one with the greater mysteries.

† Commentary No. 52

Time and Space

The illusion of time and space is a necessary, yet temporary experience, an experience that is mostly limited to the objective (physical) world and the perception of the mind seeking to utilize physical plane consciousness. Space is an entity, and time is simply an extension of space into a fourth dimension. From a purely objective point of view, space is the three-dimensional dense physical world (realm) (solid, liquid, and gaseous) (having size and shape); and time is objectively (apparently) constant. The perception of time is obviously not a constant, for subjective time varies considerably. But even objectively, time is in reality a variable. Objective time varies according to the polarity and degree of manifestation (as well as in relativistic phenomena). An hour of objective time today is not the same duration as an hour of objective time a hundred years ago. To speak of an event occurring a thousand years in the past is hardly accurate, since objective space-time is neither absolute nor constant.

Many mysteries are hidden within the concept of time and space (and in their equivalency). Modern science has discovered a number of clues, including Einstein's relativity theories and the doctrine of wave-matter duality. With a few minor corrections in interpretation, relativity theory becomes a specific case of a much more generalized law, a cosmic law that demonstrates dimensional continuity. Physicists call this the unified field theory. Modern science is investigating and discovering physical (and etheric) phenomena that are limitations (special cases) of this cosmic law.

The concept of wave-matter duality (equivalence) leads to the realization of time and space as an illusion (perspective). In classical physics the atom is composed of particles: protons, neutrons, and electrons. But in modern physics, it has been demonstrated that the particle appears to behave as a solid sphere (or point) of matter in one experiment (perspective) and as a wave of energy under another perspective (which relates its properties as a particle). Each elementary (and secondary) particle then, can be envisioned as an energy resonance that may appear as matter or as a wave, depending on how it is viewed. But it cannot appear to be both simultaneously (in any one perspective).

Matter is alive, being crystallized (by degrees) spirit. Matter is energy in a form of limitation. Matter is composed of holes stretched in a cosmic aether (absolute emptiness). Time and space are phenomena associated mostly with the densest of (physical) matter. If matter is considered to be a variance of resonant energy, then time and space are variances within the illusion of the physical world. From the lower perspective, the planet Earth appears to be a solid sphere existing at a point in space and at a point in time. But space is an infinity, and time is an eternity. And from the higher perspective the planet (and its life) is an energy resonance distributed through time and space, coexisting in several ways. The past exists as fact, though through an infinite number of perspectives. The future exists as archetypes and probabilities (yet from a higher perspective, the future is as existent as the past and present).

Time and space do not exist as realities beyond the physical plane. As the disciple begins to think in terms of consciousness which transcends the limitations and illusions of time and space, then shall higher realities begin to be known and understood. One can hardly learn of the higher dimensions with any real understanding or comprehension until one can look beyond the physical illusion. Space that is expanded to infinity becomes nonexistent, and time that is expanded to an infinity becomes nonexistent; for eternity is space, and space is life, and life is a unity which transcends all limitation and existence.

Perception

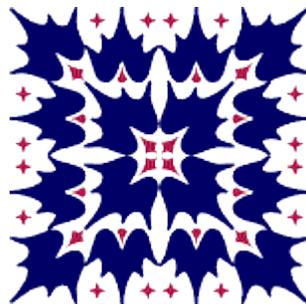
An area of special interest to the spiritual student is perception. It is important (meaningful) because it involves consciousness, sense-impressions, and the paradox of reality. The concepts and mechanism of perception are keys to the ultimate resolution (clarification) of reality and the release of the human mind from the bias and habits of illusionary existence. The process and basic tenets of perceptions are actually quite simple.

An object or event has some sort of existence or reality. An observer (perceiver) interprets in consciousness certain sense-impressions received from the object or event. But those sense-impressions are received through a medium and through an agent. The medium includes the aura of the object, the aura of the agent, and the atmosphere or mechanism in between the two. The agent is the personality and its components (personal senses). In subtle matters, the mechanism of perception can even change the object (or event) itself. The medium is real; the sense-impressions themselves are real; even the agent is real, each having some sort of existence. But, the problem arises from the assumptions of identification, and the conclusion and interpretations based upon those assumptions. Most people assume unconsciously the identification of the object with the sense-impressions of the object, and the identification of the sense-impressions with the actual perception or interpretation (conclusion) in consciousness.

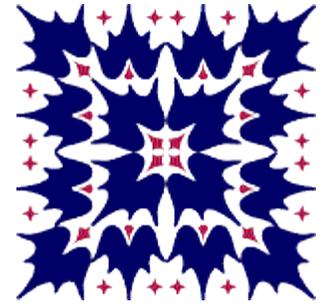
But sense-impressions are not the object, and conclusions made in consciousness are not the same as the sense-impressions themselves. At each stage in the process changes occur so that the reality of an object is far different from the reality of the conclusion based upon sense-impression. To identify one with the other is to introduce distortion due to its quality or character. The medium or mechanism will qualify the perception due to its character. The medium may include distortion due to the limitations of language (communication) or due to the transient and impression-filled nature of the atmosphere through which the observation is made.

Even the agent (the personality) is a source of distortion and confusion, depending on its quality, training (discipline), and intention. Perception is a very selective process. How often does a person see (hear) what he wants or expects to see (hear) while disregarding the rest? The senses cannot be trusted at face value; and even the interpretation in consciousness of sense-impressions introduces distortion due to desire, habit, and other forms of bias. The mind and feelings can exaggerate, substitute, and otherwise change impressions which are then accepted as valid in consciousness. Sense-impressions can be interpreted in the light of experience or in the darkness of ignorance. Personal energies tend toward distortion and self-deception; impersonal energies tend towards accuracy, honesty, and reality.

All of this is not to say that sense-impressions are not useful. It is to say that things are not usually what they appear to be; that there is a marked difference between sight and insight; that when dealing with sense-impressions, one must be careful to minimize distortion and confusion. The senses can be trained to be more useful, with greater accuracy, (outer) discernment, and quality. But the waking-consciousness must deliberately place matters in perspective, recognizing the distinctions between objects, impressions, and conclusions, discerning inwardly the values and conclusions to be accepted. As inner realization increases, the spiritual intuition and subjective rapport can be used to complement the sense impressions, thereby improving perception.



Section 3.66



Religion

And Yoga

- Following are a number of commentaries selected from Volume 6 of the Upper Triad Material. These commentaries are representative of basic ideas in theosophy.

Religion 1

The nature of religion is progressive revelation, primarily for the masses. Throughout history and pre-history there have been revelations or new exoteric religious teachings for the multitudes. As man has evolved, so have the outer teachings of each revelation been consistent with man's consciousness and his capacity for understanding. Man does not create a (true) religion. A religion is evoked by (given to) man according to his needs, and man then objectifies and interprets (or misinterprets) the teachings. The older religions (and even a few of the newer ones) were often custom-fitted to particular races or cultures, leading the people onward and upward one step at a time.

Such is the work of religion, to lead and to guide the larger groups of people (in terms of consciousness) and to slowly prepare them for the spiritual path. The deepest esoteric teachings of all religions are essentially the same. Only the outer teachings of the various religions differ, and then only according to the needs (and responsiveness) of the people. Even so, there are many common elements in the outer teachings. By degrees, the inner teachings reflect a measure (and perspective) of the ancient and timeless wisdom that constitutes the foundation and basis for all of the lesser and greater mysteries, and with those inner teachings can the spiritual students of the world find some guidance and encouragement.

Wherever there is consciousness significantly below that of the masses (or consciousness unresponsive to religious teaching), there are man-made religions (superstitions) and greatly misunderstood older teachings. Even with the consciousness of the majority, there are many man-made elements to the orthodox religions (and considerable but inevitable misunderstanding). But wherever there is consciousness significantly higher than that of the masses, there is a higher (progressive) revelation from the soul. Wherever there is a higher consciousness (in some degree), there is an availability of certain of the esoteric teachings. As a man is capable of understanding, so shall he receive.

Religions are normally founded by certain individuals who achieve (either partially or completely) union with the soul (and the greater wisdom) and are

used as instruments of revelation, often by earlier design. Among the many historical revelations are those of Abraham, Akhenaten, Confucius, Gautama (Buddha), Hermes, Jesus (Christ), Krishna, Lao-tse, Melchizedek, Mohammed, Moses, Orpheus, Padmasambhava, Plato, Pythagoras, Quetzalcoatl, and Zoroaster. Although the personalities are relatively unimportant, the teachings that pass through them are important. Among the major (orthodox) scriptures are the Old and New Testaments, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Qabalah, and the Tao Te Ching. Each of the religions (revelations) (teachings) has many lessons to teach regardless of the consciousness of the student. Most of the real scriptures are very symbolic, with several layers of meaning. However, some have been manipulated to a certain extent through ignorance and selfish design, and therefore require even greater intuition (realization) for the discernment of their essence.

The organized religions of the world offer even the most advanced students opportunities to serve humanity (though such students must be careful not to become absorbed by a religion or its atmosphere). Through religion should be imparted the encouragement of the ethical, moral, social, legal, and spiritual welfare of humanity. Through religion humanity is exposed to the orthodox and objective manifestation of truth. But in the final analysis, there can be no religion higher than truth itself.

† Commentary No. 837

Seven Schools of Yoga 1

Seven Schools of Yoga by Ernest Wood describes seven traditional approaches or paths and practices of yoga, incidentally demonstrating their correlation with the seven rays and the three rays. In this sense, the three major rays focus in consciousness and involve raja yoga in its general sense, and raja yoga (1), karma or buddhi yoga (2), and jnana yoga (3), respectively. Similarly, the four minor rays focus on form and involve hatha yoga in its general sense, and hatha yoga (4), kundalini or laya yoga (5), bhakti yoga (6), and mantra yoga (7), respectively.

Yoga implies union with the divine life and the path(s) leading to that union and self-mastery. The lower schools (hatha yoga) involve predominantly

external or lower means and methods and are considered preparatory, while the higher schools (raja yoga) involve predominantly internal means and methods and are considered (relatively) more advanced. The lower schools involve methods that are valuable for some people in conditioning the form and overcoming the lower aspects of the coarse personality (e.g., in the sense of self-discipline and purification). However, the lower schools involve particular methods which are not well-suited to all forms and which are relatively dangerous for the untutored. Moreover, for one who is already self-disciplined and adhering to the preliminary discipline, the benefits of the lower practices are questionable. Indeed, those who are able to accomplish the preliminary discipline without resorting to hatha yoga in any of its forms are better off in the sense that they are not distracted by the focus on form (and personality) that is inherent in the lower practices.

The higher schools (methods) do not require teachers nor do they involve potentially dangerous practices, but they do still require a measure of common sense on behalf of the personality, utilize the uplifted (and qualified) mind (primarily), and call upon the higher self rather than the ego or personality. Furthermore, a reasonably qualified aspirant need not rely on the hatha yoga that correlates to his or her personality ray, but, rather, should rely on one or another of the raja yogas utilizing particular techniques relating to his or her rays. Or in other words, there are aspects of each of the seven yogas that can be effectively utilized by the serious (and reasonably qualified) student.

Raja yoga (1) is the yoga of Patanjali (and the first ray) and involves freedom (self-mastery) through will, first through the (preliminary) kriya yoga and then through the ashtanga or eight limbs of yoga practice. The object of kriya yoga is the weakening of the five afflictions (which are avidya (ignorance), asmita (egotism), raga (liking), dwesha (disliking), and abhinivesha (clinging to bodily life)). Once effectively weakened, the five afflictions can be more properly overcome in subsequent stages.

Karma or buddhi yoga (2) involves unity (self-mastery) through feeling. This yoga of the second ray involves love (buddhi) and work (karma), wisdom (buddhi) and duty (dharma). In this sense dharma means "where one stands," and this (in embracing this concept) implies that the disciple (spiritual student) has achieved some measure of spiritual poise, recognizes his or her place upon

the path, and is content to do whatever is before one to do (and to work (perform service) with whatever measure of wisdom there is within the consciousness). Jnana yoga (3) involves unity through consideration (thought) (understanding) (the seeking of truth) and is the yoga of the third ray. In a sense, it is this jnana yoga that deals in its various ways with maya, glamour, and illusion and leads eventually to their successive overcoming.

† Commentary No. 838

Seven Schools of Yoga 2

Hatha yoga (4) proper involves the regulation of breathing (and in the higher sense leads to energy projection and qualification). Laya yoga (5) involves the chakras or energy centers and the force of kundalini (and in the higher sense leads to conscious working with various energies and their forces (and their transformation)). Bhakti yoga (6) involves love and the external aspect of divinity (God) [while buddhi yoga (2) involves love and the internal aspect of divinity (God)] and is, in the lower sense, the invocation or calling forth to God, and in the higher sense, the evocation of rapport with God (the soul) and the qualification of the lower self that that implies. Mantra yoga (7) involves the repetition or proper sounding of various mantras for self-qualification (and in the higher sense forms the basis for occult work). In the lower sense, these hatha yogas and their methods can become ends in themselves, while in the higher sense, each contributes some methodology and practices of value to the raja yogi.

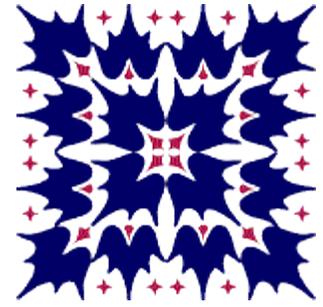
However, the raja yogi avoids the extremes of any of the hatha yogas. And the raja yogi puts the lower practices in the context of ways to facilitate the higher work without their becoming distractions (i.e., without the entanglement of the personality). Employing primarily one or another of the three raja yogas or rays (and associated internal focus and methods) and employing secondarily one or another (or both) of the other raja yogas (and specific practices of the four hatha yogas and their external methods as needed or appropriate), the raja yogi proceeds upon his or her own path (within the context of the one path). In this (higher) sense, yoga embraces both the individual path to self-mastery and the simultaneous entering into the pervasive divine life.

The real distinction between the higher yogas and the lower yogas is the reliance upon the soul in the former case and the reliance upon the personality in the latter case. Raja yoga involves the overcoming of the personality and the alignment of that personality with the overshadowing and indwelling soul or higher (divine) self. Hatha yoga initially involves a strengthening of the personality as it is integrated. Then hatha yoga involves gradually qualifying the personality (through intelligently focusing upon the personality). And finally, hatha yoga leads to the weakening of the personality (through the preliminary or kriya yoga) and the higher yogas. The various methods of hatha yoga may need to be applied over the course of many years or even (many) lifetimes, while by the time one has achieved some measure of success in the lower discipline, the raja yogas can be embraced more readily.

On the other hand, when one embraces the higher self and the spiritual path proper, one becomes the path and service dominates the quality and character of the individual dharma (which means that individual progress is subordinated to the work at hand). Individual progress then becomes more subjective and qualitative (and more or less incidental to the work) and yet (while not readily apparent to the senses) (and from a higher perspective) "progress" is thereby accelerated.

In the final analysis there are many paths within the one path, and each aspirant must necessarily find the preliminary path that is the more natural one for his or her own temperament. As the student develops and evolves over a number of lifetimes, the experience is broadened and deepened to include aspects of other paths, until, eventually, the disciple has achieved some measure of experience and ability on or with each of the seven rays and their various methods.

Section 3.67



Manifestation

Reincarnation and the Psychic World

- Following are a number of commentaries selected from Volume 7 of the Upper Triad Material. These commentaries are representative of basic ideas in theosophy.

Reincarnation and Karma

The laws of reincarnation and karma are two of the most fundamental laws concerning human life. Both are subsidiary laws to the law of evolution. The law of reincarnation implies that an evolving human life (soul) must be reborn on this earth time and time again until that soul has reached relative perfection as far as human evolution is concerned (in the physical, emotional, and mental worlds). Reincarnation supports evolution, and not retrogression or transmigration. A human soul cannot inhabit a subhuman body; that would be contrary to the laws of evolution, which require continual (though gradual) progress, onward and upward along the spiral circuit.

An individual human soul is created (appropriated by the monad) at the moment of individualization (the attainment of self-consciousness). From that moment on until the soul transcends the lower worlds, it seeks (under law) to experience and to evolve through a long succession of lives in this world. The soul is the individuality that incarnates. The soul creates a new personality (based on experience and karma) for each life, and that personality is subject to the law of karma (consequence).

The law of karma provides the basic urge toward evolution and enlightenment. It is the law of cause and effect, the great teacher which wisely yields the experiences and opportunities needed (and earned) because of causal energies. In each lifetime, every action, behavior, feeling, thought, and motive sets karmic forces (causes) into motion. Through ignorance much karma is created in the early lives. Karma teaches man to live in harmony with spiritual law, and through the results (effects) received, the needed lessons are learned (consciously or otherwise). The more closely the student lives in harmony with cosmic law, the greater will be the progress toward the higher consciousness. As a man evolves he begins to consciously set forces into motion that will bring the talents and opportunities that are needed. Each seed (cause or action) bears an appropriate fruit (result or effect). Thoughts and feelings result in tendencies and capacities. Experience becomes wisdom and conscience. Injuries (physical, emotional, or mental) inflicted upon others (or self) and rebellion against law (conscious or unconscious) result in physical, emotional, and mental diseases

and limitations. Man is responsible for all that he is, all that he has, and all that he does, on all levels.

The reincarnating soul brings with it the accumulation of karma, though normally only a portion of that karma is to be fulfilled in any one lifetime. Perfect justice (in the broadest sense) rules over all of humanity. The physical body, the emotional nature, and the mental capacity of the incarnating soul are only as good as karma determines. Likewise the friendships, experiences, and opportunities are also earned. The law of karma cannot be interfered with. However, changes in behavior and thinking will lead to changes in the results. Karma is the sum of all forces generated that are as yet unfulfilled. Through free will a person can add new positive causes which will modify the final outcome (which is a function of time). Man creates karma through free will; destiny is simply the consequence.

The results of actions in the present life may appear partially or fully within the present lifetime, or they may appear later. Karma is neither good nor bad; karma is not retribution or punishment; karma is the divine force that teaches, and it leads the evolving life into knowledge, wisdom, and relative perfection. Through the working out of karma, sins are forgiven. By living in harmony with law, limitation is overcome and self-mastery is achieved.

† Commentary No. 367

Psychic Development

A potential problem (stumbling block) for aspirants to the spiritual path is an (inordinate) interest in psychic phenomena and attempted psychic development. Phenomena distract the aspirant from the real task at hand, which is to purify and refine his character, integrate his personality, and align it with his soul in order to serve God and humanity.

Long ago in Atlantean days when the emphasis was on emotional (astral) development, psychic awareness was commonplace. But today in the Aryan Epoch, the focus for progressive man has been (and needs to be) shifted to mental development (the mental plane), and for spiritual students, soul

alignment (the abstract mental and intuitive planes). Psychic (astral) sensitivities in man have generally been reduced so that man may concentrate on developing and refining the higher, mental faculties. This is a necessary step for soul alignment, intuitive awareness, and wisdom. Thus the true power of the soul (which is much higher than psychic (astral) powers) may be properly tapped.

The aspirant enamored by phenomena who attempts psychic development may be invoking a number of potential problems. Premature opening of the chakra centers can bring instability and even insanity. Part of the problem is that only with a purified personality, soul alignment, spiritual maturity, and proper training come real discretion, understanding (discernment) and control of psychic (astral) energies. The unaware and unqualified student is ill-equipped to work in a field where glamour and illusion abound, when he has little ability to discern the real from the unreal.

A similar situation applies to those who are involuntary or untrained (and unqualified) psychics and give readings. Many are sincere and well-meaning, but lack the needed discernment; they are likely to have perceptions that are distorted or untrue (astral impressions frequently are not what they seem to be, and are usually biased by the participants' own thoughts and feelings). Only someone with the necessary soul alignment and spiritual maturity can be trained to work with validity on the astral plane (if there is a need). Often information in psychic (astral) readings or impressions tends to inflate the aspirant's ego, which if an individual is personality-centered (instead of soul-aligned), he will easily believe what is said as true as it supports his own self-glamour (self-deception).

Another factor to consider is motive. The serious spiritual student is not self-centered nor interested in developing psychic powers. He does not seek the special attention (ego gratification) that often goes with those who claim to be psychic. He knows there is no easy way (such as from a psychic) to receive answers to problems (no one is an authority with respect to another). Each student must decide for himself (after alignment with the soul) in meditation or prayer. In his desire to serve, the serious student takes the group (soul) approach without emphasis on the individual (personality). He seeks ever to identify with the greater whole (and the greater good) as he shifts his focus from

a personal approach to an impersonal, more inclusive one. The serious student knows he is necessarily responsible for handling his own personality life and problems (opportunities). He realizes the purpose of higher group work is not to solve his personal problems but rather to serve all of humanity and all life. Impersonal encouraging energies are made available to all, and not just shared with group members. When the student deepens and makes a serious commitment to the spiritual path, working for the good of all becomes his goal, and the glamour of psychic phenomena holds no attraction.

† Commentary No. 397

Chakras 1

For every manifestation on every level, there exist related energies (causes) and lines of force linking each cause and effect within that (localized) (broad) field of manifestation. On gross (dense) physical levels, the lines of force remain invisible, yet are nonetheless necessary to every action and consequence. As a general rule, the lines of force associated with manifestation (experience) (expression) (situation) (condition) (activity) on some level, exist on the next highest (more subtle) level, so that only the effects of forces can be perceived on the (lower) level of manifestation. This is true for the entire spectrum of scale, from the smallest conceivable microcosm to the greatest perceivable (conceptual) macrocosm.

The physical world is for all practical purposes a realm entirely of effects (meaning the (dense) physical plane is more illusion than reality), with all forces acting on etheric, astral, and/or concrete mental levels, affecting the lower levels in turn according to the causative (karmic) processes (balance). The etheric domain is more a realm of forces than material consequences and the dense physical. Similarly, the concrete mental (astral) plane is more a realm of forces (causes) (intermediates) than the astral (etheric), respectively. Beyond the mental plane there are relatively few terminal effects, only intermediates and secondary (interactive) (stimulated) (indirect) causes. Though each of the seven planes of consciousness may be viewed (perceived) distinctly, they are definitely related (interactively) by chakras (centers of force) and the lines of force which pass through the various chakras.

The chakras form an absolutely necessary (vital) link between the planes of consciousness, for without the chakras, energy could not flow from one level or form to another, and subsequent levels of consciousness (manifestation) could not exist. For example, the dense physical plane is the lowest level of manifestation because no chakras exist which can link to some (conceptually) lower level. As manifestation is withdrawn from the lower levels, the chakras will gradually cease to function on those levels (meaning those levels will cease to exist) (because, in the ultimate limit, every atom is a chakra, imposing or drawing energy upon or from some dimension, and what is real (?) is the induced effect (the appearance of substantiality being an illusion)).

In a sense, all of manifestation is composed of elementary (atomic) chakras, but of more practical significance are the larger chakras and the great centers of force which feed the lesser chakras (i.e., chakras exist on every conceivable scale). The most distinctive characteristic of a chakra is that it does not exist on any level or dimension of consciousness; rather, each chakra exists between (two or more) levels or dimensions of consciousness (meaning that all levels of consciousness are effects). Elementary chakras exist between two sub-planes; minor chakras exist between two or more sub-planes; while major chakras link between planes of consciousness. Chakras exist in the context of individual lives (e.g., chakras within the human constitution) and in much greater terms (e.g., planetary or solar chakras).

Each chakra is an intersection of two or more lines of force. Where many lines of force intersect coherently, larger (major) chakras exist (meaning that more energy can flow through the chakra (vortex) and be transformed). Chakras exist to transform energy from one level or dimension or form to another. Chakras have a number of attributes or characteristics, including character (ray association), quality, type, degree of activity, polarization, and context (scale). All chakras are part of the unified, evolutionary framework.

Good and Evil 1

The entire concept (duality) of good and evil exists only in the minds of men, for beyond merely human levels there is no such obvious duality and evil (goodness) exists only analogously and on such an abstract level as to have no implications for life on earth. But in the lower worlds (of human activity) good and evil are practical matters and a necessary consideration for self-mastery.

There is much that is widely called or considered evil that is not inherently evil. Misfortune, *per se*, has naught to do with evil and should not be confused with the (practical) reality of evil. Misfortune is merely a consequence of former or current activity and being merited through karma (cause and effect) is essentially good (in the sense of fulfillment, learning opportunity, etc.) (as a consequence, never as an intention). Misfortune as an intention is indeed malefic and related to evil. Conditions, effects, circumstances, etc. are all inherently not malefic.

What is evil (coarseness) falls into three types: (1) that which is inherently evil (the evil of ignorance), (2) the evil inherent in matter (form) (in the practical sense of separateness), and (3) the cosmic evil inherent in matter (which is the unresolved tension of a much earlier evolution and should not concern humanity) (which has no practical significance). By virtue of the fact of incarnation (and the soul's impersonal and abstract intentions) and by virtue of karmic laws, the human being (personality) is responsible for and accountable for all of its activities (and consequences incurred) in the lower worlds, even though much of that activity is inherently qualified by ignorance (the illusion of self-consciousness (separation)) and the nature of matter (coarseness) (which is evil in the sense of being essentially separative).

Within every human being there is a balance between good and evil. Some, more experienced and better qualified, are essentially good, in the sense that much of the inherent evil (coarseness) has been transformed and refined to allow the inherent goodness (the God within) (the true human potential) to be manifested. Others, less experienced and less well-qualified, are essentially coarse, in the sense that matter (coarseness) (selfishness) predominates,

effectively masking the truth (God) (the soul) that lives within. But those who are essentially good are not without coarseness, however deeply buried, and those who are essentially coarse are not without good, however deeply masked. The many, of course, are essentially indifferent, being neither essentially good nor evil, but asleep to either as a predominating influence.

Human development proceeds from individualization (the process of imparting self-consciousness) to self-mastery through many cycles and stages. In the beginning (the long period following individualization), the human being is essentially coarse only in the passive sense of being wholly ignorant and wholly absorbed in matter (form). That period might better be called indifference, but subsequently, as the human being develops, the individual becomes essentially self-centered and selfish, which might more properly be called essentially not good (reserving the connotation of practical evil for those whose selfishness (ignorance) (attachment to matter) is extreme and assertive (imposing)). As the human being evolves further, the indifference gradually gives way to goodness, as more and more of the divine potential is cultivated and realized, and as more and more of the essential (subtle) evil is mastered. Ultimately, the human being evolves beyond good and evil as the entire being is synthesized and as the whole (grand) illusion of separation from God is fully overcome.

† Commentary No. 434

Good and Evil 2

The evil inherent in matter (form) has two aspects: normal and abnormal. Normal evil (inherent in matter) is that which is faced in the normal (and accelerated) course of evolution, the passive evil of separateness born of the nature of matter. Abnormal (true) evil is the evil inherent in matter consciously and deliberately evoked as a means of selfish indulgence (black magic) and associated imposition.

Normal evil (coarseness) (inherent in matter) is not necessarily but potentially malefic. Matter is the extreme form of energy opposing (balancing) spirit. The quest (objective) of humanity being self-mastery, each human being is initially wholly immersed in matter and evolves (achieves) (progresses) toward that goal

only to the extent that matter (form) is conquered. Thus the evil inherent in matter provides the basic opportunity (the circumstances of immersion) for the evolution of higher consciousness, and, more importantly, the very act (process) of liberation from matter implies a transformation of that matter (inherent evil) into a higher, more progressive (refined) form (i.e., the elementary lifewave associated with matter evolves as a consequence of human evolution).

Normal evil can be malefic, as selfishness and ignorance conspire to lead the individual to impose upon others (the individual (malefactor) being nonetheless responsible). But where an individual carries selfishness to an extreme, the person can become irretrievably lost in (the evil of) matter and fail the current course (human evolution). Even more so, where an individual is well-developed mentally (and therefore potent) and extremely selfish (misguided) as well, there is the danger of true (abnormal) evil, where the forces of matter are deliberately and unnaturally evoked and bent to personal ends, ultimately corrupting the individual beyond recall (beyond hope of rejoining humanity).

The nature of matter (form) (crystallized energy) (evil) (in this context) is resistance, inertia, independence (illusion), coarseness, separateness, etc., leading the personality (form) to resist evolution, sustain self-indulgence, be absorbed in personal energy, be selfish, etc. The problem is vastly compounded by the inherent evil of ignorance, for the human being begins the quest wholly ignorant of his true nature (the soul and its relation to God) and thus wholly blind to anything (the reality) beyond the grand illusion of separate (objective) existence. The problem is compounded further by the fact that for aeons prior to individualization, the consciousness that there (then) became human has been wholly identified with matter (i.e., during the vast involutionary period). Thus the task faced from individualization is enormous, and generally many, many lifetimes of experience and struggle between the opposing forces (good and evil) (spirit and matter) (soul and personality) (consciousness and form) (truth (reality) and illusion) are needed in order to achieve self-mastery. Most will succeed. Relatively few will succeed as pioneers upon the spiritual path well in advance of the bulk of humanity, and relatively few will fail, falling far behind the bulk of humanity.

The stage (matter) (form) (immersion therein) provides the means of the great quest and affords the individual the opportunity of unfolding the divine

potential in ways not otherwise possible. In spite of the difficulties, the inherent goodness within the human being ultimately prevails, as the resistance of matter (form) (personality) is overcome, as ignorance is transformed into knowledge and understanding (wisdom), and as the illusion of independent (objective) (separative) existence is fully dispelled.

