

The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 4.1

Karma

The Force of Equilibrium



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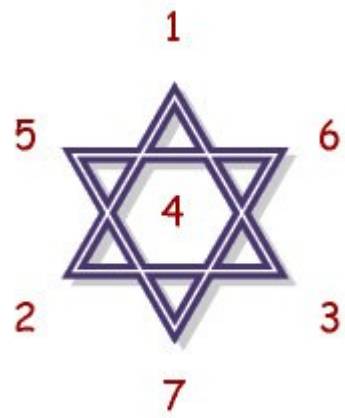
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Chapter 4.1

Karma



The Force of Equilibrium

- 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. Yet within karma there is (underlying, divine) intelligence and wisdom. Some consequences are compelling, others are non-compelling, according to need.

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. 38

The Karmic Equation

The karmic equation is an abstract representation of the karma (causes and consequences) of an individual or group. It may be used as a focal point of tension for the study of karma. Since karma is such an exceedingly complex energy (even for the evolved individual), the equation must necessarily be symbolic and abstract, with an indeterminate series of many-dimensional terms. The reason for this is quite simple; karma is a superposition of inputs (causes) and outputs (effects or consequences) and their interactions, over a diverse continuity and fabric of time, space, and consciousness.

The inputs to the karmic equation are the vast sea of causes (physical, emotional, and mental behaviors and motives) which spans past moments and lifetimes. All of the past actions have been entered as causes, and new causes are added continuously as the individual lives, thinks, feels, and otherwise experiences. The relationships of an individual to other persons are often major (potent) inputs. The output of the equation is the continuous (weighted) sum total of external forces and influences on the individual or the group. A further complexity is introduced by the superposition of individual, family, group, racial, national, and planetary karma. Much of the karmic equation concerns the relationships (superpositions and transformations) between causes and effects. Since the effects are continuously responsive to the causes and relationships, the effects constitute a feedback mechanism (the response of the individual creates new causes which in turn modify somewhat the new effects). Each equation is continuously changing, though the changes may be quite small when compared to the output or yield. In general, a large number of causes are superimposed (and distributed in time) and transformed to produce timely and appropriate effects.

The study of karma is the study of experience and evolution, for the purpose of karma is always to encourage evolution by providing the various lessons, experiences, and opportunities needed (earned). Karma can only be fulfilled as the lessons are learned, consciously or otherwise. No real external interference is possible. Under certain conditions, karma can be changed in time and space; and with accelerated learning and the creation of new causes, the karmic effects can be modified. But karma cannot be circumvented, lessened, or modified without ultimate fulfillment. The lessons must be learned, one way or another, or the individual will suffer incompleteness.

All karma is earned (anticipated). Talents, qualities, experiences, and opportunities are all earned, just as pain, suffering, and the various forms of limitation are earned, whether from carelessness, ignorance, unconscious action, or deliberate action. No karma is arbitrary. Karma is infinite wisdom, for the effects are conditioned not only from the (literal) causes but also from the state of consciousness, the motives, and the circumstances at the time the cause is created as well as at the time the effects are produced. All conditions are taken into account automatically, for the greater good.

The conscious study of causes, effects, and their relationships (both in a practical sense and in an abstract sense) tends to enhance and expand the capacity of the student for understanding. Efforts to find relationships (through meditation) and the partial understanding that results lead to progress (light and love). With understanding comes greater abilities and insight, and progress along the path is made more rapidly, more easily, and more constructively. Karma in the individual sense is eventually fulfilled, enabling the student to deal with group (human, planetary, and solar) karmic forces.

† 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.

Karmic Relationships 1

The incarnated human being is subject to the karma of many current and accumulated (historical) relationships with other human beings. These relationships include those which pertain to (1) the current individual personality (and group relationships), (2) previous individual personalities (and respective group relationships), and (3) the soul (and its soul group).

The first relationships arise through the process of differentiation, as the various souls are individualized within a group soul. Viewed historically, not all souls are individualized at the same time; most individualize in the same relatively short period of time, but in waves (groups) according to character. The totality of human souls constitutes a soul structure within which are differentiated various soul groups (with ray correlations); within each soul group are differentiated various individual souls sharing a common character (derived from the localized (subjective) nature of the soul structure). Each such soul group is actually an original karmic group holding the highest priority (order) of group karma short of the lifewave itself. The essence of each soul group is its character (nature) (quality) which necessarily evolves as its individual members evolve. As the evolutionary quality reaches a certain level (extent) of consciousness, a soul group becomes an esoteric group.

The relationships intrinsic to a group soul are virtually everlasting, as the soul group exists intact (as an evolutionary entity) for the duration of the evolution in the human sense (on the order of many millions of years). However, the individual members of a soul group will not sense the presence of the group until the later stages of evolutionary experience (where the individual begins to respond directly to the quality (energy) of the soul and its soul group). In the meantime virtually all human relationships are formed along personality lines rather than along soul lines, as the soul incarnates as a personality instrument, including its physical (genetic) heritage and its share of family, racial, and national group karma (relationships).

In the relatively early lives, the family, racial, and national group relationships form a necessary evolutionary environment. Family (racial) (cultural) ties can be

very strong, regardless of ray relationships and regardless of the character of the soul (since the unresponsive personality is practically bound only by its personal (personality) relationships). There is normally a considerable diversity of human contacts and relationships, some relatively strong (via emotional energy), most more or less incidental, but in each relationship (strong or otherwise), there is established a karmic link (with a strength corresponding to the intensity and/or duration of the relationship) that must be fulfilled one way or another. The simple karmic links associated with incidental relationships are easily fulfilled; but the more complicated (more personal) karmic links may require continued or subsequent association in order for the relationship (karma) to be fulfilled. These links pass through between lives wherever there is either unresolved energy or wherever there is a rapport developed.

Wherever there is a close association along personality lines (pleasant or otherwise) there will exist a tendency for the individual paths to intersect, wherever (whenever) appropriate in light of mutual karma. In this sense, those who are friends (or enemies) (or family members) establish magnetic (karmic) bonds for further experience and opportunity for fulfillment. The same principle (tendency) holds true for the various groups, particularly in the case of bonds (of harmony or conflict) between races, nations, religious groups, etc.

† Commentary No. 304

Karmic Relationships 2

An individual in incarnation will usually be responsive (if not reactive) to individuals with whom strong karmic ties have been developed in earlier lives, for the karma of earlier experience is carried into every successive lifetime until properly fulfilled (until a soul relationship is developed). The same is true of group karma, for an individual carries with him the karma of earlier group affiliations (as well as karma of the material heritage of personality).

A complication often arises with regard to group and individual karma, as a person who has previously incarnated in a particular group (race, nation, religion) may subsequently experience an incarnation in a contrasting group. In this way, many antagonisms can be moderated or resolved (provided the person

is responsive to the opportunity), resulting ultimately in a nicely balanced (relatively detached (impersonal)) personality temperament and a constructive harmony of all group lives. Those who remain personality-centered and attached to the current personality affiliations (in the racial, national, or religious sense) are usually (relatively) unresponsive to opportunities for karmic fulfillment along peaceful (efficient) lines.

Another interesting complication frequently arises with regard to family relationships. For an individual to incarnate in a particular family does not necessarily (or generally) mean that the individual is previously related to those family members (who may or may not be previously related to each other). However, frequently (?) is the case of some family members having previous experience together, possibly via different relationships than the present. Sometimes that earlier experience will condition the current experience and complicate matters via an intrinsic rapport (harmony) or a superficially inexplicable conflict. This is not usually the case of a spiritual student, however, who is more likely to be detached from such personal relationships (obligations). In either event, there is a definite distinction between the family relationships of the personality and those of the spiritual family or soul group to which one belongs in principle.

Though almost all relationships are developed along personality lines, some may develop into deeper, soul relationships as the personalities work closer together in terms of quality (character) (which naturally attracts the attention (repose) of the soul). In this way a soul may be drawn magnetically into alignment with a particular esoteric group, particularly where the soul has advanced beyond the consensus (level or character) of its original soul group. Original soul relationships are relatively few because soul groups are relatively small (compared with humanity) and because the members of any given soul group will normally be diffused throughout the realm of human experience. But the members of a soul group who retain their essential character and evolve in response to the group vector (quality) will find their paths will cross eventually (if not occasionally), particularly in the later stages (where the individuals are consciously upon the spiritual path, for until that time, the soul group is not a particularly significant entity or influence).

Where a rapport is developed between an individual (esoteric student) (of considerable training) and the esoteric group, the individual can relate (interact) with the other various members of the group regardless of diffusion and whether or not the other members are actually in incarnation. The group then constitutes a group network within a greater network of (linked) esoteric groups. Thus the group lives through its integrated members even though some may be temporarily displaced (but not in consciousness or relationship).

† Commentary No. 1405

Expiation

Expiation is the act of making atonement and the means by which and through which atonement is made, i.e., amends-making. Atonement suggests active reconciliation or active (willful, deliberate, intentional) restoration of balance. If one has committed a grievous (or not so grievous) offense against another or against society (or against oneself) (or against another lifeform) (all of which are inherently "against" God and one's higher (divine) nature), there is therefore a required restoration of (karmic) balance, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

The underlying purpose in restoration-of-balance (karmic fulfillment) is to ensure that whatever the implied lesson-in-experience is actually learned and whatever adjustment in consciousness that is needed is actually made. Thus one cannot simply be imprisoned or punished, and one cannot simply compensate one's victim for his or her losses or injuries, one must actually learn the lesson and make a suitable adjustment in consciousness and engage in expiation. Otherwise the apparent act of expiation will not actually restore the balance and the unresolved force will then necessarily (eventually) reappear, generally through other means or in another form and generally with greater intensity. Thus no form of "punishment" is effective unless there is also an effective consideration for and facilitation of learning and growing.

If one engages this process (expiation) openly, sincerely, and voluntarily, then there is greater likelihood of learning the lesson (properly and fully) and restoring the balance, without further untoward consequences. But if one ignores the process or if one engages the process insincerely or involuntarily,

then things (untoward consequences) tend to be more complicated and generally more painful and generally longer-lasting (untoward suggests adverse or unpropitious if not also somewhat intractable). Karmic force is unrelenting until such time as it is fulfilled. It may be acting indirectly at times and directly at other times, but it remains (and grows in intensity) until it is actually fulfilled.

The problem of expiation is not merely a matter of attitude, e.g., willingness or earnestness to engage the process, but also a matter of ability and intelligence. In order to learn the lesson one must have a capacity and facility for learning, one must be open and able to comprehend the issues. Thus much of ordinary experience is involved not so much with actively restoring the balance as with developing the capacity for intelligently restoring the balance. And ultimately, every "offense" is really against oneself (God) (and the collective consciousness (life)), and so expiation is properly a matter of finding peace with oneself, with god, and all of life.

There is also a matter of atonement in two other senses, namely that of "reconciliation of God and man through the death of Jesus Christ" and the at-one-ment in the Christian Science sense of exemplification. The life of Jesus Christ symbolizes various stages in human evolution, where Jesus represents the human being and Christ represents the higher nature or God within. Thus Christ as intermediary, capable of remission of sins, is also symbolic, in the sense that it is only through one's inner life and relationship with God that our sins can be reconciled. Thus atonement and at-one-ment are one and the same, the goal being union with God through self-mastery and adherence to one's higher nature. In the final analysis, expiation occurs through unity and union, through conscious and actual oneness with God and all lives. In this sense, karma is unification.

Section 4.11



Aspects of Karma 1

- Since karma pervades all of life and consciousness in manifestation, there are many aspects to karma. There is compelling karma and there is non-compelling karma. There is the karma of accidents. There is a relationship between dharma and karma. There is a matter of conscience. And there is the perception of good and bad karma.

Harmony and Conflict

The present planetary evolution is conditioned or qualified by the fourth ray of harmony through conflict, as the planetary scheme is presently in its fourth round of the fourth evolutionary chain. The fourth ray is especially active in humanity, as the human kingdom is the fourth kingdom in the evolutionary sequence. But this quality of harmony through conflict is both abstract and implicit, indicating far greater significance and meaning than is normally understood of harmony and conflict.

The fundamental driving force of nature is the eternal pressure of evolution. This pressure (conflict) can manifest in various ways and through a wide range of intensity. Under fourth ray qualification, the pressure of evolution is quite intense, and the resultant manifestation of karma is more serious than gentle. Fundamentally, conflict is the evolutionary pressure and harmony is the evolutionary fulfillment. Harmony is balance, completion, and perfection; conflict is tension, pressure, and crisis, leading to harmony. The very state of incompleteness is a basic (internal) discord to be resolved.

The nature of harmony and conflict is further enhanced by the dualistic character of manifestation, as the pairs-of-opposites are faced and resolved. In this sense, harmony is balance (equilibrium) and conflict is contrast (tension between the polar opposites). The arena for evolution is a realm of extremes (poles) (choices) between (within) which the individual life (and group) must ultimately find balance (control) and stability. The path is one of moderation (guidance) between the extremes, a middle road leading to the gentle synthesis of contrasting elements. The various opposites are complementary (and illusory). Contrast is a necessary condition for evolution, without which there could be no progress; but pain and suffering need not be necessary. The contrast (tension) between the elements of the personality provides the struggle of integration (development); the contrast between the soul and the integrated personality provides the struggle of alignment. The contrast between the various major and minor planes (levels) (dimensions) of consciousness provides for evolution in consciousness. Conflict implies interaction (communication), and through lack of awareness that conflict (karma) can manifest as pain.

Harmony does not mean the avoidance of conflict; it means the transformation of conflict into a realm of intelligent and controllable contrast. Harmony is a means of approach and a method of resolution. If conflict (experience) is approached with harmony (self-control) (equilibrium), then the resultant progress is more significant and the extreme of pain will be unnecessary. Passive harmony is a metastable (vulnerable) condition of weakness. Active harmony is a condition of stability and strength. Harmony is not really the objective, but it can be an indication of the accomplishment of the objective which is the higher consciousness.

The highest human harmony comes in higher meditation (true contemplation) in which mentation (contrast) ceases in the equilibrium (serenity) of the soul. The lowest form of human conflict is that which may exist (externally) between groups or individuals. Conflict arises where lessons are not learned. Wherever human conflict exists, there exists the need for love, understanding, and intelligent resolution, that lessons might be learned and that harmony might prevail. There are lessons to be learned in every crisis and in every conflict, subtle or otherwise. As the unity (in diversity) of the human race is realized, through light and love, may conflict (illusion) be transformed and resolved into cooperative contrast (synthesis), and harmony (reality) manifested on Earth.

† Commentary No. 379

Compelling Karma

One of the aspects or dimensions of karma is the degree of compulsion associated with a given karmic force (consequence). Though any given karmic force is multifaceted (drawing from numerous earlier actions) and distributed in time, that force can be perceived in differentiated terms of relative compulsion. Some karmic consequences are necessarily (virtually) compelling, and for all practical purposes inevitable (unavoidable). Other karmic consequences may be relatively non-compelling, from those forces which interact strongly (dynamically) with the subject's consciousness, to those forces which are almost incidental to the individual's consciousness and experience (but are nonetheless necessary in order to achieve completeness and consistency).

Compelling karma may be further differentiated into two types: that which is clearly cumulative from earlier experience, the fulfillment of which being determined entirely by karmic processes (bounds of karmic force), and that which is selected and programmed by the soul (under whatever measure of free will that has been achieved (earned)) for a given incarnation (from the cumulative karma, according to the (subjective) discretion and needs of the soul) (imposed nonetheless upon the manifested life, experience and consciousness of the personality). Thus, the general, impelling or compelling nature of karma is determined largely by the karmic laws themselves and to some extent by the interactive soul. Karmic laws constrain the relatively unevolved soul to some considerable extent, far less so in the case of the relatively evolved soul, such a soul being in closer relationship to its personality instrument (and more able to interact with its own karmic origin).

Compelling karma is programmed into the manifested life (experience) (consciousness) of the personality via external (internal) forces (including astrological consideration) (the relatively unevolved personality being quite vulnerable and responsive to external (astrological) forces, while the relatively evolved personality is relatively free from such vulnerability). By definition, compelling karma is a set of karmic forces released into the objective world, programmed in time or programmed to trigger in some fashion relative to the individual's experience (expression), and (relatively) irrevocable and immoderate.

In the case of relatively evolved souls (personalities), compelling karma is not generally evoked, for such souls have already (generally) fulfilled the more serious (compelling) karma and are more capable of consciously and intelligently interacting with any given circumstances or experience. But where compelling karma is evoked (always with merit), it is the necessary consequence of earlier action and not necessarily (or even generally) indicative of the current consciousness. The lessons to be learned from (via) any given karmic experience are ever lessons in consciousness, having implications for the subtle (higher) layers of human consciousness, if not obviously meaningful to the outer (superficial) (waking) consciousness. Learning (progress) is obviously facilitated to the extent and character of the individual's consciousness.

Where the implications and lessons in consciousness are not obvious or clear to the waking consciousness, the individual should simply proceed as dispassionately as possible, sincerely seeking to learn whatever lessons are afforded, without frustration, even if the lessons are afforded only to the less conscious levels. All karmic opportunity should be considered seriously (but not too seriously), for many are the lessons afforded by every compelling experience along the path.

† Commentary No. 380

Non-Compelling Karma

Non-compelling karma is that subset of karmic consequences that is more impelling or interactive than compelling. Non-compelling karma is more of a distributed pressure, to be fulfilled according to the interactive opportunities in consciousness (i.e., dependent on the individual's free will and current condition (character) of consciousness). This impelling force is an encouragement that must ultimately be fulfilled, but not necessarily constrained to given circumstances or a given incarnation. In other words, such karma is to some extent deferrable or at least dynamic (flexible) in its relationship to the individual consciousness.

Non-compelling karma exists as much for the relatively unevolved as for the relatively highly evolved (the converse (for compelling karma) not being true), but the more evolved individuals are better able to utilize the interactive karmic forces for their own progression and service. The more intelligently responsive a person is to afforded experience and circumstances, generally the more meaningful will that experience be and generally the more progress attained (experience assimilated). This implies some discretion to recognize meaningful experience (and consequently to refuse to be absorbed by less meaningful experience) and to make the implied adjustments in consciousness. Much thus depends on the awareness, discretion, responsiveness, intuition, and initiative of the individual in relation to the afforded circumstances.

The individual presently lacking in compelling karma who fails to respond to the opportunities afforded by non-compelling karma, will subsequently experience the karmic consequences of wasted opportunity. But the individual so lacking

(or otherwise) who responds intelligently (with awareness and proper consideration) may progress substantially in what would otherwise be a rather dull incarnation (from the standpoint of higher consciousness). Non-compelling karma may be as dramatic and as potentially catastrophic (from the perspective of the easily deceived personality) as compelling karma, the difference being that the personality (mind) (consciousness) is potentially able to moderate the karmic effects, either by deferring the forces or by actually fulfilling the implied energy.

The bulk of cumulative karma is non-compelling, as is the bulk of karma created by the present consciousness (consciously and otherwise), but the longer a person goes without fulfillment of major non-compelling karma, the more that karma is potentially transformed into compelling karma (and subsequently the greater is the loss of relative freedom). For the spiritual (esoteric) student living on or near the frontier of human consciousness, the karma is almost entirely created by current consciousness and group consideration, the accumulated karma having been fulfilled in order to reach the frontier of consciousness. This implies, however, that the effects of current activity are relatively more potent (compelling or otherwise) (meaning the lessons are more substantial (subtle)).

Like compelling karma, non-compelling karma may involve karma released (available) by virtue of earlier experience and karmic law alone, or by virtue of the soul's power of evocation. Particularly in the case of relatively evolved souls, the soul will subjectively evoke non-compelling karma in response to the character and quality of current consciousness and the circumstances created by (for) that consciousness as a matter of course. The interactive aspects of consciousness (karma) are considerably more potent (potentially) than the compelling aspects.

The Karma of Accidents

An accident is commonly considered an unfortunate event resulting from carelessness, unawareness, ignorance, or unavoidable causes. No event (situation) (circumstances) is without sufficient cause or merit. For every accident there exists a causal (karmic) chain. A given causal chain may or may not be particularly significant, but it exists nonetheless to provide a cause and effect relationship (to satisfy the balance of forces). Under occult (karmic) law, each person is indeed responsible for every experience faced, though few experiences involve isolated individuals, and therefore most causal chains (and most events) are multiplex (involving more than one person and/or involving a set of causes) (resulting in shared experience) (the result of interacting karmic forces).

From a metaphysical (superphysical) perspective, an accident is an explosion of psychic force. That explosion may range from great, in the case of a major (apparent) catastrophe, to minor, in the case of an incidental accident (without major consequences). Though an accident may appear to be sharply defined in time and space, most accidents involve a gradual building up of psychic force followed by a (relatively) sudden release of that tension as the resulting accident (or accidents) is manifested. In the case of a major accident, the tension can build over quite some time, as the appropriate people are gradually attracted to the time and place of occurrence (release) (manifestation) according to their respective karma. In many cases, carelessness alone is sufficient to warrant immediate consequences.

The circumstances of some accidents appear to be within a person's immediate or potential control, and are normally attributed to carelessness, unawareness, or ignorance, and indeed these can be potent causes (resulting in potent lessons and karmic fulfillment). But some such accidents are actually beyond a person's immediate control and, in addition to the karma of carelessness (unawareness) (ignorance) there may be additional, more potent (intense, cumulative) karma not directly related to the immediate consciousness (temperament) and circumstances, save as an opportunity of manifestation (release) and subsequent

realization on some level. But in every event, the participants are as responsible for their consequences as they are for their causes, however distant.

Though many accidents are essentially unavoidable (without a moderating change in consciousness), most accidents can be prevented by one who is reasonably aware of external and internal events (i.e., who is careful, observant, and able to qualify his own character, quality, temperament, etc.). If a person is consciously responsible and has reasonable awareness, then virtually all meaningful lessons can be learned (and appropriate adjustments made) without recourse to accidents, suffering, etc. The apparent tragedies of life carry with them major lessons for the individuals involved, and even those who are consciously responsible and reasonably aware are not necessarily immune.

Those who are accident prone are effectively creating their own accidents by virtue of their psychic and/or personal temperament. But those who are well-integrated, spiritually poised, conscientious and responsible, who live without haste (anxiety) and with goodwill toward all, are generally free from first-order accidents (accidents resulting from current conditions in consciousness) if not necessarily from second-order accidents (accidents resulting from earlier or accumulated conditions in consciousness). The karma of any accident is, as is all karma, the appropriate effect needed to balance the forces released by virtue of human activity.

† Commentary No. 438

The Karma Paradox

The karma paradox is simply the (apparent) paradox of responsibility for karmic consequences in which a person (first party) contributes to the experience (suffering) (blessing) of another person (second party) or group of persons. The two parties may or may not share relational karma, in the sense that their paths (karma) may have crossed previously (in the present or prior incarnation(s)) or that by virtue of contributing to the current consequences their paths (karma) may be subsequently relatable. If the two parties do share relational karma, then the situation is simply more complicated than would otherwise be the case, but the basic karma remains simple in principle.

A person (second party) who experiences some effect(s) (karmic consequences) (situation) (circumstances) (suffering) (blessing) is (in terms of the karma of that person (second party)) wholly responsible for those consequences, by virtue of prior or present (or future) actions. The fact that some other person or persons (first party) have played a role in the fate of the second party in no way changes the fact of responsibility of the second party for his (her) (their) own consequences. Had the first party not played that role in the first place, then the circumstances (time, place, situation) of the second party may have been different, but ultimately, the essential (earned) (deserved) (merited) consequences would have to be faced (by that second party). Some other first party might then be involved or natural forces might play a sufficient role, but the proper consequences would occur nonetheless and would be wholly appropriate to the lessons (experience) needed (deserved) by the second party.

A person (first party) who contributes to the fate of some second party by playing an intermediate (causal) role is wholly responsible (and accountable) for the role that is played and the circumstances thereto (e.g., motives, quality of consciousness, etc.). The fact that the second party wholly deserved the consequences afforded in no way reduces the responsibility of the first party for playing that role. If the first party is careless then he (she) (they) must suffer (experience) the consequences (karma) of carelessness. If the first party was willfully kind (malicious) (or imposing), then he (she) (they) must suffer (experience) the consequences (karma) of kindness (or harmfulness) (or imposition). Those consequences need not be in kind, but will be appropriate to the circumstances of the first party.

Thus are there two or three distinct karmic arenas in this context: (1) that of the first party independent of the karma of the second party but with consideration for the suffering (blessing) afforded the second party, (2) that of the second party independent of who contributed to the circumstances faced, and (3) that of the possible (albeit not necessary) relationship between the two parties. The first party simply plays the role of a catalyst. That role may be good, in the sense that it is motivated in kindness, without imposition, and results in a learning experience for the second party. Or that role may be unfortunate (not in the sense that it is unfortunate for the second party, unfortunate though the circumstances of the second party may appear (nothing is unfortunate)) (but in the sense that it is not properly motivated or in the sense of carelessness, and

results in some (apparent) harm to the second party). The important aspect for the first party is sincerity, consideration, motives, etc. But in every activity there are lessons for all so involved.

It is for the spiritual student to be helpful in serving humanity, carefully to maintain an overshadowing harmlessness, and carefully to prevent any unnecessary karmic involvement (personal energy) (complications).

† Commentary No. 518

Dharma and Karma

The distinction between dharma and karma is that of dharma being a particular form of karma which conveys some degree of obligation or responsibility (duty) that is not the case for the more general and more prevalent forms of karma.

In the more general (prevalent) case (karma), one acquires karmic consequences as the result of action (experience and expression on all levels of consciousness) and within those earned consequences are intended lessons. If a particular lesson is learned (and appropriate adjustments made) then that (associated) karma is fulfilled and one is free to face (create) additional karma (resulting in further progress). That fulfillment occurs through assimilation (understanding), consciously or unconsciously achieved. But if a particular lesson is not learned then that (associated) karma is not fulfilled and accumulates and reforms to re-manifest in a similar (albeit later) fashion or otherwise according to overall karmic factors. In this more general (prevalent) case (karma), one is not obligated or expected to learn the intended (earned) lesson at the particular (afforded) opportunity (though it is certainly more auspicious to do so); one must simply learn the lesson eventually and the longer it takes (from the initial affordance) the (relatively) more difficult the consequences (circumstances) become.

With dharma however, the acquired karmic consequences imply a responsibility (expectation) to act or respond in some appropriate manner. In a sense, dharma is a much more potent (yet more subtle) form of karma because it (dharma) implies that the individual has developed (earned) the capacity for responsibility

and can therefore progress by fulfilling duty (in addition to (merely) learning implied lessons). In fact, progress (in the evolution of consciousness) (along the spiritual path) is achieved more potently by adherence to truth (fulfillment of dharma) than by any conscious or unconscious learning of implied lessons, for the greater lessons per se are the lessons of dharma. Karma is qualified by merit, appropriateness, and affordance of some lesson to be learned (experience to be assimilated); dharma is (additionally) qualified by responsibility and the expectations that that implies.

The early forms of dharma involve more mundane responsibilities leading gradually to the (more potent) responsibilities of ethics. The later (and even more potent (subtle)) forms of dharma involve the qualification(s) of the spiritual path (the soul) itself. If one responds (positively) in accordance with dharma, then that dharma is fulfilled and sustained (while karma is merely fulfilled). If one fails to respond properly (if the responsibility is not recognized and honored) then one's karma is complicated more considerably than with non-dharmic karma, but the dharma persists nonetheless. One of the higher talents is the ability to recognize dharma and properly discern its implied (conveyed) responsibilities, and in that recognition and understanding comes the capacity for adherence.

As one progresses upon the evolutionary (spiritual) path, one gradually and eventually becomes free from accumulated karma (karmic obligations), but never free from (instantaneous) karma or the law of karma itself. As one progresses along the path, one earns more and more dharma and that dharma (or more properly the adherence to that dharma) conveys considerable (albeit subtle) and increasing freedom. There is simply a profound freedom implied (conveyed) in adherence to truth (dharma), for dharma reveals the way and conveys the ability to proceed intelligently upon that way, in light and love and power.

Karma and Conscience

In addition to the overall rate of karmic return (the overall rate of appearance of karmic consequences relative to the overall karmic production (action)) which is relatively rapid for those upon the spiritual path and relatively gradual for all others, there is also a matter of the timescale (speed) (rate) of karmic consequences relative to specific karmic causes (there is furthermore a matter of rate of karmic fulfillment given some rate of karmic opportunity).

Everyone has a mix of (relatively) fast karma and (relatively) slow karma, with fast karma predominating in the lives of those upon the path and slow karma predominating in the lives of those not upon the path (of course karmic rates embrace a continuum, with those who are approaching the spiritual path gradually improving the awareness required for more direct assimilation of experience, but the significant (dramatic) increase in rate of karmic return comes only where one has made a proper commitment to the spiritual path) (once the residual karma has been fulfilled, the personal karma will tend to be all fast karma).

Thus each person has an associated reservoir of accumulated (unfulfilled) karma, with overall (composite) and individual (elemental) rates of return (nonetheless dynamic and continuously interdependent in relation to new and old causes and the overall condition of consciousness). Each rate of return (overall and for each given karmic element) is loosely analogous to the tension of a (multidimensional) spring. Slow karma occurs where the karmic tension is relatively small, where direct assimilation of experience (karmic consequences) is relatively unlikely, and where the person is not on the spiritual path and thereby allowed a much more gradual karmic fulfillment. In this case (slow karma) is implied a relatively weak conscience, for it is (among other things) the overall sharpening of conscience that indicates the relative acceleration of evolution in consciousness of those upon the path.

Conversely, fast karma occurs where the karmic tension is relatively large, where direct assimilation of experience is relatively likely, and where the person is indeed upon the path and has evoked a much more rapid karmic fulfillment (in

order to reduce the karmic accumulation and thereby increase the freedom for hastened evolution (and the service to humanity that that implies)). In this case (fast karma) is implied a relatively strong conscience. The conscience is in effect an integrated, subjective manifestation (indication) of accumulated wisdom (realization) (assimilation of experience). Conscience is defined as a sense or consciousness (subjective awareness) of the relative moral (ethical) goodness of one's own conduct, intentions, and character, together with a feeling of some obligation to proceed in a manner consistent with that sense of appropriateness. Thus the degree of development and manifestation of conscience, the relative rate of karmic evocation, and relative place of a person on the spiritual path are all related.

Much in the realm of human events that appears disparate or unjust can be explained by this principle of conscience and karma. For example in the case of two people of comparable intelligence and ability (but disparate ethics and spiritual awareness), the one of relatively weak conscience may appear much less accountable (more free from ethical or moral constraints) (more free from consequences) (more successful?) than the more conscientious counterpart, but one must realize that the rules are different for these two and, in the long run the person of conscience will develop much more rapidly and embrace much more wisdom (realization) than those who are less conscientious.

† Commentary No. 587

The Zero Option

One of the basic truths of karma, action, and responsibility is "inaction is action". The spiritual student (as every self-conscious human being) is responsible for (the consequences of) every action, activity, and expression (physical, emotional, mental) (consciously or unconsciously demonstrated). The zero option (inaction) is as much an action as any deliberate or indeliberate expression or demonstration, since consequences result from every moment-focus in consciousness.

The consequences of inaction can be just as profound and far-reaching as any more obvious activity. For every dilemma (decision point) faced by the spiritual

student (who is somewhat aware of cause and effect relationships and the fact of karma and responsibility for consequences), every reasonable option should be weighed and considered (unless, preferably, intuition provides the appropriate path (decision) without recourse to deliberation or reasoning). Some options may be obviously (apparently) positive (constructive), while others may be obviously negative (destructive or needlessly leading to complications). The neutral option (of inaction) may in fact be positive (constructive) or negative (destructive) depending on the context and potential consequences.

Some prefer the zero option, erroneously thinking that inaction minimizes karmic entanglements, avoiding action (and responsibility) in the expectation of progress. Yet the zero option is action, and for every action (inaction) there are consequences, and for every action (consequence) there is unevadable responsibility. Given a choice of karmic entanglement (complexity) or karmic simplicity (all other factors being the same), then simplicity is preferable. But all other factors are rarely the same, so the option of simplicity should not be an excuse in itself. One should rather seek the appropriate decision, one that accommodates dharma (the sense of responsibility of the spiritual student) without fear of entanglements or consequences (one who consciously accepts responsibility for all actions (and inaction) has naught to fear, while one who fails to accept such responsibility has much to fear (face)).

As the student evolves, a sense of (recognizing) appropriateness (intuitive realization) is gradually developed so that decision points are rarely consciously recognized as decision points, since every dilemma carries within it the answer or resolution intuitively realizable. The zero option is actually utilized more often than not, but not for the sake (illusion) of avoidance, but rather for appropriateness. Sometimes (often) every (positive) action can be expected to lead to misunderstanding or complication, so that the zero option (neutral path) is (in that case) one of minimal misunderstanding (or minimal complexity) (for which consequences the actor is nonetheless responsible). In short, the student should prefer action wherever action is appropriate, and inaction where inaction is appropriate. The zero option should be considered in the context of the dilemma (what to do or not).

Where action is called for (seems more appropriate than inaction) and more than one reasonable path (essentially or apparently equal in positive potential) is

recognized, then it does not really matter which path is chosen (the non-recognition of a single preferable path means either that all are equivalent or none is particularly preferable or that the student is simply blind (for the moment or in this instance) (in which case the choice still does not matter since any choice in this case would lead to some realization)). Finally, the zero option should be exercised conscientiously (honestly and reasonably) until or unless a reasonable path or action can be recognized.

† Commentary No. 727

Good and Bad Karma

The concept of good and bad karma presents semantic difficulties because “good” and “bad” are oft used in misleading and judgmental ways. “Good” usually indicates something favorable or desirable, as in bountiful, attractive, suitable, pleasant, wholesome, honorable, benevolent, etc., while “bad” usually indicates the opposite, or something unfavorable or undesirable, as in disagreeable, unpleasant, injurious, harmful, unhealthy, sorrowful, distressing, etc. Thus good and bad karma refers to favorable (desirable) and unfavorable (undesirable) consequences, respectively.

But good and bad are relative terms, depending on context, personal perspective (judgment), and appearances rather than underlying reality (truth in some higher sense than the practical reality of day-to-day mundane existence). Thus particular karma (karmic consequences) is good or bad only in the sense of how a person affected (effected) feels about those circumstances and consequences. Intrinsically, karma is neither good nor bad, but merely (and necessarily) appropriate (merited) (warranted) in every (proper) sense.

It is misleading (self-deceiving) (greatly oversimplifying) to think of good karma as a consequence of good works and bad karma as a consequence of bad works, because karma is much more (almost entirely) concerned with the evolution of consciousness, and the concept of good and bad is really limited to the affected consequences rather than the effected consequences. All karma is “good” in the sense that it promotes learning and evolution in consciousness, and is never “bad” in the sense that it is always merited. Karma is necessarily complex because the inputs to the karmic equation are very widely distributed in time

(for each individual) and the individual consequences are necessarily balanced by wisdom and the greater context of the race, culture, lifewave, and planetary environment. Thus it is difficult to draw specific (affected) conclusions from specific (timely) consequences. Causal relationships are potentially and normally very complex and work out in time and combine in so many ways that output (results) (consequences) is not easily or readily correlatable to known inputs (actions) (causes). And causes come as much or more from emotional and concrete mental levels (behavior (feelings and thoughts)) than from physical levels. The causal chain is simply not (generally) very apparent to anyone.

Yet it is nonetheless human nature to understand and accept that good things happen (or should happen) to good people and that bad things happen (or should happen) to bad people. But "bad" things also happen to "good" people and "good" things also happen to "bad" people, because, in a sense (and over the timescale of causes (several to many lifetimes)) "good" people are not all good (nor have they always been "good") and "bad" people are not all bad (nor have they always been "bad"). Good people generally have a great deal yet to learn (as do bad people), and all (experience) contributes to the working out (resolution) (adjustment in consciousness) (learning) of karma in the broader sense.

In wisdom (karmic balance) (fairness), there are also different standards for predominantly good and predominantly bad people, such that the further along the path one proceeds, the greater is the consequence for relatively minor transgressions (actions inconsistent with the intended consciousness) (as karma is essentially a restorative force to encourage all toward evolutionary experience and achievement). In the final analysis, however, there is no good or bad, just experience that is judged and adjusted according to the relative balance between the past, current, and intended quality of consciousness.

Section 4.12



Aspects of Karma 2

- Additional aspects of karma include the triple nature of karma, karmic and personal forces, karmic notions, karma and disparagement, and happenstance and transpiration. In some higher sense, grace, happenstance, and karma are quite equivalent.

The Triple Nature of Karma 1

Karma is that underlying progressive (evolutionary) force which provides focus (balance) within the context of manifestation (incarnation) (karmic law). It is the force associated with cause and effect, of action and consequence, on every level of consciousness. There are three principal aspects to karma which constitute its triple nature. These are samcita (sanchita), prarabdha, and kriyamana.

Samcita karma is the accumulated karma of past (present) (future) lives, or more properly, that unresolved accumulation of karma that is not evoked in the present incarnation or phase of manifestation but which necessarily provides a subtle evolutionary pressure by virtue of its existence. It is in a sense the potential or non-kinetic dimension of karma, for it is neither active nor passive, but persistent. In another sense it is samcita karma that is the weight or burden of the soul, as by its very existence it prevents the soul from playing an active role in the life of the personality. For as long as there is samcita karma the soul remains predominantly on its own level, in repose, awaiting the development of the personality (lower self) and its eventual responsiveness to the soul (higher self). Samcita karma exists because and to the extent that a person is normally unable to fulfill all of his or her karma in a given lifetime. The action or activity implied in experience generates karma. That which is not or cannot be dealt with presently simply accumulates as samcita.

Prarabdha karma lies in the present (lifetime) and is manifesting karma, that which has commenced, that allotment or measure of karma that is evoked by the soul, which conditions or influences the current circumstances of the soul-in-incarnation (i.e., the personality). The soul evokes a measure of samcita for each lifetime until samcita is exhausted. The measure (prarabdha) is wisely (albeit not consciously) determined based on the ability (evolutionary state) of the person to learn and grow thereby (and the intention of the soul with regard to rate of progress).

Most souls are not concerned with rate of progress and evoke modest measures. Souls upon the spiritual path are more concerned with rate of progress and

evoke larger measures in order to prepare the personality for service in the context of the path (of course rate of progress cannot readily be perceived from within an incarnation because it is largely a subjective matter (i.e., the assimilation of experience (on soul levels) may not be apparent to the mind). Prarabdha for those who are not upon the path tends to be modest in terms of overall measure but occasionally dramatic by virtue of the severity of lessons (impressions) warranted. Prarabdha for those who are approaching the path tends to be a larger overall measure, and somewhat more dramatic. Prarabdha for those who are upon the path may be comparable to that of those approaching the path, or more subtle in the case of those who have no great accumulation to deal with.

Kriyamana karma is that which is in the course of making, or “new” karma, from the activity of the person in incarnation. Along with prarabdha karma, kriyamana karma provides the dynamic or kinetic dimension to karma, with prarabdha being the active-present component and kriyamana being the active-creative-future component. Kriyamana karma is that which is being created and contributes to (and potentially modifies) either prarabdha and/or samcita. Kriyamana is the subtle (anticipatory) evolutionary pressure, while prarabdha is the active “burden-of-the-personality” to be faced at the moment.

† Commentary No. 918

The Triple Nature of Karma 2

Together samcita-prarabdha-kriyamana wholly condition the incarnation, providing the circumstances, ordering, internal and external factors, etc. for all of life’s experiences and opportunities for expression, from the subtle and indirect pressure of samcita through the direct pressure of prarabdha, to the dynamic dimension of kriyamana.

In addition to the triple nature of karma (samcita-prarabdha-kriyamana), prarabdha is also of triple nature in the sense of there being essentially three kinds of karma-to-be-faced-in-the-present-life. These are dradha, adradha, and dradhadradha. Dradha karma is that which is fixed and unavoidable, immutable. It provides certain keynotes or milestones within the incarnation,

factors and circumstances that remain fixed. Adradha karma is that which is not fixed and is therefore avoidable in the sense of being changeable, either in timing, scope, or intensity. And dradhadratha karma is that which is both fixed and not fixed, being more fixed than adradha but less fixed than dradha.

And yet, in no case is any karma evadable. That which cannot be modified is simply faced, for whatever it conveys in the way of factors, circumstances, lessons, etc. That which can be modified (by kriyamana) cannot be evaded, but the experience can be hardened or tempered by virtue of our attitude toward it (which is, after all, the proper essence of kriyamana (toward prarabdha)). If we approach our conditioning (internal and external factors) and our circumstances (and thereby our experience) in an open-minded, responsive manner, then we learn and grow in consciousness as we fulfill our (prarabdha) karma. If, on the other hand, we seek to evade or ignore the afforded opportunities and lessons, then the karmic (evolutionary) pressure continues inexorably (if not with even greater intensity), albeit potentially in new and different ways and with new and different means.

The distinction between dradha and adradha is relatively clear. But dradhadratha requires considerable effort for either modification or transcendence (fulfillment). If one does nothing in response, it is as if it were dradha. But if one applies sufficient intelligent (honest, open-minded) effort toward resolution, then it is as if it were adradha. In practice, prarabdha is a combination of these three dimensions, with some aspects being fixed, some being not-fixed, and others being fixed-not-fixed. Likewise, for most people, "karma" is really a combination of samcita-prarabdha-kriyamana. The key is responsiveness. If one is responsive, then the karmic dimension is broader and deeper. If one is non-responsive, then the karmic dimension is relatively narrow and fixed (measured). Similarly, those who sleep through their lives on earth are continually creating new karma by virtue of their associative conditioning, while those who are more-or-less awake are simply (with kriyamana) resolving their (samcita-prarabdha) karma without creating new entanglements.

While prarabdha-kriyamana is continuous, as considerable progress along the path is achieved, samcita is gradually reduced and eventually eliminated and prarabdha-kriyamana becomes the dominant (creative) factor for the soul's emergence into activity (expression). But when the person (focus of

consciousness) emerges into the consciousness of the soul, then one simply acts from that state of being, without the entanglements of karma. The whole process of karma, the law of action (the personality) (the astrological domain of personality-centeredness), is then fully superseded by dharma, the law of being (the soul).

† Commentary No. 1017

Karmic and Personal Forces

While the progressive and inertial forces act along the axis of the spiral circuit (path of involution and evolution), karma acts radially inward, in a direction perpendicular to that axis, in order to restore the balance. This is required by virtue of personal force (desire, will, activity not aligned with the direction of evolution).

Thus karma facilitates evolution by responding to every instance of imbalance with wisdom that affords the experience needed in order for the evolving life (consciousness) to progress in consciousness. There is no question of punishment. There is only a matter of learning. In the early stages of evolution, the domain of personal activity is relatively broad and the karmic force is not very strong. Any action not aligned directly with evolution contributes to the reservoir of unfulfilled karma, to be balanced in subsequent experience. As action is taken that is directed directly against the path and flow of evolution, the evolutionary force pushes the life (consciousness) in the direction of evolution. But as action is taken that is not directly aligned either with the progressive or inertial directions (i.e., with a component that acts radially outward), then karma comes into play to restore the balance. As progress is made, as lessons are learned, as experience is assimilated into knowledge, understanding, and (most properly) wisdom, then karma is fulfilled.

Relatively unevolved people have little karma but “acquire” karma at a much greater pace than others. Average people have lots of karma but acquire karma at more or less the same rate that it is fulfilled, affording more variety in circumstances and experience. Relatively highly evolved people have little karma and tend to assimilate their experience (fulfill their karma) more or less at the same time as the experience, thus having little or no accumulation. Another

factor is the magnitude of the personal force, which tends to increase as a person evolves in consciousness. Thus consequences are “earned” in accordance with the appropriateness of the action (the extent to which it facilitates or hinders evolution) and in accordance with the magnitude of the personal force invested in the experience or expression.

The karmic response is, in part, proportional to the radial component of the personal force. Yet the further afield the action is, the stronger the restoring force (karma) becomes, so that recognizable limits are placed on the field of activity (experience and expression) afforded. This is a matter of efficiency and effectiveness in the context of underlying purpose. While diverse experience contributes to evolution, particularly in the early stages of the path, there must be some limits in order to guide the experience and expression in the ways and means intended (i.e., there are specific goals in consciousness for each lifewave and each planetary scheme).

As life (consciousness) proceeds onward and upward, the band (field) of affordable experience and expression is constrained in the sense that it becomes closer and closer to the axis of evolution and the magnitude or strength of the restoring force becomes greater, meaning that results (consequences of action (behavior, feelings, thoughts)) come more quickly and more forcefully. This simply facilitates evolution for those who are more dedicated and more aligned with the flow. Yet with this “constraint” of karma, there is actually more freedom for the spiritually realized person by virtue of the degree of alignment with the evolutionary force. There is simply (progressively) an absence of (lower) individuality and ego (desire, willfulness at the personality level), so that every action is a matter of dharma and aligned with the flow (the way).

Karmic Notions

There are a number of popular notions regarding karma that lead to some misunderstanding of its nature. Among these are the notion that there are no underlying lessons, the notion that karma is equivalent to circumstances, and the notion that karma can be circumvented. There is some element of truth and some element of not-truth in each of these notions.

Life (manifestation) proceeds with a balance of forces. There are underlying evolutionary forces (pressures) and there are underlying inertial forces that keep those evolutionary forces properly directed and tempered. Action (or reaction) on any level enters (contributes to) the karmic equation and evokes an appropriate response. Everything in this world is conditioned or qualified by underlying purpose (evolution in consciousness in the context of a broad scheme of lives within lives). Karma is one of the most fundamental forces of manifestation and contributes directly to evolution in consciousness. In that sense, it is one of the forces of evolution.

The whole purpose of karma (karmic force) is to restore the balance in such a way that evolution in consciousness is encouraged. Evolution is not “forced” directly, but indirectly through cultivation and conditioning. This allows sufficient flexibility in manifestation to evoke constructive but unanticipated changes. Karma embraces the whole cause and effect relationship, with emphasis on growth in consciousness, i.e., facilitating the learning of whatever lessons are intended for this lifetime. Action on physical, emotional, and/or mental levels is causative. Action may facilitate the balance (equilibrium) of forces or not, as the case may be. If the balance is disturbed, then a cause and effect chain or relationship is introduced into the karmic equation that evokes learning opportunities for all concerned.

Karma is fulfilled as the intended lessons are learned or as the intended adjustments are made, however consciously or unconsciously. Many people who “embrace” karma do so while unconsciously believing there are no intended or underlying lessons, i.e., by focusing on the circumstances rather than the opportunities for growth, growth is undermined, and the opportunity for growth

is neglected, meaning that there is no restoration of balance, meaning, further, that as karma remains unfulfilled the pressure for fulfillment increases. Karma is equivalent to circumstances only in the sense that circumstances are all evoked through karmic process (force) (action and consequence with underlying purpose (wisdom)). Thus karma is not really equivalent to circumstances because karma is broader than just circumstances taken at apparent value.

Karma cannot be circumvented. Karma can be changed through action and adjustment in consciousness. Karma can in some instances be delayed or deferred. But all of the karmic force that is applicable in any life must eventually be faced and resolved. Circumstances are consequences of the whole cause and effect relationship in the context of evolution in consciousness. One can deal with circumstances. One can even transcend circumstances. But one cannot circumvent the karmic dimension of circumstances. One can alleviate the effects without dealing with or resolving the cause (and its implied lesson), but the cause will remain, and grow in pressure (stress) (imbalance) until it is resolved and the lesson learned. In this sense, karma is incontrovertible and immutable. Freedom comes through intelligent awareness of karmic consequences, through a balancing or resolution (fulfillment) of karma in reaching equilibrium. But this freedom is not, however, a passive state. It is merely a non-active state, one that relates to karma in more subtle ways.

† Commentary No. 1284

Karma and Disparagement

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

Everyone is subject to karma, the law of cause and effect, action and consequence, even those who don't believe in karma. Every action, behavior, comment, feeling, and thought is subject to karma. Everyone has strengths and

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

Perhaps the biggest mistake that someone can make, who believes in karma, but does not actually understand karma, is to judge that particular conditions or circumstances makes a person any greater or lesser than anyone else. One who understands karma would never think so. For in understanding karma, one realizes that all things are interrelated and that wisdom underlies all that seems to occur in this world. Apparently wonderful opportunities (e.g., health, wealth) may not be all they appear to be, and indeed may be (and are generally) part of something much more subtle. Similarly, apparently less-than-wonderful circumstances (e.g., physical or mental disability, poverty) may mask something (opportunity) quite meaningful and valuable. So one should not (ever) judge based upon appearances, for there are underlying factors that may not be generally apparent.

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

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

† Commentary No. 1415

Happenstance and Transpiration

There is a small but interesting paradox with regard to how things happen. On one hand there is the sense (belief) of some people that everything happens for a reason. On the other hand there is the comparable (different) (but equivalent) sense that things just happen (or in some more extreme sense, that everything is happenstance). Happening simply refers to whatever comes about without regard to causation or intention (or underlying purpose), i.e., without recourse to any sense or apprehension of cause and effect relationships. While happenstance refers to things happening (believedly) due entirely to chance. Transpiration refers to the knowledge or understanding of what has happened. In fact, everything happens by chance, and nothing happens by chance. These statements are both true and equivalent.

As usual, the deeper truth lies either between the extremes or is broad enough to embrace both senses. From one perspective, everything in life, everything that happens, is truly a consequence of everything else (past, present, and future). Every action is inexorably linked to every other action. But only some of those links are significant (and the human being, with limited consciousness, is not able to discern true significance because much is simply beyond the human scope or senses). Most happenings are not significant. So one can say that everything happens for a reason (more or less), because there is an underlying causal fabric that embraces everything. Every cause, every process, and every consequence. One may never actually fully know the reason for anything, because of the scope and complexity-in-manifestation of that causal fabric, but sometimes one can know or understand some of the reasons, to some extent (or

at least one can have the artificially comforting illusion of knowledge or understanding). The problem is that if one focuses on reasons instead of learning and growing, then reasons become excuses. One can become entangled in reasoning and in reasons.

Thus it is also true that things just happen, which means that it does not really matter why or how (meaning that one needs to not be entangled in or distracted by the why or how). Especially since one cannot be sure of "reasons" or of all the causal factors. One can be sure, however, that there is a flow to life, that all things and all lives and all events exist within that flow. That things and lives and events are all interrelated. Better for the spiritual student to focus on living in the moment, i.e., with a spiritual focus and according to spiritual principles, than to be engaged (entangled) in trying to understand the small things (in details).

The manifestation of the universe is mechanistic in some sense, in the sense that everything happens according to natural law and in the sense that what happens is stochastic. But natural laws are themselves consequences, and governed by underlying purpose (evolution in consciousness). And what seems to be statistical is simply a matter of how we look at it. If we embrace a broader, deeper perspective, then there is really no significance at all in statistics. Statistics are consequential and superficial. So while (some) natural laws may seem mechanistic, they are actually just a small part of something greater and purposive. Thus what happens at the material (superficial) level is a very small part of what really happens.

Transpiration is different from happenstance, for transpiration implies at least some limited apprehension, that something has happened if not the significance of what has happened. Thus things just happen. And some things transpire, to some extent.

Section 4.13



Freedom

- While karma does provide certain limits to human experience and expression, there is considerable freedom for the human being in manifestation to guide his or her own experience within the context of intended evolution in consciousness. But, according to the rules inherent in the laws of manifestation, that freedom must be earned. Most of humanity experience and express themselves through the mechanicalness of conditioned existence, so in this sense there is little freedom. But as progress is achieved in consciousness, as the human being awakens to the nature of being and the field of manifestation, then considerable freedom results. There is destiny. And there is free will. But there are practical limits to both.

Opportunity and Limitation

One of the most potent and rewarding of energies for the evolving man is the karma of limitation and opportunity. The karma of limitation deals with physical, emotional, and mental impairment, defect, or limitation. The karma of opportunity deals with the availability of (or lack of) opportunities in the light of (or lack of) talents, abilities, and capacities. Limitation and opportunity are very much interrelated.

Limitations and opportunities are earned, as are talents and capacities. If through learning, service, and the application of consciousness, the individual earns opportunities for further learning or work or service, then that opportunity must be utilized constructively and wisely. If the opportunity is ignored or neglected or abused, then limitation is highly likely to follow, either presently or in the next lifetime. The nature of the limitation depends a great deal on the circumstances of the opportunity, the response, and the consciousness of the individual. Opportunity is a responsibility. Financial or material wealth, talents and experience, and the situations in which the personality is placed, are all opportunities (responsibilities) to be approached with wisdom. Otherwise, the consequences are stern lessons that encourage the individual in the optimum (proper) direction. The attitude toward an opportunity or experience plays a considerable role in addition to (or in spite of) the talent or wisdom held.

Mental or emotional insanity is often the result of premature psychic development and tampering or the result of mental and emotional abuse. Physical limitation is sometimes the result of the direct application of the personality by the soul seeking to develop the personality in a certain way, in order to accomplish a certain experience or achievement. A physical limitation often leads to increased development and capacity in other areas. The blind person may develop an acute sense of hearing, smell, or touch. The deaf person may develop greater powers of visual observation. And the physically crippled individual may develop greater mental powers. Physical limitation with little pain or suffering strongly suggests the need for such experience.

The keys to such a life are acceptance and determination, to accept the condition and to make the best (most) of the experience and wherever possible, determination to overcome the limitation by all (internal) means. The person experiencing limitation may otherwise waste a lifetime of unsuspected opportunity. Guardians and teachers of such persons should strive to encourage the concerned individuals toward self-confidence and determination to live a useful, constructive life. There need be no dwelling on false hopes which may negate or actually discourage self-development.

The understanding of the karma of limitation and opportunity leads to considerable encouragement to make the best of this life (spiritually), in spite of limitations, imperfections, or the lack of opportunities; and encouragement to recognize and utilize opportunities as constructively and as unselfishly as possible. There is a great deal of work that needs to be done that does not require well-defined opportunities for service. The spiritual student who fails to respond to an opportunity for service may well be denied another chance in the present lifetime. In the face of the karma of limitation and opportunity (as in all karma) one should seek understanding. The spiritual student should seek to improve his consciousness and to learn the lessons of life, that limitation might be ultimately removed (as the lessons are learned) and that freedom to serve humanity might be returned or improved.

† Commentary No. 86

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. 146

Individual Freedom

Individual freedom is a relative state, limited by capability (potential), natural law (physical and superphysical), and the freedom of others. The concept of individual freedom is an interesting one for the spiritual student, for it has a bearing upon the personal (individual) life as well as the relationships of the individual with others. What appears to be individual freedom is actually an internal phenomenon (from the standpoint of humanity), but it can be considered from the vantage point or focus of the individual.

The exercise of freedom is one of the more sacred (and well-earned) of opportunities. Relatively unevolved individuals flow with the inherent and instinctual current of the personality, as that personality is exposed to the internal and external forces of heredity and environment. Such a flowing is relatively devoid of individual freedom, or at least lacking the exercise of freedom (as decisions are made unconsciously). As the individual evolves, the intelligence emerges (withdraws) somewhat from the surrounding sea of external forces, and the exercise of freedom is begun (on purely personality levels) (as decisions are made more or less consciously).

Ultimately, the individual must face the crisis of decision between the (apparent) values of the individual and the values of the group. That crisis (transition) (interaction of values) continues until the individual becomes deeply committed in consciousness to the evolutionary path. The higher (impersonal) values take precedence over the lower (personal) values and the exercise of

freedom gradually becomes a matter of living in harmony with a far higher current, that of the path itself. Individual freedom then means the freedom of acceptance and the freedom of creatively (and responsibly) applying the higher energies (subject to the guidelines of natural law). Decisions are then made in conscious response to higher impression.

On a more practical level, the individual is free to choose the particular path or direction in life (subject as always to karma) and free to choose the values of life. The right to choose (the right to self-determination) is an important one. Not only must the spiritual student exercise his freedom, but the student must take care to allow others to do so also. Values cannot really be impressed upon others; values must be self-realized. Individual freedom (sphere of influence) (rights) should extend only so far as the rights of others are not compromised. The principal means of constructive influence (without interference) is by encouragement and example. Constructive energy (values) can be made available, so that the individual can choose the response (if any), but the energy should not be forced.

The principle of non-interference (in the lives of others) is deeply rooted in the purpose of the differentiation of human lives. That purpose implies creativity and the development of new qualities and characteristics (through diversity and the freedom of expression). Each individual contributes experience and expression to the greater life. Creative (active) consciousness (as distinguished from passive consciousness) cannot be impressed or forced. It must be cultivated through (relative) freedom and tension. Though natural law provides boundaries (and encouragement), the potentialities to be realized would be of an altogether different variety (character) if values (decisions) (paths) were forced explicitly. Forced adherence (for the human evolution) is temporary at best; unless the higher values are accepted (realized) in consciousness (and interpreted and experienced creatively), the individual contributes little to the greater life. The lessons of individual freedom are subtle and many.

Freedom

One of the problems in the objective world (as human personalities) is the illusion of separateness and the sense of independence that naturally grows as the personality becomes relatively potent (as the personality becomes reasonably well-integrated). One of man's major objective values is freedom, yet much within the human domain (helpfully) constrains and limits the degree of freedom to be experienced. Each individual (human) has earned a measure of freedom, depending on past experience, consciousness, karma, etc., but that measure of freedom is generally perceived without consideration or realization of the framework of evolution, subjective and superphysical (impelling) forces, the inter-relatedness of all life, consciousness and appearance, etc.

All of human experience is conditioned or qualified by evolutionary factors and group karma. All individual experience is further qualified by individual karma (the consequences of activity and consciousness (present and past)). The relatively unevolved human being, being largely absorbed in physical and/or emotional experience, has relatively little freedom. Such an individual is not generally conscious of being an active force, moderating the immediate environment and experience; such an individual is largely and unconsciously responsive to external (astral) (astrological) forces. The actions of the relatively unevolved human being are generally determined by the environmental factors (glamour and illusion) (emotional and concrete mental forces) as they relate to the character and consciousness of the individual, not by virtue of the individual's relative freedom.

In the case of the evolving human being (one who is evolving still more or less unconsciously, but who is beginning to think freely), the measure of freedom is greater (albeit limited), the influence of external forces is less, and the individual is beginning to actively influence the immediate (and consequential) environment and subsequent experience. As the individual further evolves, that freedom increases, yet remains bounded (moderated) by evolutionary factors (e.g., the greater needs of humanity take precedence over non-constructive individual expression). As long as a personality remains ego-centered (self-centered), the freedom of the individual will be limited (albeit potentially

substantial). But where the individual evolves beyond the personality, where the mind embraces the soul (humility) (wisdom) (impersonality), the human being attains freedom.

But true freedom, being unlimited, is nonetheless qualified, by the character and quality of the soul. And such qualification introduces the essential nature of freedom, the freedom to contribute to the cause (fulfillment) of planetary evolution (and potentially beyond). Such is the paradox, that the character (wisdom) of the soul is to freely choose to align itself in consciousness with the greater life, exercising freedom only to the extent that such expression contributes constructively and effectively, not in accordance with any individual view, but in accordance with the group view (the consciousness of higher, group (planetary) consciousness). The opportunity exists nonetheless for the soul to choose otherwise, and rarely, a soul does so choose (and consequently ceases to exist as a soul).

Practical freedom is largely a function of karma, an earned privilege of consciousness. Freedom is not an inherent right of consciousness, except in the sense that it is granted by higher wisdom. The properly qualified (committed) spiritual student chooses to subordinate the individual freedom to greater needs (the path and all of its qualified domain in consciousness).

† Commentary No. 376

Independence

Closely related to the measure of individual freedom is the sense (illusion) of independence that the ego (mind) (personality) enjoys. Freedom is indeed possible, even probable as the human being evolves, but independence in an absolute sense is not possible, for all things are inherently related. Individual consciousness cannot exist without inherent life (which is one with every other life). Nothing is totally independent, yet relative (entirely mundane) independence (illusion) is possible.

As the strength (integrated potency) of the individual ego (mind) (personality) increases, the individual becomes a relatively active, potent force in the

immediate environment, leading (potentially) to a sense of self-reliance, independence, potency, etc. That sense of independence is compounded by the illusion (appearance) of separateness (i.e., that individual objects (people) (things) are distinct and independent) and the relative ignorance of the causal (relational) forces that link every manifested element together in life and consciousness (if not appearance). The desire for independence is a natural one, for it generally comes to the evolving human being who has already progressed beyond some of the primitive (preliminary) glamours and illusions, but that desire is compounded by more advanced (subtle) glamours and the illusion of success (freedom).

Another complication is the actual need for evolving humanity to learn to think freely, without bias or predisposition, without the narrow-mindedness of the concrete mind and without the distractions of the emotions. The spiritual student must learn to think freely in order to work (serve) (progress) effectively, and this requires a measure of detachment from mundane matters and external forces. This process leads rather naturally to a state of relative independence (from lesser things and mundane forces) that the mind relates to its own relative potency. The danger (impediment) comes where the personality goes too far in its sense (and expression) of independence, to the point where the ego is relatively self-centered and relatively detached from humanity (and other lives (higher consciousness)) rather than being merely detached from the petty, mundane aspects (such detachment being necessary for further evolution).

The spiritual student, at least, needs to achieve a balance between the natural, spiritual detachment (impersonality) (freedom), the need for an enlightened relationship with humanity (awareness) (compassion), the exercise of individuality (individual freedom) (the illusion of independence), and the subordination of the ego (lower self) to the group and to the path. As the spiritual student progresses, the exercise of individuality (independence) is further subordinated to the needs and dictates of wisdom (the spiritual path); the essence and expression of individuality is transformed into the relatively particular (personal) (individual) contribution to the path (e.g., the adaptation and expression of individual character, talents, etc., to the duties of the path). But that individual contribution must (ultimately) (necessarily) be subordinated to the higher qualification of the path.

The individual contribution is only meaningful where it is tendered in context (i.e., subordinated to and responsive to the character and encouragement (qualification) of the spiritual path). The danger of an active sense of independence is increased separation and isolation in consciousness from spiritual qualification. The sense of individuality and (more importantly) the sense of independence must be transformed into intelligent (not passive) subordination, cooperation, and adherence to the dharma of the path.

† Commentary No. 1444

Binding and Bondage

Everything within the field of manifestation is bound or limited or constrained in some sense, by karma, by dharma, and by other laws of evolution in consciousness which qualify and guide and encourage experience and learning. All are bound by natural law. This is not bondage. This is simply coherence. These natural laws provide context and meaning to life and consciousness. They do not in themselves convey bondage.

Bondage is being entangled in the lower worlds. The lower worlds exist only as an environment through which to learn and grow. But because the human being in incarnation is immersed in the lower worlds he (she) is usually blind to the underlying and overshadowing reality (and context). This blindness is also part of the process. Through experience (more properly through the assimilation of experience) gradually comes clarity and understanding. The binding force of materialism and egoism is gradually overcome and (relative) freedom (enlightenment) is achieved. But in order to achieve this clarity and insight one must necessarily evolve to the point where one is less bound by circumstances. And this is achieved through experience, through assimilation of experience, through purification of the vehicles (body, emotions, mind), through growth in consciousness.

But in the meantime a person experiences a not inconsiderable extent of bondage, beginning with the initial immersion (the blindness of matter) and being compounded by one's own actions (attachments). Karma is the principal superficial binding force. It is the law of action and consequence and the means

through which consequences are evoked which are needed for growth. Thus most human beings are bound in this lower sense primarily by their own actions, attachments, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, feelings, opinions, and thoughts. These personal bindings occur on physical levels (materialism), emotional levels (entanglement in the senses), and concrete mental levels (intellectualism and egoism). In the final analysis, all personal binding is a matter of both materialism and egoism.

Some people are also bound to some extent voluntarily or passively by secular laws or imposed (worldly and psychological) forces. But most are simply bound by their own entanglements and the lack of realization of underlying reality. Moreover, many suffer the delusion of self-control or self-mastery (freedom from any binding) and the delusion of self-indulgence. It is only the ego which can suffer these delusion, but most people live at the ego level and fail to realize that the ego (what they are identifying with) is itself an artificial entity and therefore not real (not enduring). The ego serves as an effective barrier between the bound consciousness (lower self) (personality) (ego) (intellect) and the higher self (reality) (truth).

And some are bound more nobly and more consciously, by ethics and principles and spiritual values, by understanding of natural law and the rules of the path (conscious evolution). Thus while most people are bound by the quality and level of consciousness and by karma, some are bound more so by dharma, which is a higher order (more voluntary, more noble) binding. It is of course all relative. There is an overall underlying coherence or context. And there is entanglement. And everything in between. As the student evolves there is a lessening of the artificial (involuntary) constraints (karma) and a deepening of the less artificial bindings (conscious embracing of dharma). Enlightenment is a very gradual process, but as one becomes relatively more enlightened there is increasing freedom. For good.

Section 4.14



Justice

- While the role of karma is to sustain the balance between the various evolutionary forces, thus enabling them to serve their purposes, there is inherent, underlying wisdom and therefore justice, within the entire scope of manifestation. Apparent injustice implies either misunderstanding (lack of insight) or unfulfilled karma (or both). Karma requires that every experience or consequence be merited. Since karma is a consequential field, extending over all lives and groups, there is not normally a simple (singular) cause and effect relationship leading to particular circumstances. While quite simple in principle, karma is exceedingly complex in manifestation, and therefore it is quite difficult to discern the cause and effect relationships (past, present, and future) that lead to current circumstances. Yet, there is justice.

Justice

Two ways to consider the concept and processes of justice are from the standpoint of administration (imposition) and from the standpoint of receipt. Ideally, justice is the maintenance or administration of what is just, normally through the proper administration of law and the assignment of merited consequence (rewards or punishment?). The emphasis in justice is upon what is just (morally right) and involves fairness, impartiality, merit, equity, and right action. However, problems arise from personal energy, human attempts at judgment, and the misunderstanding of purpose.

The least merited form of (apparent) justice is that which is imposed on individual or personal levels, involving emotional and/or rational energy. Justice (?) imposed on personal levels (retribution) violates a number of basic principles and leads inevitably to greater karmic entanglement (leading to proper understanding). The karmic dilemma (deserved imposition versus the right to impose) is resolved albeit with some difficulty. Man has only a limited awareness of reality; he is normally unaware of cause and effect relationships which underlie and precipitate all experience. Consequently, man has no right of imposing judgment upon others, especially with regard to personal energy.

Karma requires that every experience be merited; an individual receiving some sanction must therefore merit such imposition, regardless of the motives or judgment of the person imposing such sanction. The reality (reasons, cause and effect relationships) is almost always far removed from the reasoning or understanding of the instrument. Though the person performing the imposition (knowingly or otherwise) serves a higher purpose, the lack of proper awareness and understanding coupled with the personal motives (energies) constitutes an impropriety (the end does not necessarily justify the means).

An intermediate form of justice is administered through government sanctions. The same considerations apply for the intermediate form as for the more personal form, except that in the intermediate form there is (hopefully) a greater element of reasoning and understanding. Being less personal, the intermediate form of human justice is more likely to be effective (meaningful) and thereby

contribute to the purpose of justice. In fact, such human justice is allowed (encouraged) to the extent that it is (nominally) fair and reasonable. The significance of the intermediate form goes beyond that of the individuals concerned, for it implies a progressive form of group (cultural) (national) learning, as the group attempts equitable and reasonable self-regulation (analogous to self-control (moderation) of the evolving individual). The entire process of law-making and administration of human laws is a response of the group to the inner (evolutionary) encouragement, and though imperfect, it contributes to the development of the group with which it is applied.

The highest (and only essentially perfect) form of justice is karma, which underlies and overshadows all lesser forms and experience in the lower worlds. Karma is flexible in that it involves wisdom and incorporates all pertinent causes throughout the time-stream, but it is also implacable in the sense that it cannot falter. It does involve mitigation (motives, circumstances) but places the greatest emphasis on individual responsibility. An individual is responsible (accountable for every action) regardless of circumstances, though the circumstances (ignorance) will affect the consequences. The essential purpose of karma is the evolution of consciousness; justice is a lesser albeit important concept which supports the general purpose of karma. The essential purpose of justice, perhaps too often overlooked, is to encourage self-reform.

† Commentary No. 309

Injustice

One need only look into the external (mundane) world to see numerous examples of apparent injustice, of circumstances apparently unmerited by the character or consciousness of the individual or group. But according to the law (karma) which underlies all circumstances and situations there can be no (real) injustice, for the circumstances faced are the consequences of action (forces set into motion), over the entire existence of the soul, not necessarily earned in the current incarnation, but at least modified by the current consciousness.

Since karma is a consequential field, extending over all lives and groups, there is not normally a simple (singular) cause and effect relationship leading to

particular circumstances. Though many circumstances may be traced to causes (thoughts, feelings, actions) generated in the current lifetime, the majority of circumstances are modified by the current temperament and may be traced to a collection of causes spanning several lifetimes. And these circumstances can likewise normally be traced to include relationships with a number of people. Karma is an integrative function, and its justness (equity) depends upon the whole (consciousness) rather than the individual (separated) parts.

Since the soul is the practical (individual) unit of evolution, and since the soul exists out of time and space, only the soul is in a position to realize the lessons implied by consequences that may not correlate within a particular incarnation. The mind (personality) is not normally in a position (awareness) to realize consciously the causes leading to particular circumstances; thus it is the role of the personality to learn the obvious lessons and to develop a proper (impersonal) disposition with regard to circumstances faced (and particularly so as those circumstances appear unmerited). Apparent injustice is frequently a lesson in itself, as the response of the individual is assessed.

Where the personality reacts to the circumstances faced, further karma (complication) is generated. Reaction implies a personality-centeredness (self-centeredness) and a relative lack of wisdom. Where the personality responds to circumstances in a more intelligent (moderate) (self-controlled) fashion, the individual is more likely to learn the needed lessons and contribute more constructively to further circumstances. Of course the standards (expectations) for the spiritual student are more demanding, as the spiritual student is expected to respond to all circumstances with maturity, without ever being offended and without any feelings of injustice. All is governed (qualified) by law, and any personal response (reaction) is unwarranted by spiritual standards. To be offended by any person or any circumstances is a personality-centered response (and unwarranted). An individual cannot offend another; but an individual can be offended, and by spiritual standards, must take full responsibility for being thus offended. It is not for anyone to apply standards to any other, nor are spiritual standards even pertinent to the many.

Another element of (apparent) injustice arises from group consideration, as each individual is accountable to some extent for the karma incurred by the groups to which (and to the extent to which) that individual is related. Choosing to

incarnate in a particular race, for example, brings an individual subject to the karmic effects (circumstances) earned by that race. The effects are merited, nonetheless, as lessons in themselves as well as opportunities to fulfill the group destiny, as individuals are necessarily a part of the group evolution, and since the lifewave to which the individual belongs encompasses all subordinate groups and races. Thus (central) karma enfolds equity regardless of appearance to the contrary; injustice simply cannot be.

† Commentary No. 493

Crime and Punishment 1

Exoteric laws are rules of conduct prescribed or recognized as binding or enforced by some controlling authority. A crime (in this orthodox sense) is an act that is forbidden or the omission of a duty that is commanded by a public law and that makes the offender liable to punishment by that law. In this same context, punishment is retributive suffering, pain, or loss and/or a penalty imposed upon an offender through judicial procedure. The whole system of exoteric law is (in principle) a natural (human) attempt to establish and maintain a peaceful, safe, and orderly society, to permit the members of that society to reasonably exercise their (relative) freedom.

The duty of the spiritual student in this context is to remain a law-abiding member of society and, simultaneously, to remain true to the dharma of the path (i.e., to abide by the (higher) ethical and moral standards of the path (to the extent that they are recognized) (without imposing those standards on others)). For the spiritual student, (and in principle) where one has reason to be offended, one should not feel offended, nor should one be reactive or retributive. Where one commits some offense deliberately or otherwise, one should accept responsibility for one's action and offer appropriate recompense. In the face of apparent injustice, one should recognize the infallibility of karmic law and accept the consequences, looking to those consequences as encouragement for learning.

In the metaphysical sense, every circumstance faced is a warranted consequence of integrated action, all lives and all action (experience) being governed by karmic law. Freedom of action implies (earned) opportunity for experience and

expression, but it also implies the inevitability of appropriate consequences. Action may be inherently constructive or destructive (or both), with resulting circumstances being appropriate in a broader sense than is normally recognized. In the metaphysical sense, a crime is any act that is inconsistent with the evolutionary plan (with consideration for the level and quality of consciousness (and degree of awareness) and the associated circumstances). In the metaphysical sense there is no punishment, for all consequences are inherently constructive, always earned, and always appropriate.

There are basically two categories of crimes, that of crimes against others and that of crimes against oneself. Any crime against another (others) (humanity) is a crime of imposition (any imposition not in accordance with the evolutionary plan is offensive). Imposition includes many of the conventional crimes (murder, rape, assault, robbery, etc.) as well as the moral (ethical) crimes of intimidation, coercion, preemption, preclusion, deception, lying, etc. Crimes against oneself are the crimes (offenses) (improprieties) of self-indulgence, and include selfishness, self-centeredness, absorption in mundane or personal matters, pursuit of self-interest, neglect of duty, etc. Offenses are judged (karmically) by the extent of imposition or indulgence, the extent of deception or self-deception, etc., in context. There are few if any absolutes (save the void) and few things are perfectly clear. Thus one cannot (and should not presume to) judge others (since one cannot know and understand all of the factors); one should simply seek to learn by one's own experience and the experience of others in order to improve oneself.

In the final analysis there is no distinction between crimes against others and crimes against oneself, since all are one and we evolve as a group. With an integrated (inclusive) perspective, all actions should be tempered by accumulated wisdom.

Crime and Punishment 2

In conventional terms, a crime is a transgression or violation of public or moral law and the offender is liable to punishment under the auspices of that law. In principle, "punishment" under law is intended to discourage such offenses, by the offender and by potential offenders. But in practice, "punishment" unfortunately also often involves either retribution or retaliation. None of these practices (punishment, retribution, retaliation) are in themselves proper in any deeper sense. In principle, public laws are reasonable and serve the public good. And "punishment" or incarceration is in principle both a learning and rehabilitative process. In practice neither is necessarily or generally true.

Thus in metaphysical terms, a crime is simply an action that is inherently counter-evolutionary and therefore a (moderate to serious) transgression from the karmic balance (progressive equilibrium), which necessarily evokes a progressive and restorative force. While public law generally has an intellectual basis, natural law is derived from the underlying purpose of life in this world, namely the evolution of consciousness. While public law and its enforcement depend upon human involvements (and human limitations (bias)), natural law is perfect and inexorable. Natural law (the restoration of balance) involves a natural underlying purpose and wisdom, without deliberation. Whatever action is taken, natural law encourages evolutionary growth and discourages counter-evolutionary practices. The problems of course are that natural law is not recognized consciously by many people in incarnation (who remain asleep) and that consequences evoked may be displaced in time and space and compounded by other actions and context such that correlation is not necessarily or even generally apparent.

Yet there is no punishment, no retribution, no retaliation, and no sense of these things, within the framework of natural law (metaphysics). Restorative (karmic) forces are evoked naturally and produce (ultimately, even unconsciously) understanding and insight, at least at the level of assimilation in consciousness, as the lesson is learned and adjustments are made. The process may involve pain or suffering or other unpleasant (but nonetheless consequential) factors, but these are (properly considered) the reactions of a

person to the evoked circumstances. If a person is open to learning, truly open, then there is no substantive pain or suffering. Properly, the underlying lessons are learned and adjustments are made before the restorative force becomes intense.

If a person hurts or abuses another life (human, animal, plant, or mineral), either physically or emotionally or in some material or financial sense, then the consequences are naturally that that person should feel the pain or suffering that he or she has inflicted on others, so that he or she learns to be sensitive to the well-being of others. Ultimately one realizes that all lives are so interconnected that hurting or abusing someone (or some lifeform) is simultaneously a hurting or abusing of oneself. But this realization usually takes many lifetimes to emerge into the waking-consciousness. Which means that the restorative (encouraging) force is often persistently recurring and gradually increasing in magnitude or intensity.

All crime is based on ignorance. All evil is rooted in ignorance. If one really and truly understands the context (evolution) and the consequences (karma), then there is no crime. There is simply an expression of life (without harm) that engenders growth leading to deeper realization.

† Commentary No. 1067

Justice, Law, and Truth

One of the problems associated with conventional forms of “justice” is the emphasis on law and procedure at the expense of truth. The reason for this emphasis is that “law” and associated procedures in law are relatively more easily defined, recognized, and understood in some more objective sense than is truth. In principle, and to a large extent even in practice, laws protect people through equal opportunity, equal application, etc. Laws are, however, still subject to interpretation and variability (bias) in implementation (via police and other agents of the justice system).

Human-based law is inherently biased by virtue of the role of personalities in establishing law, e.g., ego, vested interests, utilization of law to bring about some related objective, however noble. Where there are many laws and/or

numerous competing jurisdictions and interests, there arises a complexity in interpretation and implementation (and understanding). Ideally, human-based law would be relatively simple and straight-forward, both in intent, content (basis), and implementation. But that would require more noble (less personality-centered) law-makers and implementors. The emphasis should be on establishment of a relatively simple system of what is or what is not considered "acceptable" behavior through some consensus, with sufficient consideration for minority interests (i.e., not merely an imposition of majority interests, but an implementation of equitable and fair and reasonable standards).

In practice that is extremely difficult to do in any form of democracy, where personalities have competing interests, values, etc. Some other forms of government would afford easier implementation of such a system of justice, but are generally more subject to other abuses (e.g., a benevolent dictatorship is still a dictatorship). Freedom of expression is still an important ingredient in human experience, but it needs to be tempered somewhat by broader, less personal interests. A "good" system affords individual expression while protecting the broader interests of society as a whole.

The problem of truth is that it is not generally provable, while in principle "law" is more objective. In some societies, law is used to compensate for other potential abuses rather than dealing with those abuses directly, e.g., the notion of evidence wrongly obtained being not allowable seeks to discourage wrongful obtaining of evidence, but in fact also allows for the dismissal of pertinent information (truth). Ideally, persons acquiring evidence wrongfully would be appropriately prosecuted (to discourage abuse), while such evidence (truth) would remain admissible (encouraging "justice") (i.e., in principle, "all" evidence should be admissible (if evidence is not pertinent, then it should not affect the outcome)). But again the problem is human limitation, e.g., emotional and intellectual biases and how those biases affect judgment.

On the other hand, in the world today (and for the foreseeable future), human-based law is the only practical recourse. As humanity evolves as a whole, these processes and systems will improve, with emphasis on truth and justice rather than law and procedure (and eventually these systems will not even be needed). As truth is more easily and truly discernable, and not merely a matter of

perceived truth (such as it is), then any reasonable system of law will be relatively easy to implement. With relatively broad powers of realization (i.e., conscious, intuitive recognition of the truth of something), reliance on judgment will not be needed. And the diversity of competing interests will be replaced by a diversity of contributive interests within some commonality of prudent interests.

† Commentary No. 1155

Incarceration 1

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

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

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

generally a larger, longer, broader (more meaningful) pattern of experience and expression that leads to incarceration.

Incarceration, or the details (specific experience) of incarceration, may or may not appear to be fair, and may be perceived as fair (just) and not fair (not just), depending on perception, perspective, understanding, and values, which necessarily vary. One who commits a crime rarely has the same perspective as the apparent victim. Incarcerated people rarely have the same perspective as their administrators and captors. Yet each (perspective) has some merit. In the final analysis, one must accept as fact that incarceration is consequential, merited in some broader consequence. Unless one accepts responsibility for one's own circumstances, regardless of appearances, it is very difficult to then proceed on toward resolution and freedom (equilibrium).

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

Incarceration 2

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

When a person finds himself (herself) incarcerated, it is generally a consequence of the soul's intention to work out (resolve) matters of consciousness. The forces and factors which lead to incarceration are part of the broader pattern. The individual is still responsible for his or her actions, attitudes, behavior, etc., and is therefore wholly responsible for his or her consequences and circumstances, but consequences (incarceration) may be inevitable based on other (karmic) factors not readily apparent. Incarceration is rarely a pleasant experience. The circumstances of incarceration, which may be diverse (e.g., lack of comfort, extent of lack of freedom, loss of (some) normal rights, hostile environment, etc.), however unpleasant, provide an opportunity for the incarcerated person to face whatever lessons are intended or conveyed by the experience.

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

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

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

† Commentary No. 1196

Imposition

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

Two of the determining factors are necessity and reasonableness. Sometimes one cannot avoid imposing upon others. Sometimes it is reasonable to do so.

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

Respecting individual rights is still relatively important. Appreciation for individual and group differences (in character, temperament, and values) should be part of the process. But the question is where is the fine line between one individual's (or group's) rights and those of another. If one person likes quiet and another prefers noise, then what constitutes imposition. As a general practice, relatively coarse people tend to impose their energy and forcefulness (values) upon others, while relatively refined people tend to accept the presence of relatively coarse people, without being averse (without even being tolerant (because tolerance implies judgment)). But in the final analysis, the spiritual student (evolving human being) must learn to respect the rights and interests and freedoms of others and not impose upon them, even while being imposed upon.

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

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



Section 4.15



Responsibility

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

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

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

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

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

† Commentary No. 1496

The Responsibility Paradox 1

A paradox is defined as something that is "seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true" and as "an argument that apparently derives self-contradictory conclusions by valid deduction from acceptable premises." The responsibility paradox arises from common beliefs in specious cause and effect relationships.

A person is (definitely) responsible and accountable for his or her own actions, attitudes, behaviors, feelings, and thoughts. A person is also responsible and accountable for the consequences of those actions, attitudes, behaviors, feelings, and thoughts. But many people attribute consequences speciously, falsely, without understanding the actual cause and effect relationships that bind all

things together. Most people make assumptions, draw conclusions, make judgments, based on appearances and conditioned thinking, without apprehending the underlying reality. Consequently, many people attribute blame (responsibility) where none is actually warranted (and similarly, seemingly (self-deceptively) avoid responsibility when indeed they are responsible).

For example, in medical research. If a scientist discovers a cure for cancer, he would be (falsely) (wrongly) considered (by most people) to be responsible for saving many lives. And if someone in authority were to ban stem cell research, he would similarly be (falsely) (wrongly) considered to be responsible for much suffering and many deaths. But these beliefs are based on false assumptions in cause and effect relationships that are simply not valid.

First of all everything is inter-related. No one discovers a cure for some disease on his own. It happens only when and where and how it is allowed to happen, according to (individual and collective) karma. The cure is already existent (extant) and the understanding of this "cure" is available in higher consciousness. Thus it is a matter simply of embracing that consciousness and then proceeding in accord with karma. The person who "discovers" this may be engaged in noble work, but he is not in any real sense responsible. He is simply an agent of karma. It is not his intelligence, nor his work, nor his insight, that results in a cure. Nor that of his colleagues. He is simply a catalyst. And the outcome (cure) could not (ever) occur unless the collective consciousness was consistent with that cure.

Similarly, an action that seems to prevent a "cure" is also not a matter of responsibility for the consequences of the lack of a cure. A person who acts is simply responsible for the rightness or wrongness of that act. Which is simply the best that a person can do given his understanding, sense of ethics, conditioning, etc. A person who fails to act, has not committed any grievous crime, unless that inaction is in itself dishonest or injurious. If people suffer or die seemingly for lack of a cure, the truth is that they suffer and die consequentially from their own actions, mostly in previous lifetimes, and not by virtue of lack of cure. This in no way justifies lack of compassion for those who suffer. And much of suffering is collectively consequential, which means that those who do not suffer are also responsible in some sense for the collective consequences. We are all responsible, collectively.

Moreover, true responsibility (and accountability) is not a matter for human judgment. It is a matter of karma, of divine law (of action and consequences), of learning from experience, of learning from the consequences of our actions (and inactions). Individually and collectively. What matters is that we learn and grow. What matters is that we embrace compassion for others.

† Commentary No. 1497

The Responsibility Paradox 2

Another example has to do with inaction. If a person is faced with a situation, where taking action might (seem to) save a life or reduce suffering, then indeed a person is responsible for his decision, action or inaction as the case may be. To act with compassion, to seek to reduce suffering, is noble. But the decision, to act or not to act, is a matter of conscience, and adherence to conscience. If one acts (or not) with good conscience (not with mere rationalization of propriety) then one is responsible for acting in good conscience. If one acts (or not) contrary to one's conscience, then one is responsible for acting contrary to one's conscience. If some person's suffering is relieved seemingly by virtue of one's action, then one is not responsible for that relief, even while it is "right" to act virtuously. Similarly, if someone suffers seemingly by virtue of one's action (or inaction), then one is not responsible for that suffering, unless there is malicious intent or carelessness.

What is important is developing one's conscience, which is the (higher) sense of righteousness and propriety and wisdom. What matters is learning and growing from our experiences. What matters is serving others, and contributing to the collective evolution in consciousness. Every opportunity to act or not to act is a test of conscience, of consciousness, of ethics and principles and values. The consequences for which one is responsible are what happen to oneself, and what is imposed upon others. Thus (directly) causing suffering or injury to others (human, animal, environment), by virtue of intention or carelessness, is something for which one is indeed responsible. But one is not inherently responsible for what happens to others. One is only responsible for what one does, or says, or thinks, or feels.

Many people play the what-if game and punish themselves for consequences that were never actually within their own control. If what one does and says and feels and thinks is honorable, then one is not responsible for any adverse consequences to others. If a person turns left instead of right, and someone dies who seemingly would not have died if one had turned right, then that death is not at all a consequence of one turning left. Because there is nothing "wrong" with one turning left or right. As long as one proceeds sincerely, without intending to hurt anyone, and without being imprudent or careless, then one is not responsible or accountable for what happens to other people.

On the other hand, much that a person does (says) (feels) (thinks) is based in ignorance and illusion, and a person is ultimately responsible for learning and growing and overcoming that ignorance and illusion. If a person does not realize that something (action) is harmful, then the responsibility is for lack of realization, not for actually causing harm. The actual harm arises from the collective karma, for which one is responsible collectively, and not from lack of realization. Much of the environmental damage that has occurred in this world is a matter of collective ignorance and the illusion of human superiority. Similarly for much of the damage that is done to the various animal lives. The actual damage (to the environment, to the animal lives) is consequential in terms of collective conscience, but the real import is learning that one's actions can be harmful and changing one's actions accordingly, to be helpful (respectful) to the environment, to be helpful (respectful) to animal lives.

Responsibility is ultimately a paradox. One can rationalize whatever one wants to, without really understanding. So the spiritual student is simply urged to live sincerely and nobly, according to conscience.

The Responsibility Paradox 3

The human being is ultimately responsible for his or her own condition in consciousness, physically, emotionally, and mentally, objectively and subjectively, and for the direct consequences of every action, every word, every feeling, and every thought. The problem is that one can never actually measure those direct consequences, since all actions (from all times) (and from all peoples (relationships)) contribute to the outcome, individually and collectively. So the focus should be upon embracing the principles that facilitate growth in consciousness, e.g., ethics, rather than simply being entangled in experience.

The human being is responsible for living without harming anyone or any living creature, to whatever extent that is possible or practicable. And for compassion toward all creatures. And for acceptance of responsibility where one's actions cause harm, even incidentally. With increasing and deepening awareness, the spiritual student becomes aware of the effects of his or her actions on every level, in principle, and then modifies his or her actions accordingly, so that every action (and every inaction) is in harmony with the flow of life, i.e., embracing gentleness, humility, honesty, and harmlessness. Once these principles are embraced on a continuous basis, then the student can focus more so on learning and growing and serving, with frequent retrospective visits to strengthen one's commitment to gentleness, humility, honesty, and harmlessness.

Of course responsibility includes one's relationships in the world, to one's immediate family and friends, to one's community, to the human race as a whole, and to all of life. To one's (noble) profession and colleagues. This does not mean attempting to impose one's insights upon others, or (necessarily) doing what others wish for us to do, but it does mean living ethically and responsibly, embracing the higher principles and values and living (encouraging) simply by example, by virtue of how one lives in the world. There is for the spiritual student necessarily a spiritual focus, but that focus is two-fold: learning and growing on the one hand, and serving on the other. And service is primarily through the way one's life is lived, gently, graciously, honestly, helpfully, and harmlessly.

There is ultimately only one thing that a person can take to the next world (incarnation), and that is character or quality of consciousness (wisdom). All of life is designed to provide the experience that is needed in order to learn and grow in character and quality of consciousness. Thus in the final analysis, the ultimate responsibility is to embrace the purpose of life, to learn and grow and serve, to engage the evolutionary process as consciously and as effectively as one can. To eschew whatever is counter-evolutionary and to embrace whatever is evolutionary. This does not mean embracing whatever "people" think is progressive, but learning to sense what is truly evolutionary and then embracing that to the best of one's abilities. It means learning what are the higher principles and values, understanding them, and embracing them.

The spiritual student is responsible for living in accordance with his or her understanding. With conscience. With whatever wisdom is apparent. And deepening in that wisdom. The student should eschew whatever practices are known or sensed to be unhealthy, even if those practices are embraced by most other people. And the student should embrace whatever practices are known or sensed to be healthy, without imposing or promoting, even if that means being unconventional.

