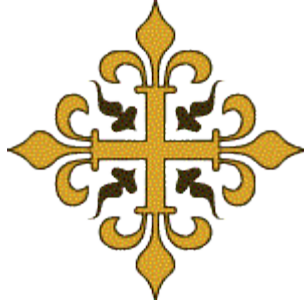


The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 5.1

Knowledge

The Basis for Understanding



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Knowledge

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Contents

		Page
• Chapter 5.1	<u>Knowledge</u>	1
	Knowing	C 1133 2
	Knowledge	C 1134 3
	The Esoteric	C 23 5
	The Hidden Wisdom	C 45 7
	The Ancient Mysteries	C 46 8
	Self-Knowledge	C 151 10
	Self-Evidence	C 628 12
	Assimilation of Experience	C 1217 13
	Knowledge and Truth	C 1430 15
• Section 5.11	<u>Aspects of Knowledge</u>	17
	Communication	C 249 18
	Doctrine and Dogma	C 601 19
	Data 1	C 694 21
	Data 2	C 695 23
	Unanswered Questions	C 855 24
	Unquestioned Answers	C 856 26
	Secrecy	C 906 28
	Cognition and Affection 1	C 1431 29
	Cognition and Affection 2	C 1432 31

		Page
• Section 5.12	<u>Understanding</u>	33
	Keys to Understanding	C 96 34
	Understanding	C 321 35
	Assimilation of Knowledge	C 1218 37
	Delusion of Understanding	C 1418 39
• Section 5.121	<u>Interpretation</u>	41
	Interpretation	C 1219 42
	The Seven Rays	C 14 43
	Astrology	C 27 45
	The Tarot 1	C 895 47
	The Tarot 2	C 896 48
• Section 5.13	<u>Wisdom</u>	51
	Wisdom	C 176 52
	Assimilation of Understanding	C 1220 53
	Conscience	C 1221 55
	Perplexity and Wisdom	C 1494 57

Chapter 5.1

Knowledge



The Basis for Understanding

- Knowledge is that body of information that is "known" or believed to be known and understood, that provides a basis for perceived understanding, for relating experience, and for evolving in the sense of the assimilation of knowledge into understanding. The problem of knowledge is the general lack of objectivity that prevails in human consciousness, given immersion in the material world. It is virtually impossible to determine the validity of information at its own level.
- Knowledge in the sense of the field of the human mind is compounded by the nature of the world (universe), the nature of mind, the nature of perception, etc. Thus people tend to make assumptions about these things without necessarily realizing the difficulties and generally without even realizing that assumptions are being made. What is generally believed to be readily apparent and true, may not be generally true. Thus the mind-field of human perception and thinking is fertile ground for contrast leading to evolution in consciousness.

Knowing

The problem of knowing, of believing with some certainty that one has knowledge, that one actually knows something, is really a matter of validity or actuality, compounded by perception (belief) and the means through which “knowing” is achieved.

Something is either true or not true (or partially true). Knowledge is acquired through experience, through perception, through study, through realization. But knowledge may be real (true) or not, or partially real. And if one proceeds on the basis of something “known” that is actually only partially true or not true then one is misleading oneself and furthering misunderstanding (compounded by the unconscious assumption that something is true). Knowing can arise in a number of different ways, including instinct (at animal, etheric, or astral levels), intellect (at concrete mental or rational levels), and intuition (at the level of buddhi).

Instinctive knowing is generally true, except that one generally interprets instinctive knowledge (feelings) and what is interpreted (or believed) may or may not be true. One might “feel” hostility from someone but in fact may be merely misreading body language (subconsciously) (and body language is never wholly reliable as it is subject to individual and cultural diversity). The instincts rely on physical, etheric, and astral senses, predominantly at unconscious levels, and therefore there tends to be a great deal of conditioning involved (unconscious mechanicalness). In addition to conditioning there are factors of desire and ego. Desire (conscious or otherwise) colors one’s perceptions (at instinctive (subconscious) levels and at more direct levels (sense perception)); one tends to sense what one wants to at some level. Ego is a considerable bias applied unconsciously or indirectly to this process.

Intellectual knowing is based on rationalization, deliberately and consciously or indeliberately and unconsciously (or partially so). One may try to be objective, but conditioning, ego, etc., generally limit one’s ability to be objective. One’s beliefs and one’s values definitely color the process of reasoning, and so intellectual knowing is mostly a matter of belief rather than (really) knowing

something (which may happen to be true (or not)). Knowing is compounded by certainty. If one is very certain of the truth of something, then that is a very strong indication that the basis of truth is unfounded, that the belief is a matter of attachment rather than realization of truth (of course the "knowledge" may still be true (or may not be)). Certainty in knowledge (or perception of truth) indicates closed-mindedness or ego. The wise are never really certain, because they realize that all perception and all knowledge and all understanding is relative, partial, and limited, and therefore one should consider all knowledge (beliefs) to be tentative and provisional.

Intuitive knowing is based on the functioning of the soul (atma-buddhi-manas) rather than the (physical-emotional-mental) personality (ego). The soul does not get involved in anything personal, and therefore any "intuition" that is personal is definitely not intuition, but is rather either intellectually or instinctively based (i.e., most of what is perceived to be intuition is really the subtle product of intellect or the more direct product of instinct). But what is really intuitional knowing is true. The problem then is that what is known at the intuitional level must still be brought into the mind for a person to have any conscious appreciation of it, and once the intuitive insight is brought into the mind then it is subject to interpretation (conditioning), etc. All the more "reason" to consider all knowing as tentative and provisional.

† Commentary No. 1134

Knowledge

Knowledge is that body of information that is "known" or believed to be known and understood, that provides a basis for perceived understanding, for relating experience, and for evolving in consciousness through the assimilation of knowledge into understanding. The problem of knowledge is the general lack of objectivity that prevails in human consciousness, given immersion in the material world. It is virtually impossible to determine the validity of information at its own level.

Thus knowledge in the sense of the field of the human mind is compounded by the nature of the world (universe) (manifestation) (and the false perspective that

prevails on material levels), the nature of mind (and the false perspective of self (ego)), and the nature of perception. People tend to make assumptions about these things without necessarily realizing the difficulties and generally without even realizing that assumptions are being made. What is generally believed to be readily apparent and true, may not be generally or actually true. Thus the mind-field of human perception and thinking is fertile ground for contrast leading to evolution in consciousness.

The theme of knowledge provides a focus and foundation for understanding human experience and the worlds of consciousness in which humanity lives. Knowledge properly assimilated produces understanding. Understanding properly embraced produces wisdom. Knowledge is not actually conveyed from incarnation to incarnation, although the ability to retrieve knowledge may be conveyed. Understanding is not actually conveyed from incarnation to incarnation either, but the capacity for understanding is a matter of evolution (achievement) and so conveys progressively, from one lifetime or incarnation to another. Wisdom is definitely conveyed from lifetime to lifetime, directly for those who are attuned to some extent to the higher Self, indirectly otherwise, for those who are able to listen to conscience. Unfortunately, some people are so absorbed (self-absorbed) on material (emotional) (intellectual) (personality) (ego) levels that their ability to draw upon the wisdom of the higher Self, even indirectly (through conscience), is limited.

The real problem of life in the lower worlds is not knowledge, nor the acquisition of knowledge, nor even the assimilation of knowledge, but the assumption of knowledge, and the assumption of understanding. The real problem is maya and glamour and illusion. By presuming (predominantly) unconsciously, the nature of the world (and the nature of self), a person greatly compounds the problem. As the student progresses, he or she gradually transcends maya (inertia on physical and etheric levels). As the student progresses further, perception that is clouded by (through) glamour (inertia on emotional or astral levels) and illusion (inertia on mental levels) is gradually and eventually fully overcome, as the student achieves the alignment of a purified and integrated personality with the soul, through intelligent meditation. This process of waking-up, to higher and higher, deeper and deeper, levels, is the real work of evolution in consciousness.

But waking-up requires a great deal of preparation (and persistence). Waking-up requires sufficient and pertinent knowledge. It requires understanding and open-mindedness. In this sense, knowledge is a legacy, earned by virtue of experience and expression (action and consequence) (karma), (and therefore) always merited, and knowledge (understanding) conveys responsibility, to act sensibly and appropriately based upon that knowledge (to the extent of understanding).

† Commentary No. 23

The Esoteric

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

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

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

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

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

The Hidden Wisdom

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

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

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

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

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

† Commentary No. 46

The Ancient Mysteries

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

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

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

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

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

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

† Commentary No. 151

Self-Knowledge

The understanding of the manifested universe is generally dependent upon the ability to correlate, interpret, and assimilate information gained through observation and experience (through the senses). But that understanding of the outer world is also (somewhat) dependent upon an understanding of human nature. Man tends to understand the world around him in proportion to how well he understands himself. There are many correlations between the inner (human) and outer worlds; many keys to understanding the universe are held within the human form for those who would know themselves truthfully.

Self-knowledge begins with self-observation, self-examination, and self-evaluation. Important ingredients of this process are honesty (humility) and sincerity. The seeker must be open to the truth about himself, and must remain unbiased by preconceived ideas or conclusions. The exercise of retrospection is part of this process, but it should be complemented by serious spiritual exercise (meditation) and the calming of the entire personality nature. By steps the layers of self-glamour and illusion are revealed for what they are, and the deeper truths about the self (and its relationship to every other life) are uncovered. Each action, activity, feeling, thought, and tendency should be examined carefully. Above all, the motives and intentions should be evaluated, for these are the real keys to understanding any action.

The intelligent student should realize that he is influenced (to a certain extent) by both internal and external forces. Each source of influence should be examined and the response of the personality to each influence should be

assessed. The student should honestly accept responsibility for his own behavior and his response to any situation. As understanding increases, so can the response be conditioned or qualified by will (intention). The student should be able to apply self-knowledge or understanding to the task of self-improvement (the continuing (probationary) effort of purification, preparation, and refinement) as well as to the task of understanding the reality or purpose that underlies all events and appearance in the manifested universe.

Outer knowledge can be tested inwardly for significance if self-knowledge is based in truth (honesty). In accordance with the awareness (acceptance) of the truth about oneself, will be the ability to discern truth from (within) information or knowledge obtained externally. Similarly, knowledge can be obtained internally and tested for significance. The test for apparent significance depends a great deal on the degree and quality of alignment (of soul and personality) and the quality of values which condition the personality. An individual who is personality-centered will normally accept as significant any impressions which reinforce his own (personality-centered) values and interests; this will, of course, reinforce his continued self-glamour. An individual who is reasonably aligned (with the self) and who is honest with himself (and whose values are predominantly spiritual and impersonal) will accept as significant only those impressions which have some basis in truth (reality), rather than appearance.

Self-knowledge is the beginning of self-realization. In humility and with compassion, the self-realized spiritual student understands himself (at some level) (and knows his limitations) and the world around him, with honest detachment. Such a spiritual student is continually aware of his actions, reactions, and interactions with the inner and outer worlds. Balanced nicely between the spiritual self and the outer world, the self-realized student stands as a responsive and willing servant of life (God) and humanity (the lifewave).

Self-Evidence

As one progresses upon (or toward) the spiritual path, more and more of the ancient wisdom (esoteric philosophy) becomes self-evident, rather than being merely (intellectually) understandable (or not as the case may be). That which is self-evident requires no proof or explanation; it is simply recognized as true, comfortably accepted (if not understood), and (subconsciously) integrated within the student's value system. The objective of the spiritual student in this regard is two-fold: to naturally improve the capability for self-evidence, and to preclude or minimize the element of self-deception or presumption.

Self-evidence is, in a sense, simply the practical consequence of wisdom (insight) (understanding), the ability to perceive valid correlation or correspondence, to recognize the appropriateness of a particular teaching (or to recognize the limitation(s) of a particular teaching). Wisdom is the result of experience assimilated (by the soul) and incorporated as conscience and understanding. That wisdom (understanding) may or may not be directly or consciously drawn upon by the mind (personality), but is at least subconsciously available to the relatively refined and responsive mind. Self-evidence (proper perception of truth) is improved and deception (presumption) (distortion and misrepresentation of truth) is precluded or minimized to the extent that the various stumbling blocks of the personality are properly overcome.

For the spiritual student of buddhi-manas (intuitive polarization) there is conscious and verifiable self-evidence. Such a student has necessarily overcome the stumbling blocks of the personality and functions mentally and intuitively, unimpeded by attachments or personal bias. Such a person does not necessarily understand everything (for experience is generally not complete and the faculties may not be completely developed) but such a student will simply know the relative extent of understanding (i.e., self-honesty is paramount). For the mentally-polarized, the relative quality of consciousness (extent of refinement and self-mastery) determines the talent or ability for self-evidence. Such a student may or may not be able to bridge between the abstract and concrete mental faculties or respond to occasional intuition.

Such a student may or may not be (as the case may be) biased by opinions and other attachments that preclude or distort the perception of truth, and such a student may or may not have personal bias to contend with. All of these things (opinions, mental attachments, ego, dependence upon rationalization, self-interest, lack of humility, lack of discretion (discrimination), personal bias (interest), mundane or intellectual absorption, etc.) are all relatively detrimental to the clear perception and appreciation of truth.

While the self-evidence of the unrefined mentally polarized person is generally precluded or distorted by the self-interested mind, the self-evidence of the emotionally polarized person (refined or otherwise) is generally precluded by emotional bias (attachments), the lack of mental integration, and the lack of discernment. In the context of self-evidence, emotionally polarized and unrefined mentally polarized students generally suffer a considerable extent of self-deception and presumption of understanding. The solution is achieved through attention to conscious refinement (and adherence to the path) and the cultivation of relative humility. If the mind is not filled with preclusions (thoughts) and the emotions are clear and unassuming (without desire or attachment), then the student can achieve some essential degree of humility and freedom from personal bias such that intuitional insight and mental realization (self-evidence) can begin to dominate the waking-consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1217

Assimilation of Experience

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

Experience in the world of human endeavor, in the world of the human personality of physical, emotional, and mental experience and expression, leads to the development of abilities, acquisition of knowledge, and the assimilation of experience, all of which occurs at the personality level (not at the soul level), all of which lead eventually to understanding and ultimately to wisdom. Much

of experience is unconsciously assimilated, incidentally in the course of living in the world. What a person learns through experience is assimilated in the form of knowledge or superficial understanding. If a person is more conscious of experience, if a person is consciously attempting to learn the intended lessons, and if a person is conscious thereby of the process of assimilation of experience, then that process is facilitated and progress occurs more quickly than would otherwise be the case.

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

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

Experience leads to the assimilation of experience. The assimilation of experience produces knowledge and leads to understanding. Thus effective

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

† Commentary No. 1430

Knowledge and Truth

Evolution in consciousness involves learning and growing and serving. Through the course of experience and expression, the student acquires knowledge, assimilates that knowledge into understanding, and assimilates that understanding into wisdom. And as one deepens, the focus shifts from learning and growing to serving, even while one (necessarily) continues to learn and grow. But as one advances the challenges and lessons become relatively more subtle.

One cannot take knowledge into the next world or into the subsequent incarnation. One cannot actually take understanding into the next world. But one can take wisdom. And if one has wisdom, then the underlying basis (understanding) is inferred. And one can always evoke whatever knowledge and understanding has contributed to wisdom or consciousness. So while one does not carry knowledge or understanding on to the next world and the next lifetime, one does carry forth what is actually needed which is the ability to evoke knowledge and understanding. So what matters is not knowledge or understanding but wisdom and the ability to evoke understanding. This ultimately requires a relationship to truth that (relationship) eludes most people until the relatively final stages of evolution, namely a dedication to truth that facilitates learning and growing and serving.

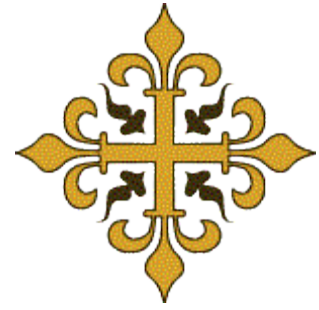
For most people knowledge is not a barrier because for most people life is about acquiring knowledge and to some extent about understanding. But for the spiritual student life is more about understanding and wisdom and

consciousness. For the spiritual student life is about embracing truth. And truth is much more subtle than knowledge. Knowledge involves the mind and the mind is naturally grasping. The mind tends to be attached to knowledge. It acquires knowledge and keeps it. For the spiritual student, who is advancing beyond the ordinary sphere of human experience, this attachment to knowledge tends to undermine the learning process. Believing that one knows something creates a barrier to understanding. Knowing something is an attachment, that precludes or inhibits deeper, broader knowledge and understanding.

If one is to be receptive to learning, one must continually consider the possibility that what one knows may not be true, or may not be the whole truth. Indeed, what one knows (even what one understands) is never the whole truth. Because knowledge is not truth and understanding is not truth. Knowledge is simply a small reflection of truth, constrained by our circumstances (consciousness), while truth is real, has depth and breadth and persistence. So learning is properly not so much about acquiring knowledge as it is about embracing truth. It is about being open-minded, not having attachments to whatever knowledge there is, but simply working through whatever knowledge is apparent to that which is beyond (understanding, truth). If one grasps knowledge then one cannot see what is beyond.

Knowledge is not the only substantive barrier to truth (understanding, wisdom). Another substantive barrier is lack of honesty. In order to recognize truth, one must be true. One must be honest with oneself and with others, in thought and feeling, in word and deed. If one compromises, by thinking or feeling or speaking or otherwise expressing what is known to be not true, then one thereby undermines one's ability to discern the truth. Consequently, the spiritual student properly learns to not know things and to be comfortable not knowing things. The spiritual student learns to embrace truth instead of knowledge, and ever without attachment.

Section 5.11



Aspects of Knowledge

- There are many aspects of knowledge. The fifth ray experience produces relatively objective consciousness, the ability to discern truth in the rational sense, while the sixth ray experience produces relatively subjective consciousness, the ability to discern truth in the intuitive sense. Along the way the student learns to communicate, to interpret what is experienced and perceived, to deal with information and make some sense of it.

Communication

Communication is the process by which information (meaning) (energy) is exchanged between focal points of consciousness, through some common means or system of symbols. The process requires an originator (precursor) (sender), a message (energy), and a recipient (and usually includes feedback). The originator and recipient, as focal points of consciousness, must each be polarized in some common way, or at least have some common ground of experience, in order for understanding to occur. Effective communication implies the accurate understanding of the intended message.

The least effective communication occurs between separated units of consciousness. Separated units of consciousness must rely on discrete means of communication, subject to inaccuracies (misunderstanding) at every stage of the process: the limitations of language, the utilization of words (symbols) that mean different things to different people, the problem of interpretation (and the bias of expectation), and the various problems of personality-centered experience. Such communication (between separated units) can be improved by the establishment of a common basis (foundation) of communication: a common core of experience, familiarity, honesty, openness, and sincerity.

The most effective communication occurs between focal points of consciousness which experience deep, subjective, intrinsic rapport and a harmony of integrated fields (of consciousness) (harmoniously integrated auras, regardless of distance or apparent separation). If direct, rational, and coherent communication can be (first) (properly) established (in the objective sense), based on mutual trust and objective understanding, then that process of communication can be enhanced (and ultimately transcended) by more subjective factors in consciousness. Then the exchange of information can be enhanced by the energy of the exchange and the subjective rapport that exists (consequently) between the respective minds (hearts) (souls) (units of consciousness).

Ultimately, a telepathic rapport can be developed which embraces a continuous exchange of energy, with or without conscious involvement. The exchange of a discrete, objective message (energy) then simply strengthens (confirms) the

energy link between the centers (units) of consciousness, and allows stronger, more subjective energies to flow. In the case of the evolving spiritual student, it is essential for the student to overcome the impediments of the personality in order to achieve effective (unprejudiced) communication. Reactionary tendencies must be transformed into intelligent and intentional (meaningful and reasonable) responses. The fear and vanity of the personality must be properly overcome or eliminated, to allow for unbiased interpretation and more complete understanding. The tendency of the mind to make personality-centered assumptions must also be overcome, for a considerable misunderstanding can arise where implications are exaggerated, distorted, or misinterpreted along personal lines. A complete dedication to truth and honesty in all matters can substantially enhance the communication process.

The process of communication (energy transfer) can occur horizontally (between units of consciousness on the same plane or of the same relative magnitude) or vertically (between units of consciousness on different planes or of different relative magnitude). The communication of the macrocosm with its microcosm is paralleled by man's communication with the lesser lives of his own constitution and with the energies (lives) (forms) within nature. A considerable volume of communication exists within the framework of human experience, of which only a small portion is realized or involved consciously.

† Commentary No. 601

Doctrine and Dogma

Doctrine is defined as "a principle or body of principles in a branch of knowledge or a system of belief" and implies that that principle or body of principles is accepted by some group of believers or adherents to a philosophy or school of thought. The quality of doctrine depends upon the quality of consciousness embraced in its formulation and presentation. Doctrine that depends on (intuitive) realization (soul impression) and spiritual maturity (wisdom) (sensibleness) is preferable to doctrine that depends largely on reasoning or emotional attachments. Similarly, doctrine that is relatively broad (inclusive) and relatively dynamic (able to be changed in light of further realization) is

preferable to doctrine that is relatively narrow in its interpretation and rigid (inflexible) in its presentation.

In the positive sense, established doctrine (of spiritual quality) can provide valuable ideas or concepts for consideration, qualified by the (higher) consciousness of the formulators (who embrace the energy of the ideas concerned) and provided in the context of individual and group consideration. Conversely, in the negative sense, doctrine in the form of dogmatic assertions (imposed by presumed authorities) discourages the individual consideration (evaluation) necessary for intelligent acceptance and adherence (or rejection) (in whole or in part). Where doctrine is proclaimed or prescribed, rather than presented for consideration, then such doctrine constitutes dogma. Dogma implies established (prescribed) opinions without range (freedom) for open and honest consideration.

For the spiritual student in particular, it is important to honestly and openly consider and evaluate (intuitively if possible) every significant or relevant aspect of the esoteric (theosophical) (metaphysical) philosophy (and the entire field of relevant human knowledge), without arbitrary (imposed) constraints in thinking, believing, or adherence. This does not imply or require debate, advocacy, challenge, etc. (which are all inherently separative processes), but it does imply responsibility on the part of the student for the evaluation process and consequent adherence to what is actually accepted and understood.

The wise student has no opinions (for opinions imply attachments to beliefs and inherent inflexibility (inability to change, deepen, grow, etc.)) and looks to no authority save his or her own soul (external sources can still provide ideas for consideration, but the student should be careful not to accept external sources as authoritative as that tends to bias the process of consideration and tends to preclude soul qualification). The various esoteric and exoteric schools can still provide meaningful doctrine (for consideration), but the dogmatic assertions of the more typical religious (rather than spiritual) presentations are generally much less meaningful.

For the spiritual student (teacher) (facilitator), assertions (prescriptions) (proclamations) (arguments) should be avoided, with the principles (doctrine) presented conceptually (for consideration) and subject to refinement as

understanding improves or as the proper context is realized. Rules (where needed) should be presented as guidelines rather than absolutes and although some measure of adherence may be necessary it should ever be with the understanding that such (necessary) adherence is preliminary and subject to consideration and (always tentative) conclusion. Blind acceptance and attachments (opinions) do not (easily) afford learning. The precepts (maxims) of the path (and the rules of the road) are intended as encouragement to afford learning.

† Commentary No. 694

Data 1

Data in its most primitive form is defined as energy that is available to perception. Primitive data is real by virtue of its being undisturbed or undistorted by the process of perception, but even though the (energy) field of (raw) (primitive) data may be disturbed by perception (which is a dynamic and interactive process), raw data remains real (while the data perceived is merely a copy of the primitive data) (while perceived data is necessarily distorted by perception, greatly so or otherwise depending on the relative bias of the perceiving organism and the level and manner (quality) of perception).

Raw or primitive data is naturally self-structured or organized but not necessarily perceived as such. Raw data is normally perceived as being unstructured or unorganized because the perceiving entity generally takes a relatively narrow view (i.e., views the data partially) and is generally limited in its ability to embrace the depth, breadth, and underlying structure (fundamental organization or pattern). Perceived data must therefore be (arbitrarily, intelligently, or naturally) organized and information extracted in order for it (the perceived data) to be useful or meaningful (and, unfortunately, normal (heavily biased) human perception leads one to see (perceive) what one wants to, somewhat (at least) regardless of reality, and therefore the information "extracted" is often misleading and, "wrong" conclusions are drawn.

Information is defined as the relatively useful content (component) of data (or information is less primitive data, data that has been perceived (correctly or incorrectly) (objectively or otherwise) and evaluated (consciously and/or

deliberately or unconsciously and/or carelessly)). Information is generally more organized or structured than raw data is perceived to be, but information per se may or may not be properly organized and therefore may be useful, not useful, or misleading, depending on the processes involved, the character and quality of consciousness, the circumstances (internal and external bias), etc. Information then is a subset of the perceived data and that subset that is potentially meaningful to the perceiving organism (given that some or much of the potential information content of the perceived data may be disregarded or not recognized as having value (and given that the perceived data from which the information is extracted may or may not be the most useful dataset)).

The next step in this process is the correlation of the higher order or refined (organized) data (information) so that knowledge can be obtained. This occurs through conscious or unconscious consideration, evaluation, analysis, etc. and ultimately through some form or extent of discrimination (weighing what is of relative value and what is otherwise). This correlation of information from one or more sources of data leads to relative knowledge (beliefs) (opinions) (conclusions) and relative understanding. These processes may be more or less instinctual, emotional, mental (rational or otherwise) (concrete or abstract) (objective or subjective), and/or intuitive. Depending on the particular process or processes, the particular character and quality of intervening consciousness, and the relative ability, experience, training, etc. of the person or entity, the results (knowledge) will be relatively good (accurate) (meaningful) or otherwise.

Knowledge is therefore “data” of a higher order than information and conveys some degree of (apparent) understanding (or relative understanding conveys some extent of knowledge). But knowledge without understanding (correlation, appreciation of relative significance, etc.) is of relatively little value.

Data 2

Beyond knowledge is wisdom. In this context, wisdom is the kernel of knowledge that is extracted from knowledge (or experience) by virtue of assimilation. While knowledge implies or conveys some degree of understanding, wisdom implies or conveys some degree of realization (more properly, understanding and realization convey knowledge and wisdom, respectively). Wisdom is, in this context, the most refined level of “data” and is the first of the four levels to convey achievement (data is obtained; information is extracted or obtained; even knowledge is primarily obtained; while wisdom is achieved). In the parallel between matter (energy) and data, raw or primitive data corresponds to dense matter (the available reservoir of material substance); information and knowledge correspond to more refined matter (forms); while wisdom corresponds to formless energy (arupa levels). Thus data, information, and knowledge belong to the realm of form (personality), while wisdom belongs to the formless domain (beyond personality).

The experiential process of obtaining data, extracting information, acquiring knowledge, and achieving wisdom involves all of the seven rays and demonstrates the parallels and distinctions of the occult rays with respect to the mystical rays. Data per se belongs to the seventh ray of boundless, fundamental energy. Information belongs, in this context, to the fifth ray of concrete knowledge. Knowledge, in this sense, belongs to the third ray of correlated information (understanding) (intelligence). And wisdom, in this sense, belongs to the first ray and realization (in the more normal context, knowledge belongs to the fifth ray and wisdom to the second).

The process of perception, of extracting information from data, belongs to the sixth ray. The process of discrimination, balance, etc., of acquiring knowledge from information, belongs to the fourth ray. And the process of assimilation, of achieving wisdom from knowledge and experience, belongs to the second ray. Thus all seven rays are linked constructively, with the occult or odd-numbered rays showing a progression in refinement, organization, and usefulness of data, and the mystical or even-numbered rays demonstrating a progression in

processes from the relatively primitive (perception) to the intermediate (discrimination) to the relatively advanced (assimilation).

Another useful analogy is that of noise, music, and silence. In this sense raw data corresponds to noise; information and knowledge correspond to unrefined and refined music, respectively; and wisdom corresponds to silence (truth). Noise represents unrefined (coarse) matter. Music is useful transitionally (and represents the human personality). And silence is more universal (and represents the soul (and its monad)).

One of the objectives of life in the lower worlds is to learn how to perceive more clearly, accurately, and effectively; how to discriminate more effectively and easily (naturally and without bias) in the face of tremendous amounts and diversity of perceived data and information content; and how to assimilate one's experience (and meaningful knowledge obtained) more directly, so that evolution may proceed expeditiously. With increasing quality of consciousness (refinement of the physical, emotional, and mental vehicles), distortion in perception is minimized, effectiveness in discrimination is enhanced, and proper assimilation is assured. Evolution proceeds from the assimilation of knowledge and experience (from the achievement of wisdom). Wisdom (conscience) (capability) (subjective data) is carried forth to the next incarnation, while knowledge (information) (data) is released.

† Commentary No. 855

Unanswered Questions

As one evolves in consciousness, the nature of one's questions and the manner of apprehending the answers to questions also evolve. Many go through life in a largely self-absorbed manner, being preoccupied merely with the immediate experience and personal concerns, without formulating any questions of higher (non-mundane) relevance. Others, more mentally active (but still largely absorbed in the lower worlds), begin to formulate questions on more substantive and less personal issues. And a few (more mentally active but less absorbed in the lower worlds) actually formulate sensible, non-personal questions of philosophical and spiritual value.

In the early phase of “questioning” the concerns are personal and mundane (and of little or no real significance). Consequently, it does not really matter whether or not these questions are answered, except that personal questions (in which the person is attached or entangled in mundane energy and/or the desire nature) usually evoke answers fabricated by the mind (kama-manas) [i.e., one hears what one wants to hear] and which are of little or no value. There is, however, a middle phase (of seeking truth and understanding) in which one who is approaching the path begins to focus the attention on issues that seem pertinent, with the expectation of finding the truth and comprehending it. A great deal of energy can be expending in such seeking and searching (with other matters (e.g., one’s duty) often left unresolved or neglected), yet with energy expended (sent forth), there is generally some appropriate consequence (result) (answer).

It is generally good to question, rather than to accept blindly whatever is presented or read. But one should ever be wary of the intervention (and inventions) of the mind. “Answers” that come from the mind in the sense of some rational or intellectual process have relatively little value (to the spiritual student). It is far better to rely on the intuition for “guidance” than to rely on the mind. It is even better to be involved in service such that the answers to questions are not so important.

The nature, character, and form of one’s questions are a strong indication of one’s degree and extent of (relative) understanding (wisdom). The seeker of truth generally formulates pertinent questions, but compromises the process by expecting them to be answered. That expectation then serves as a hindrance to understanding, an impediment to the intuitive insight of realization. But if the seeker formulates questions and has no such expectations, then there is a greater likelihood that the pertinent answers will come, in their own way and in their own time, according to the needs (not desires) of the seeker and according to the relative degree of intelligent receptivity. Answers to the more proper (relevant) questions are most properly “answered” in the form of quality rather than mental apprehension.

The real value to questions lies in their formulation, not in the assumed answers (if any). And the most pertinent questions are those that cannot be answered, that cannot be apprehended by the mind, but which can be assimilated directly

in the form of quality and wisdom. In this sense, even “understanding” can be a hindrance. Each formulation is in effect an invocation. And the proper consequence of an invocation is an evocation. But evocations are not generally “answers” to questions. Quality and assimilated understanding (wisdom) are far more valuable than anything apprehended. In the final analysis, properly formulated questions evoke the needed quality, and remain suitably unanswered.

† Commentary No. 856

Unquestioned Answers

There are (at least) three aspects to the subject of unquestioned answers, corresponding to the relative posture (activity and responsiveness) (role) of the mind (in its three stages of passive mind, active mind, and unconditioned mind, respectively).

The first aspect is the case of passivity (of the conditioned mind), in which “answers” are unquestioned because they are simply accepted without any effort toward discrimination or discernment. This is okay for the (primitive) emotionally-polarized person (emopol) who has a rather undeveloped mind and no alternative to accepting external impressions, but it is rather detrimental for the (more advanced) emopol who has a more or less developed mind but who is not using it effectively. It is far better to exercise the mind in consideration of the “answers” provided or realized than to accept those answers blindly. Thinking for oneself is a major achievement for the emopol and provides the framework for the transition from emotional polarization to mental polarization. So in this first stage, the student does not question the answers, but does need to learn to question the answers, as the mind is developed and brought into activity. Thereby (through proper mental activity) knowledge is properly acquired, experience (learning) is accomplished, achievements are made, and assimilation (of knowledge and experience) yields understanding and some degree of wisdom.

The second (somewhat higher) aspect is the case of activity (of the conditioned mind), in which “answers” are dutifully questioned and a determination of acceptability or reasonableness is afforded, where the mind is relied upon in the

active sense (and the intermediate goal is objectivity). This attitude of questioning is positive in the sense of the relatively undeveloped mentally-polarized person (menpol), but not so in the sense of the developed menpol who is nearing the transition from mental polarization to intuitive polarization. In this second stage it is important for the student to develop the faculty of discrimination, through analysis and other intellectual consideration.

Questioning the answers supports the sense of discrimination and also can be used to guard against the fabrications of the mind. In this second stage, the student may very well question all the answers, but the student eventually needs to learn how (intelligently and effectively) not to question any of the answers, that the (properly qualified) student might pass on to intuitive levels.

The third (highest) aspect is the case of non-passivity and non-activity (of the unconditioned (unfettered) mind), in which answers are unquestioned because the mind is wholly tempered by a posture of awareness (intuitive realization). In this case, mental passivity is simply not possible, and mental activity is so tempered by the higher quality that the intuition (properly) dominates. With the mind properly unfettered and unconditioned by attachments, bias, prejudice, opinions, etc., the mind is free to respond in clarity (truly objectively) to the higher impressions (buddhi) and wisdom of the soul. This is what is meant by self-realization (the consequence of self-mastery) and is the practical goal of the spiritual student.

The intuitive (intelligently receptive) state (of the fully developed, tempered, and unconditioned mind) is effectively the highest stage of mental posture that can be achieved (within humanity) at the present time (and foreseeable future). But, ultimately, answers remain unquestioned because the questions remain unanswered.

Secrecy

Throughout history and in the context of the occult path there have been secret societies and the perception of secrets to be safeguarded and/or realized depending on one's point of view. A great deal of misunderstanding exists in these matters, leading to all sorts of notions which distract the seeker from that which is needed (e.g., character-building and service).

Occult or esoteric knowledge is simply that body of knowledge that remains hidden from the bulk of humanity, not by virtue of any intention on the part of occult societies or the spiritual hierarchy, but by virtue of man's inability to accept or comprehend this knowledge. As man's ability to accept and understand "truth" grows, that which was esoteric becomes exoteric (at least for him). The deeper (greater) (higher) truths become self-evident as one gradually achieves self-mastery and overcomes the limitations inherent in ordinary human existence, as one progresses or evolves in consciousness, and as one develops the ability to actively (consciously and deliberately) embrace higher reality. In this process, nothing is deliberately hidden from the student. All of the truth lies within the human being and is available to the extent of his or her abilities.

There are and have been many so-called secret societies or occult organizations (most having questionable credentials (i.e., of less than noble character)) which have glamorized whatever fragments of the metaphysical or theosophical knowledge and understanding they have realized and which have glamorized the fact of their existence and the fact of their knowledge and (presumed) understanding. For the most part, these societies and organizations are merely imitating the real occult organizations which remain hidden for practical reasons rather than any sense of exclusiveness, superiority, or other such (foolish) notions. Such organizations remain secret only because there is no need for revelation. Their knowledge or understanding remains secret only because man is unprepared to embrace it, and certainly not by virtue of withholding (truth ever persists (availably) within the field of consciousness).

Esoteric knowledge does not require safeguarding. Esoteric knowledge is by its very nature self-safeguarded. Telling someone a higher “truth” (that is beyond his or her comprehension) simply serves no purpose (not to mention the possibility that one’s own understanding may be flawed). For the most part human language remains insufficient for expressing the higher truths. Man simply has no basis (experience) for understanding that which is esoteric. As man acquires that basis (experience, language (concepts), etc.), the higher knowledge and understanding come naturally. The keys to revelation are (1) the ready availability of the outer (deeper) knowledge (that which can be written or discussed) to those who are ready (and thereby seek appropriately) and (2) the ready availability of the inner (deeper) knowledge (that which can only be grasped subjectively) to one who effectively turns within. These two aspects balance each other and afford everyone an equal opportunity, to the extent of their qualification (preparedness).

The idea that the “higher” truths are dangerous and must be withheld from those who are not “pure” enough is also misleading. Higher truth does convey potential power, but those who are ill-prepared are generally those who have not the ability to utilize that knowledge effectively (for good or ill). Real understanding (and real ability to utilize knowledge) comes with refined temperament, such that “truth” is never dangerous in any higher or fundamental sense, although truth ever conveys consequence (as un-truth ever conveys even greater (albeit non-progressive) consequence).

† Commentary No. 1431

Cognition and Affection 1

Cognition is defined as the act or process of knowing or believing, including (some) conscious awareness and some (not inconsiderable) judgment. It is generally a matter of “knowing” through the mind or head-centered nature. Even where one is more intuitive or heart-centered, knowledge continues to be something that involves the mind in some way, if only to bring what is believed to be known to the waking-consciousness. In this context, affection is defined as the act or process of knowing or believing, without recourse to judgment or rational process. In the lower sense, generally, affection is based upon the emotions (emotional nature (temperament), astral impressions, emotional biases

(largely unconsciously)) and in the higher sense, less generally, affection is based upon the (true) intuition.

Most people are both cognitive and affective. Cognitive at some times and/or in some ways, affective at other times and/or in other ways. Some are primarily cognitive, some are primarily affective. In the context of the spiritual path (conscious evolution), the objective is to perceive things clearly, relying on the (true) intuition, without recourse to analysis or reasoning or judgment, and without recourse to emotional impressions. Without substantive bias or prejudice. In understanding how the cognitive and affective natures function, it becomes possible to begin to see things more clearly, and eventually to transcend these limitations (mind and emotions).

In this sense there are necessarily distinctions needed between affections, emotions, feelings, and sentiments, but mostly between emotions and feelings. In this sense, emotions are simply states-of-consciousness within the astral body, while feelings are more substantive (higher or consequential) impressions in consciousness. Feelings are of two varieties, the lower in the sense of the physical senses, the higher in the sense of something more conscious. In some sense emotions are relatively shallow or superficial, a reflection of external impressions and internal biases (the emotional nature), while feelings are somehow deeper. Emotions are transients and generally dynamic. Feelings are more enduring, more assimilative. Affections suggest biases in the sense of likes and dislikes. Emotions suggest stronger implications in terms of stimulation of the emotional nature (astral body). Thus, in this sense, emotions are not "real" and feelings are more internal.

It is not really fair to consider a person to be exclusively cognitive or exclusively affective, but is fair to consider the characteristics and processes that result from being primarily cognitive or affective. Similarly it is not really fair to identify cognition with deductive thinking, nor to identify affection with inductive thinking, at least not exclusively. But these associations are nonetheless indicative of the general processes. Similarly, everyone is biased to some extent, but the extent of bias varies greatly. Thus one key to understanding one's own nature is the realization of one's biases and the realization of the various processes that occur in consciousness.

So. Generally. A cognitive person is a deductive thinker who tends to look at the evidence, evaluate it, and draw inferences or conclusions. In principal, the cognitive person is not particularly biased and the evaluation and analysis process is potentially quite objective. That does not mean, necessarily, that the outcome (inference) (conclusion) is correct, only that the process is reasonable. In practice, even a cognitive person is biased, but if the biases are known consciously then there is some possibility of apprehension. Except that if one relies on thinking, then one can not ever actually embrace truth.

† Commentary No. 1432

Cognition and Affection 2

This is because the mind is necessarily superficial (shallow). It deals with observations and impressions, and is subject to bias and prejudice. The mind (reasoning) (thinking) is at best objective and reasonable, and even at best, is limited by logic and experience. The mind is not a source of truth. The mind does not inherently embrace truth. Rational process depends necessarily on assumptions and logic, and assumptions may not be true, and logic is a superficial means of drawing a conclusion. Thus deductive thinking, at best, is rather limited and limiting.

Similarly, an affective person in the lower sense is an inductive thinker who tends to believe or decide or desire an answer or outcome and then look for evidence to support that answer or outcome. This generally and usually occurs unconsciously simply because most people are unconscious (and lack the fully conscious awareness of what they are thinking and feeling and doing). The process engaged is often termed "selective perception" because an affective person tends to see only the evidence that supports the desired outcome and tends not to see any evidence that does not support that outcome. In short, this is "logic" corrupted by emotional biases. It is not very objective, but is subjective in the lower sense.

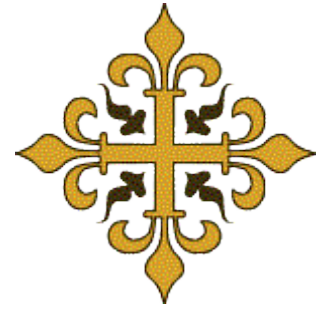
But. An affective person in the higher sense is another beast altogether. An affective person who relies on intuition rather than the mind and the emotions, who is relatively unbiased, can sense the truth (almost) regardless of it's

trappings (context, framework, means). The truly affective-intuitive person does not suffer the limitations of the mind or rational process or intellect. The truly affective-intuitive person does not suffer the limitations of emotional distractions (because "feelings" in the higher sense are embraced and acknowledged in consciousness and are indeed meaningful and not distractive or transient). The truly affective-intuitive person is subjective in the higher sense, perceiving truth without the impediment of preconceived notions, without the imposition of the mind or intellectual process.

The truly affective-intuitive person is both cognitive and affective. Knowledge is acquired through the intuition and the mind is simply acceptive, except that it is not actually knowledge that is acquired, but understanding and wisdom. The mind is not allowed to cling to anything (knowledge) (beliefs) but simply reflects whatever is apprehended. This unfettered mind is thus able to apprehend things that would be leaps-of-faith for those less able to see the truth. The "evidence" may not be apparent to support what is apprehended, but that really does not matter, because "truth" is not about knowledge or evidence or rational understanding. Truth is about truth. The way things are, not the ways they seem to be.

But in order to get to this point and place of clarity, to be able to embrace truth, the student must necessarily first purify the body, the emotions, and the mind. The student must understand and temper the lower nature and win its support for higher work. Purification leads to integration (of the lower nature) and this integration (and further refinement in consciousness) leads to the proper alignment of higher and lower natures. In this process the student must necessarily learn to be (become) honest in all things, internal and external (through outer relationships). Through spiritual discipline and spiritual practice, over the course of many lifetimes, the student is able to accomplish these things and become dedicated to truth (the way) and conscious awareness.

Section 5.12



Understanding

- Knowledge is the basis for understanding. But knowledge alone does not evoke understanding. One must be able to understand. One must be able to understand the context and implications of knowledge before there is proper meaning. Intellectual understanding may suffice for a while, but ultimately understanding must be based on intuitive realization. Before knowledge or experience can be truly understood, it must be assimilated in consciousness.

Keys to Understanding

The evolution of human consciousness proceeds in accordance with the assimilation and application of knowledge and experience. With increasing wisdom comes the ability to assimilate experience directly and consciously. This implies the capability to understand and relate knowledge, experience, and consciousness. Though the ability to understand depends on many factors, there is much that the student can do to cultivate and expand that ability.

Understanding is directly related to mental proficiency, which is an acquired characteristic (generally developed in earlier incarnations). The mind should have a broad foundation of knowledge available to it, as well as appropriate, specific knowledge; that knowledge can be expanded almost continuously. The student can acquire (with discernment) all pertinent or generally meaningful knowledge. Knowledge is not the only essential key or requirement, but without knowledge or the ability to acquire knowledge, the mind is relatively helpless. The mind can be trained to enhance the acquisition of knowledge (through observation and study) and with some exercise, the student can learn to mentally program the memory and the patterns of information retrieval so that practically all the knowledge acquired consciously (subconsciously) (super-consciously) can be recovered (selectively), at will.

One of the more difficult of the keys to understanding is correlation. The ability to relate items of information in a meaningful way requires a mind properly trained in the art of correlation. It is this correlation of information (consciously or otherwise) that actually results in understanding and comprehension. Often the student will have all the necessary information but be unable to put it together in the right way to achieve a meaningful conclusion or realization. Discernment must be cultivated (and the mind trained) so that relationships can be recognized and threads (programs) of insight can be developed. It is in the art of discerning relationships that the intuitive ability is a most valuable aid. The lower (concrete) (intellectual) mind can be nicely programmed, but it is still quite slow compared to the intuition. The concrete mind operates in a single-track mode; only one thought, thread, comparison, or piece of information can be considered at any one time.

Though efficient programming of the lower mind can speed up the process of comparison (determining relationships), the abstract (higher) (intuitive) mind can function almost instantaneously. It is the intuition (buddhi) working with the abstract mind, and working through the disciplined (trained and responsive) concrete mind, that evokes immediate understanding; for the abstract mind (guided by the intuition) can work along many tracks (with cross-correlation) simultaneously. The intuition can also bring down into waking-consciousness knowledge (realization) from higher levels, provided the lower mental framework (appropriate knowledge and language) is present. But the proper development of the intuition requires considerable spiritual training and the building of the bridge of consciousness between the personality and the soul.

Even with the attainment of all this, there may remain serious hindrances to understanding, that are attachment and habit. In this respect, detachment means freedom from bias, prejudice, preconception, and misleading assumptions (illusions). Without such detachment, the mind is quite limited in its ability to correlate and accept realization. Only the open mind, free from opinions and free from bias, can consistently function as an instrument of understanding. With an open mind and a disciplined personality, the student can cultivate understanding, assimilate knowledge and experience, and improve consciousness.

† Commentary No. 321

Understanding

The natural quest for understanding is related to the evolutionary urge (for progress). Understanding can be conscious and/or unconscious; much can be assimilated subconsciously to be available to the conscious mind upon reflection. Understanding is a natural result of effort and experience, of the capacity for understanding (which implies experience, assimilation, and some mental training). But understanding also implies overcoming glamour and illusion, and overcoming the predisposition of the personality to misunderstand through personality-centeredness and presumed understanding.

Understanding is defined as discernment (insight); as an act or result of proper interpretation; as the power of comprehension, the ability to apprehend general relationships of particulars (which suggests that understanding is related to broad-mindedness, and that narrow-mindedness furthers misunderstanding); as the power of making experience intelligible (meaningful) through observation (attention) and proper reasoning (reflection). On the lowest practical level, understanding is closely related to instinct; on the highest level, understanding is closely related to intuition (self-realization). Between instinct and intuition lies a continuum of reasoning. Neither instinct nor intuition leads to misunderstanding; it is the domain of reasoning that provides the opportunity for misunderstanding.

All confusion and misunderstanding is self-imposed. An individual (or group) must ultimately accept responsibility for his own condition of relative understanding (or misunderstanding). All information inputted becomes the responsibility of the recipient. Relative understanding depends upon the perception processes as well as the interpretation of the perceived information. Misunderstanding is far less likely where there is proper observation (attention) and freedom from predisposition (expectation) (bias) (personal energy), impatience, and assumption.

Glamour (illusion) is produced as the human mind (consciousness) assumes a reality (truth) (fact) based upon appearance or unwarranted assumption. Where assumptions are made (consciously or otherwise) and accepted as fact there is a real problem in consciousness, for the presumed facts then form an unmerited basis for further reasoning and further misunderstanding (compounding). The solution (understanding) comes where personal energy is overcome, assumptions are deliberately distinguished from facts, perception and interpretation are relatively free from bias, the intuition is allowed to manifest, the individual takes responsibility for his own condition, and simplicity (broad-mindedness) (open-mindedness) is valued over complexity (narrow-mindedness).

Understanding is actually a continuum, from relative misunderstanding, to a lack of understanding, to relative understanding. With some degree of humility (maturity) the student should prefer a lack of understanding (freedom from misunderstanding) to misunderstanding. Only then is (relative) understanding possible. But that understanding must still involve some (relative) uncertainty

(open-mindedness). Confidence is relative and subject to further experience and improved understanding. Certainty (unmerited confidence) can be an impediment in itself. A mature (stable) posture (conscious disposition) based upon an acceptance of relative uncertainty (i.e., there are no (absolute) certainties) is relatively better than one based upon unmerited confidence (self-deception) or one based upon unwarranted assumptions or premature conclusions (rather than tentative conclusions); spiritual poise (simplicity) (stability) (humility) in the face of uncertainty is a major key to understanding.

† Commentary No. 1218

Assimilation of Knowledge

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

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

The student needs to discern the difference between superficial experience, superficial knowledge, and superficial understanding, on the one hand, and real assimilation of experience, knowledge, and understanding on the other. In this sense, understanding is a product. Understanding is produced as a consequence of assimilation of experience and (more properly) as a consequence of

assimilation of knowledge. Being entangled in experience means that a person cannot really comprehend the significance or nature of the experience. Being attached to knowledge, having beliefs and opinions, means that a person cannot really see a broader context, cannot really understand what is known (and more importantly, what is not known). Assimilation occurs when the essence of something is incorporated. Thus, superficial experience and superficial knowledge lead to superficial understanding.

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

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

Delusion of Understanding

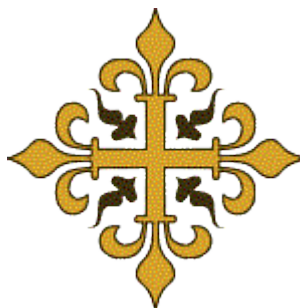
One of the more poignant and substantive barriers to communication and understanding is the delusion of understanding. Many people believe they understand something when in fact they do not. This presumption of understanding then creates a barrier to understanding. Even if a person does understand something, it is better not to presume (complete or full) understanding, because that presumption then undermines a person's ability to understand something deeper or more fully.

Words are inherently limiting. They do not convey literally or completely the intended meaning, simply because words mean different things to different people and one can never be entirely (at least rationally) sure that one understands words in the same way that someone else does. Moreover, much that is expressed in words is not a complete conveyance of what is felt or meant. The expression "I understand how you feel" is generally invalid, because unless one is actually connected to another person through a common aura (not merely proximate) then one cannot actually know properly or completely how another feels. Thus understanding is generally and necessarily limited and partial. People tend to understand things according to their own experience, which is generally (somewhat or substantially) different from that of other people. And people tend to "understand" with the mind rather than intuitively, and the mind is necessarily limited (while the intuition is necessarily subjective).

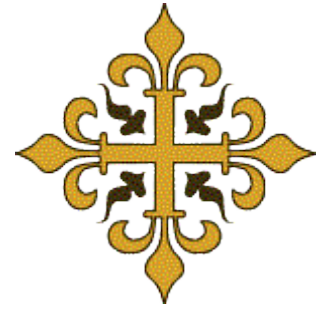
If one then understands that one does not understand completely, then one is more likely to be able to understand in some deeper or broader sense. But if one does not understand that one does not understand, and simply presumes to understand, then it becomes much more difficult to perceive the (deeper, broader) truth of something. It is similar to having opinions. Having an opinion and presuming understanding are grasping phenomena in which one is simply unreceptive to the truth. The quest of the spiritual student, however, is to learn and grow, to seek truth wherever it may be found, which means not having opinions and not presuming to understand (anything). Humility is an extremely potent quality in this regard.

Another factor is the relative degree of certainty or confidence that one has in knowing or understanding something (or believing that one understands something). If one is indeed sure of something, then one is necessarily deluded. Being sure of something means that one is not open to the truth. But if a student believes things more provisionally, without grasping, without attachment, without forming opinions, without presuming to understand, then one is therefore (relatively) much more open and receptive to learning and growing (more readily embracing truth). Thus presumption of understanding is relative. It is better to presume to understand things only to some extent. That provides coherence (and relative confidence) without actually undermining one's ability to perceive truth. Indeed truth is relative, and the embrace of truth likewise. One can (and should) deepen in truth and deepen in one's ability to deepen in truth, without much in the way of presumption.

Of course presumption of truth is rarely a conscious act. Most people presume things unconsciously, without realizing that they are making presumptions. Thus the first step is to be more consciously aware of the assumptions and presumptions that one is making. The second step is to cultivate humility such that one no longer makes assumptions or presumptions, but remains more open to learning (understanding) and further realization (embrace of truth).



Section 5.121



Interpretation

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

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

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

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

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

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

† Commentary No. 14

The Seven Rays

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

† Commentary No. 27

Astrology

Astrology is one of the most ancient of arts and sciences, and one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented. Though quite ancient, astrology is still in its infancy as far as humanity is concerned.

The basic concepts of exoteric astrology are somewhat clear. Throughout the heavens there are centers of energy of many kinds. Some centers are radiators; some are transformers; and others are absorbers of energy. The planets are actually focusing points for extra-planetary energies. Energy passing through such focal points is normally reduced in intensity and modified somewhat by the planetary aura. Exoteric astrology is partially aware of some of the zodiacal influences and some of the planetary effects and cycles, but is largely unaware of esoteric effects, non-physical planets, and non-ecliptic sources.

The effects of astrological energies depend greatly upon the maturity of the soul and the accumulated karma. At the moment of birth, the first breath conditions the etheric body and aura with the influences of that chosen moment. These influences have a large conditioning effect for rather unevolved souls, and a much lesser effect for more advanced souls. The precise moment of birth and the actual location are rather important factors if one is to perform any meaningful calculations. The computations of exoteric astrology are somewhat clear, though there are perturbations of which orthodox astrologers are quite unaware. An exoteric chart, with progressions, is sometimes helpful, but only for souls who are not already upon the spiritual path, and is only meaningful as far as personality is concerned. The esoteric calculations are considerably more abstract and require some measure of enlightenment for any meaningful

interpretation. Astrological calculations may be reasonably clear, but interpretations are mostly inaccurate, especially for the more evolved souls.

The exoteric astrology deals with the unaligned personality; the esoteric astrology concerns the soul and therefore concerns the esoteric group. The unevolved are governed largely by instinct and emotion, and therefore by the impelling energies of the heavens. The evolving man, having accumulated karma, is sometimes influenced by these external energies; certainly much of his personality is conditioned, until the alignment of that personality with the soul. Prior to birth, a soul will choose (within certain limits) a portion of its karma to be fulfilled in the coming life, and the time and circumstances of the birth (including the parents). The influences thus chosen for birth will have an effect throughout the lifetime, though modified by progression and development. The evolving soul will plan certain key events in order to fulfill karma and to develop or experience in a particular direction. There still exists considerable free will (for the evolving man) in determining the path between those points and the reactions to those influences.

The unevolved have very little free will, while the evolving man has an increasingly greater free will. The soul that commits itself to the spiritual path passes out of the exoteric domain and into the esoteric domain. For such souls, the exoteric astrological interpretations are even more confusing (invalid). The soul on the path of liberation is more and more the master of its own destiny, choosing the responses to the available energies, and more and more aligning the will (and therefore the destiny) to the good of the group. The astrological influences that are responded to are those which have been earned, whether they bring limitation or opportunity. The esoteric student rises into that esoteric domain where astrology is that of human and planetary destiny (purpose) and the relationships of souls to the greater groups.

The Tarot 1

The tarot is a particular symbolic and procedural system embodying some degree of metaphysical philosophy, utilizing a combination of particular and various symbolisms, through the medium of a (tarot) deck of cards and their various relationships one to another and through the medium of utilizing those cards according to particular and various methods.

The higher purpose of the tarot is to provide a convenient and portable mechanism for the embodiment and representation of the ancient wisdom (esoteric philosophy) that can be utilized effectively as a point of focus for occult work. Since the basis of the tarot is natural symbolism, it can easily convey its content and quality to (and be effectively utilized by) any trained spiritual student (of any system), while safeguarding that content and quality from any person ill-prepared and unfamiliar with the natural, underlying basis of all occult systems. There is no lower purpose of the tarot, although it is often (and necessarily poorly) utilized by the unqualified and pseudo-qualified for (presumed) fortune-telling and other (relatively foolish) personality-centered operations.

The tarot design can vary a great deal from deck to deck, although those decks that are designed properly, according to the natural, underlying system, are sufficiently similar in the important aspects. The embodied quality and depth (breadth) of content can also vary a great deal from deck to deck, according to the qualifications (knowledge, understanding, wisdom) of the designer. A highly qualified designer will generally produce a highly qualified tarot design (high deck). A poorly qualified designer will generally produce a poorly qualified design (low deck). Consequently, the usefulness and utility of a deck is limited by both the quality of the design (embodied knowledge, understanding, and wisdom) and the quality of the operator (reader) (user) [capacity of the operator for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom].

A high deck is only really useful to a highly qualified reader. Anyone less qualified will simply be unable to discern the embodied quality and content. A moderate deck is only useful to moderately and highly qualified readers,

although for the highly qualified reader a moderate deck cannot convey the higher aspects of the teaching. A low deck is not really useful to anyone, although the unqualified readers generally do not discern the relative (real) quality of the deck being utilized, being able to judge only on the basis of (superficial) appearance. In other words, the key to effective utilization of a tarot deck lies in the resonance (potential) that exists between the deck and the reader. A low deck has low potential, even for the enlightened reader. A high deck has a range of potential, depending on the potential of the reader. One can only extract what has been embodied and only to the extent that one already possesses the embodied knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (and only to the extent that one is properly attuned to or aligned with one's own higher nature). The intellect is not an effective operator.

The tarot is properly utilized (1) as a focus for (unspecified) occult work (service) (white magic), (2) as a point of focus for evoking knowledge, understanding, and wisdom that is not otherwise readily available to the waking-consciousness (but which has been otherwise personally realized), and (3) as a self-psychological tool. The tarot is improperly utilized for any personality-centered, self-centered, or selfish purposes, or for any mundane or personal interests (e.g., fortune-telling). The tarot is merely a point of focus, and can be used or mis-used according to the reader's intention.

† Commentary No. 896

The Tarot 2

The (proper) tarot deck consists of 78 cards in three parts. The first part consists of 21 numbered cards. The second part consists of card number zero. And the third part consists of 56 cards in four suits (signs) (elements) (seasons) (principles) (cardinal points) of 14 cards each. The first two parts constitute the major arcana, while the third part constitutes the minor arcana.

The cards of the major arcana are known by various names, each of which constitutes an entire symbolic sub-system and is related to every other according to the various embodiments. The following are among the various names. Card I is the Magician. Card II is the High Priestess. Card III is the Empress. Card IV is the Emperor. Card V is the Chariot. Card VI is the

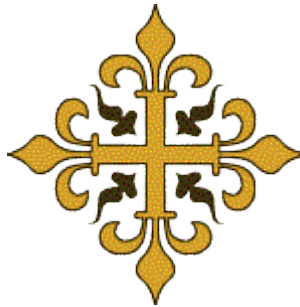
Lovers. Card VII is the Hierophant. Card VIII is Strength. Card IX is the Hermit. Card X is the Wheel of Chance. Card XI is Justice. Card XII is the Hanged Man. Card XIII is Death. Card XIV is Temperance. Card XV is the Devil. Card XVI is the Tower. Card XVII is the Star. Card XVIII is the Moon. Card XIX is the Sun. Card XX is Judgment. Card XXI is World. Card XXII (Zero) is the Fool. The first suit of the minor arcana is called clubs or sceptres and represents the first principle (fire). The second suit is called hearts or cups and represents the second principle (water). The third suit is called spades or swords and represents the third principle (air). And the fourth suit is called diamonds or pentacles or disks and represents the fourth principle (earth). The popular deck of "playing cards" is a derivative of the minor arcana.

The symbolism (properly) embodied in the tarot is multi-dimensional, with numerous symbolic threads (consistencies) running throughout the various cards and in various directions. Since the tarot does, in its higher sense, rely on an intuitive (non-egoistic and non-rational) appreciation of the "deck" and its manifestation (application), one can only really learn the tarot by actually utilizing a (high) deck. Once a person has a suitable feel for the tarot, then one can study the various writings on the tarot, but ever relying on the intuition for that sense of appropriateness (for what rings true and for what rings not so true) [for much of what is written concerning the tarot is without much meaning to the spiritual student]. One can ill afford to approach the tarot in a strictly rational manner, for much will be missed thereby, and one can ill afford to approach the tarot with unbridled or untempered imagination, for much that is false will be gained thereby, thereby deceiving the student and distracting the student from what is true. The only truly effective means of embracing the tarot is intuitively, without recourse to psychic (astral) (emotional) abilities and without recourse to rational (intellectual) abilities.

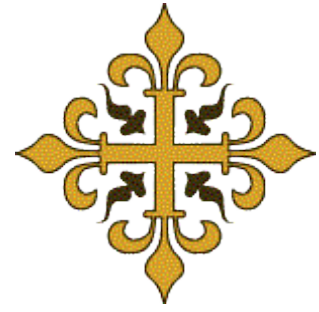
The tarot is both a definite system and a means by which any (proper) system may be embodied. The tarot is both a systemic doctrine and a system of methods. The tarot is a book of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom that can be read in any number of different directions (ways). The tarot is both definite and indefinite. The mind must therefore be tempered and qualified by the intuition to effectively interpret the higher impressions without prejudice. One must be able to embrace both abstract and concrete concepts. One must be able to discern the sense of things (patterns) as well as to discriminate vital

distinctions. Above all, to achieve any real understanding of these things, one must be both open-minded and impersonal.

In a sense, and in the final analysis, the real intention of the tarot is to conveniently evoke within the consciousness of a reincarnated student all that he or she had previously learned of the esoteric philosophy.



Section 5.13



Wisdom

- Understanding ultimately leads to wisdom. While understanding follows the assimilation of knowledge, wisdom follows the assimilation of understanding. Wisdom produces conscience. While knowledge and understanding have some apparent value in the world, only wisdom can be carried between lives.
- Love-wisdom is an essential characteristic or flavor of the spiritual path. The central importance of wisdom is due to the transient nature of experience. In any given lifetime, the student has experience and some recollection of that experience, and possibly even of its significance. But unless knowledge and experience are assimilated into wisdom, nothing of that knowledge and experience is carried forward into the next incarnation. That which is assimilated, either in the current incarnation or in the process of withdrawal from incarnation (purgatory) is included in conscience that is available to some extent in subsequent lives. Assimilated knowledge and experience is therefore potentially evoked at will in subsequent lives. Wisdom is the guide of inner, higher consciousness, applied to thinking, feeling, and behavior. Thus it is relatively important to assimilate experience and likewise to draw upon that wisdom (by turning within) rather than upon one's own lower devices (e.g., intellect).

Wisdom

Love and wisdom are the twin features of the second ray. Both love and wisdom are deeply related to the soul and the aspect of consciousness. In the esoteric sense, love and wisdom are equivalent, but in approach and application they can be considered as complementary and distinct (though ever related). Increasing wisdom is a chief characteristic of the evolving soul, and the pursuit (and attainment) of wisdom is said to be the purpose of philosophy.

Wisdom implies understanding, comprehension, the assimilation of knowledge and experience, and discretion as to conclusion, disposition, and action. Wisdom is not a characteristic inherent in the unevolved soul; it is an intangible and elusive attainment of an experienced (relatively evolved) soul, the potential (archetype) (intention) of which is pre-existent in the unevolved soul (which is itself merely an archetype). As a soul progresses and wisdom is attained, that wisdom becomes increasingly manifest in the personality which is the soul's link to the objective world (arena). But wisdom is not a tangible concept; it exists only through its efforts and characteristics (manifestation).

The first inklings of wisdom arise as common sense and prudence. Common sense suggests sound practical intelligence; prudence implies cautious practical wisdom (especially as it relates to the individuality). From these simple personality-centered beginnings comes sagacity, the acuteness of mental discernment and soundness of judgment. As the mind is developed and intelligence expanded, more and more knowledge is transcended or transformed into wisdom. The active ingredient or catalyst in that process is love (consciousness). Knowledge alone is not enough. Rational thinking (reasoning) alone is not enough. Wisdom requires more than knowledge and reasoning, for wisdom requires the impersonal love born entirely of the soul. Such wisdom then carries with it the deepest sense of understanding and comprehension, through spiritual intuition and realization. Such wisdom is quiet qualification for every activity in the lower worlds as well as for every relationship.

Two hallmarks of wisdom are discretion and a sense of appropriateness. Discretion and (spiritual) discernment (in the sense of true wisdom) are the

consequence of mental qualification and enlightenment (and their relationship to observation (right interpretation and conclusion)). Wisdom does not necessarily suggest complete or objective knowledge; often there is a confidence and a sense of appropriateness superior to knowledge. The wise student acts with discretion and appropriateness, even if specific knowledge or understanding is remiss. Reasoning remains a worthy instrument to the unenlightened mind, but it should always be subordinated to realization (spiritual intuition) (wherever a student is so capable of evoking intuition). The spiritual student should take great care to properly discern and recognize appropriateness.

Wisdom also suggests higher forms of knowledge and the discernment of truth and rightness. But wisdom cannot be taught, and neither can it be possessed in any concrete sense. Wisdom and truth are intimately related, but truth must be recognized if wisdom is to be manifested. Higher knowledge can be shared or revealed, but much depends on consciousness (character) (quality) and how the student responds to higher knowledge. Knowledge carries with it responsibility (for proper application), as wisdom carries with it the impulse and momentum of the soul. Wisdom carries with it even higher responsibility than knowledge. That (soul) wisdom can be characterized simply by humility, compassion, and goodwill. But of all the virtues, perhaps the one most characteristic of wisdom (in the esoteric connotation) is silence and the emptiness that that implies.

† Commentary No. 1220

Assimilation of Understanding

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

Experience requires that a person be in the world (and to some extent engaged with the world), but effective assimilation of experience properly requires non-engagement. Knowledge may be obtained within or without the world and worldly encounters, but the assimilation of knowledge requires the context of experience (psychology) and the field of manifestation. Thus while experience and knowledge can be embraced (superficially) without a context, their assimilation, and particularly the assimilation of understanding, requires a proper (broader, deeper) context. Thus what really matters is not the experience or knowledge or understanding, but the product of assimilation of understanding, which is wisdom.

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

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

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

† Commentary No. 1221

Conscience

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

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

Conscience is, properly, a function of wisdom, of being able to respond to the character and quality of the soul (causal self). It is the expression of inherent wisdom gleaned through assimilation of understanding (gleaned through assimilation of knowledge (gleaned through the assimilation of experience)). It

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

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

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

Perplexity and Wisdom

Perplexity suggests a state of confusion or bewilderment, being disturbed or puzzled by something, a lack of peacefulness of feeling and thinking. Perplexity also suggests "involvement" in the sense of being entangled in experience without requisite understanding or wisdom. And perplexity implies complication and difficulty and uncertainty.

Perplexity arises from the engagement of the mind and senses, which tend to complicate experience and hinder (deeper) understanding. If one is entangled in life, then life is relatively complicated. If one is entangled in thinking about something, then likewise it is relatively complicated. For entanglement and thinking are more or less the same phenomenon, one on more emotional levels and the other on more concrete mental levels. If one is perplexed by life or events or experience, then one is simply not apprehending life (events) (experience) as it is (as they are). There is uncertainty, in details, but there are no real mysteries, for life is (truly) relatively simple and straight-forward. It is only how people engage life that makes it complicated, and potentially perplexing.

Perplexity is also a function of the delusion of the senses and the illusion of separateness (physical reality) (materialism) (ego). Perplexity in the form of contradictions and complications arises from inconsistencies between what is believed or understood and what is perceived, and on a higher level, between the illusion that is embraced and the (actual) truth or reality. Perplexity is good, in the sense that it suggests that one is not simply passive or acquiescent with regard to experience. If one is not challenging anything, mentally or emotionally, then one can hardly be perplexed. And in being perplexed there is the possibility of actually learning something. Indeed, perplexity (apparent contradiction) (paradox) can be quite revealing, if one is open to learning. Most people who are perplexed simply try to fit the pieces into a conventional framework, and if they are successful (deluded) then avoid for the time being the opportunity to learn. But those who are interested in the (actual) truth, rather than something relatively more comfortable, look deeper or broader, and

potentially begin to see the cause and effect relationships that explain things, at least in principle.

Wisdom comes from actually embracing what is understood, and understanding comes from actually embracing what is experienced or known. If one embraces experience with an open mind, (substantially) unfettered by preconceptives (beliefs) (bias) (conditioning) (knowledge) (opinions) (presumed understanding), and without being entangled, then there is the possibility of real insight. Of course one must be properly qualified and receptive, unattached either to what is being apprehended or to the outcome, in order to truly understand something. Indeed, the spiritual student who embraces wisdom does not seek intellectual understanding and is therefore not perplexed. The spiritual student realizes the limitations of reasoning, and the limitations of intellectual understanding, and is therefore able to embrace experience and learning more subjectively and more deeply.

Of course the only real impediment is delusion, which is based primarily in the ego and the need of that artificial self to defend and promote its own existence. Thus one of the keys to embracing wisdom is the transcendence of intellect and ego. If one is able to rely on intuition rather than intellect, on the higher self rather than the lower, artificial self, then there is no perplexity. Things are simple. And straight-forward. There is Tao.

