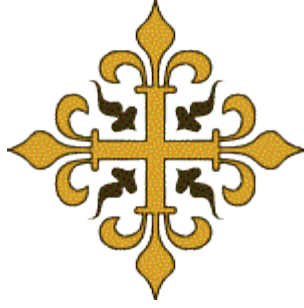


The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 5.3

Mind

The Instrument of Mind and the Processes of Thinking



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Mind

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Contents

		Page
• Chapter 5.3	<u>Mind</u>	1
	The Open Mind	C 127 2
	The Mind and its Brain	C 209 3
• Section 5.31	<u>Aspects of Mind</u>	6
	Criticism and Opinion	C 47 7
	Mental Organization	C 238 8
	Mindlessness	C 414 10
	The Triple Point of the Mind	C 544 12
	Syncategorematics	C 680 13
	Focus and Attention	C 845 15
• Section 5.32	<u>Thinking</u>	17
	Abstract Thinking	C 223 18
	Positive Thinking	C 328 19
	Thinking Processes	C 340 21
	Discrete Thinking	C 344 23
	Linear Thinking	C 347 24
	Matrix Thinking	C 348 26

		Page
• Section 5.321	<u>Aspects of Thinking 1</u>	28
Variable Analysis	C 446	29
Ideation	C 597	30
Thinking and Feeling	C 854	32
Contrivance	C 874	34
Intellectual Honesty	C 914	35
Distinctions	C 1057	37
Realism and Denial	C 1060	39
The Emotional Mind	C 1066	40
• Section 5.322	<u>Aspects of Thinking 2</u>	43
Baconian Prejudice	C 1084	44
Projection	C 1093	45
Equivalence	C 1138	47
The Cultivation of Bias	C 1213	49
Thinking Clearly	C 1214	50
Dichotomy	C 1433	52
Thinking and Violence	C 1448	54

		Page
• Section 5.323	<u>Belief Systems</u>	56
	The Basis of Belief	C 441 57
	Faith and Reasoning	C 442 58
	Reasoning and Intuition	C 443 60
	The Old and the New	C 1233 62
	Mainstream Thinking	C 1239 63
	Cults	C 1240 65
	The Occult Basis of Beliefs 1	C 1241 67
	The Occult Basis of Beliefs 2	C 1242 68
• Section 5.33	<u>The Monkey Mind</u>	71
	The Monkey Mind	C 1441 72
	The Grasping Mind	C 1442 73
	The Advertent Mind	C 1443 75
• Section 5.34	<u>The Quiet Mind</u>	77
	The Passive Mind	C 741 78
	The Active Mind	C 742 79
	The Quiet Mind 1	C 743 81
	The Quiet Mind 2	C 744 83
	Quiescence	C 1250 84

		Page
• Section 5.35	<u>Depth</u>	87
The Deepening	C 71	88
The Superficial Mind	C 241	89
Superficial Mentality	C 572	91
Superficialness	C 1149	93
Depth 1	C 1381	94
Depth 2	C 1382	96



Chapter 5.3

Mind



The Instrument of Mind

And the Processes of Thinking

- The soul tends to develop (evolve) a form or instrument for each plane of consciousness in the scope of its experience. On the manasic (mental) level, the primary instrument is the mind, in its two parts: the abstract mind of the soul itself and the concrete mind of the personality or lower self. On astral levels, the primary instrument is the astral or emotional body. On physical levels there exists a dense physical instrument (body) and its etheric (vital) double.
- Occult or head-centered work is concerned primarily with the mind and its particular instrument within the physical body, the brain. It is the mind that provides the focus of consciousness, allowing a person to relate perception and experience with knowledge and understanding.

The Open Mind

As the spiritual student proceeds along the ever-deepening and expanding lines of consciousness, it becomes increasingly important for the student to maintain an active, open mind free from attachments and broad enough to recognize the inclusiveness of truth. The degree of passivity (the extent to which something is active or passive) and the degree of closure (the extent to which something is open or closed) of the mind together indicate the possibilities for discernment and realization.

The open mind is subject to both external and internal impressions. If the mind is also passive, then the external impressions will normally dominate without discernment or any concern for relevance or validity. If the open mind is active rather than passive, then the individual will normally think for himself, giving consideration to conscious impressions consciously. A passive mind tends to accept as valid whatever external thoughts or impressions are offered, consciously or subconsciously. A passive mind also implies weakness and vulnerability to the glamour and illusion of the worldly atmosphere. It is the active and open mind that offers the best combination for the evolving student. The active mind gives (suggests) strength and the opportunity for self-control, plus the open mind gives flexibility and opportunity for growth.

The degree of closure takes precedence over the degree of passivity. A closed mind, for example, offers very little flexibility, while an open mind is far more workable and easier to develop and improve. A closed mind is usually the result or consequence of fear or inertia. Both fear and inertia are difficult obstacles to overcome. But as fear and inertia are slowly overcome, the closed mind becomes more active (along narrow lines, at first), which in turn encourages more progress toward the gradual opening up (broadening) of the mental character. Though a closed mind is rather limiting as far as consciousness is concerned, the open mind is not without its problems.

One of the more serious problems of living in the objective world is the influence of the world's emotional and mental atmosphere upon the emotional and mental activity (or passivity) of humanity. That atmosphere is qualified mostly by

human thought and feeling, glamour and illusion. That mixture of thought and feeling is impressed upon passive minds and emotions, which further complicates the problem. The problem is rather delicate, for the spiritual student needs to be open and actively responsive to both the external and internal worlds while maintaining self-control and thinking matters through to determine an individual set of values and beliefs. External and internal impressions need to be discerned and evaluated, that the individual might grow (deepen) and expand in perspective. Values and impressions received visibly, verbally, emotionally, or mentally should not be accepted passively as valid or true, but should be accepted, deferred, or rejected based upon recognized merit or realization. And it should be remembered that there exists no real authority for truth.

The student must be free to observe, evaluate, and respond appropriately to every experience in life, including every possible exposure to spiritual insight, internally through meditation and contemplation (and intuition), and externally through art, science, religion, and philosophy. With an active and open mind there is freedom for self-determination (and voluntary cooperation with the evolutionary pattern), and there is freedom to grow and expand. May closed and passive minds be transformed into minds of disciplined mental activity and openness (humility); and may unconscious and passive acceptance be replaced with conscious and voluntary discernment and self-realization.

† Commentary No. 209

The Mind and Its Brain

The soul tends to develop (evolve) a form or instrument for each plane of consciousness in the scope of its experience. On the manasic (mental) level, the primary instrument is the mind, in its two parts: the abstract mind of the soul itself and the concrete mind of the personality or lower self. On astral levels, the primary instrument is the astral or emotional body. On physical levels there exists a dense physical instrument (body) and its etheric (vital) double. Occult or head-centered work is concerned primarily with the mind and its particular instrument within the physical body, the brain.

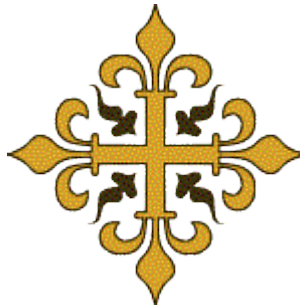
The brain is a strictly physical instrument having a dense physical structure and an etheric counterpart. It is analogous to the hardware (physical instrument) of a computer system (specifically, to the central processor). The brain is concerned primarily with three things: processing sensory inputs, physiological processes (the control and coordination of the physical body), and localized memory. As a dense physical form, the brain has no consciousness of its own (except for the elementary consciousness of the physical and etheric atoms). It is simply a piece of hardware associated with (and necessary to) the physical body, but it is also the primary instrument through which consciousness can function and experience on physical levels. Without the brain, it would be extremely difficult for the waking-consciousness to experience anything on physical levels. The brain is not required for thinking processes, but it is needed for observation, awareness, and interaction on physical levels.

The mind on the other hand, is an instrument of a much higher order than that of the brain (a higher order as far as plane of consciousness is concerned albeit not nearly as structured (organized) as the brain). The mind is the instrument used on the mental plane of consciousness, the instrument of reasoning, thinking, and understanding. It exists more as an aura than as a detailed form, though the mental body itself is becoming more organized as far as mental matter is concerned. The lower (concrete) (superficial) mind provides the single-track processes of thinking and reasoning (with the generation of thought-forms in mental matter), and the (conscious and subconscious) programming of the personality on mental, emotional, and even physical levels.

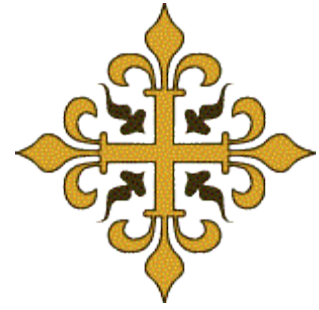
The concrete mind is analogous to computer software, the programming that utilizes lower-order instruments (hardware). The abstract (higher) (inner) mind is a higher order of programming (software) that operates on multiple-tracks and has virtually no structure. The abstract mind provides an interface with the concrete mind of the personality, by providing various energies (guidance) from the soul. The abstract mind is more concerned with relationships, understanding, comprehension, realization, and contemplation; while the concrete mind is more concerned with programming, concentration, and application.

The intellect is that aspect of the concrete mind that has so identified itself with the brain (and with physical experience) that its patterns and processes

(programming) have more or less crystallized. The mind utilizes the brain intimately for physical awareness, and that relationship is usually a considerable distraction (absorption) for the mind. In fact, the mere presence of the brain in the personality system tends to burden (dull) (slow down) the entire thinking process. Since the brain and the mind are closely related during incarnation, it is almost inevitable that an intellect will develop to sustain the illusion of lower (independent) existence. Memory processes, too, contribute to this complicated involvement of mind and brain. They are both involved to a certain extent with etheric memory processes.



Section 5.31



Aspects of Mind

- There are many aspects of mind. The mind is developed over the course of many years. And then the mind must be tempered and brought into responsiveness. Understanding how the mind functions is essential for the spiritual student to be able to effectively utilize the mind and for the student to eventually be able to transcend the mind and function on intuitive levels.

Criticism and Opinion

As a person (individuality) treads upon the path and proceeds to purify and develop the life and consciousness, there inevitably comes a time of crisis in mental development. When the emotions have been tamed and when the polarization of consciousness becomes predominantly mental, then the mind will tend to grow very strong. With that strength and the independence of mind will come the powers of discrimination (discernment) and observation. And along with this will come one of the greater stumbling blocks of mental evolution: the development of the critical mind.

The powers of observation and discernment are generally beneficial, for much can easily be learned through awareness of the lives and worlds that surround each individual. But the power of the mind to criticize can be quite detrimental. In the highest sense, no criticism (verbal or mental) can lack a destructive quality. There are criticisms that are (relatively) obviously destructive and uncalled for. Then there are subtle criticisms and the so-called constructive criticism. In the higher reality, even the most (apparently) constructive criticism has a damaging effect, in the subconscious sense and in the psychic sense. A critical attitude or disposition is highly detrimental to an individual (and to those around him) even though critical words may not be spoken.

In the case of the sensitive mind, to be criticized is to be attacked. The mind (perhaps unconsciously) may feel antagonized by even slight and gentle criticism, whether or not intended. Criticism in general negates or reduces cooperation between individuals and groups. Choosing words carefully (or intuitively), one can verbally transmit a helpful message or suggestion in a gentle, impersonal way (without criticism) that will encourage cooperation and consideration. Instead of telling someone (as it seems) he is wrong or that something is wrong, one might suggest that there seems to be a better way. It is not the role of the spiritual student to judge others or to correct what seem to be their mistakes or weaknesses. It is easy to criticize, unconsciously or otherwise. But the critical disposition must ultimately be tamed, if the student is to perfect the relationship between the mind and the soul.

Another serious stumbling block for the mentally developed student is opinion. Opinions (along with illusion) enslave the majority of mentally polarized human beings. In the objective experience it is nearly impossible to have no opinions, but it is quite possible to minimize such distractions and attachments. To hold fast to opinions without consideration for new or expanded possibilities is the mark of the enslaved mind. Aspirants and disciples are expected to grow, through deepening their spiritual lives and experiences. Thus the student must be free to assimilate his experience, changing or modifying his opinions and values in the light of experience and in the light of the energies from within. The open-minded and discerning individual often reviews his own opinions and philosophy and incorporates any worthy changes or additions. He is not pressured or intimidated, but changes only where there is value in doing so.

The spiritual student is not expected to assume all of the qualities of the perfected man in one lifetime. But the student on the path is expected to make some progress in each lifetime, without making excuses. The elimination of criticism is a (relatively) difficult task, but one that can be attempted and one that can show progress. To be free from inflexible opinions is also a real possibility. Ultimately the liberated soul must have no opinions, but that is as yet not a practical goal. It is however, a goal that should be kept in mind.

† Commentary No. 238

Mental Organization

One of the challenges to developing humanity (and more so the spiritual student) is the effective organization of the mind. As a physical instrument (of the mind) the brain is very highly developed and organized with considerable and effective internal structure; yet the brain remains under-utilized in almost every case. The mind, on the other hand, is not as well developed nor as well organized as the brain. As is the normal case in development, the mental body is more a sheath than well-defined instrument. Most of humanity have not achieved mental polarization and consequently the mind (and its mental body) of the ordinary person is relatively vague and lacking in organization.

As humanity overcomes the emotional polarization and (Atlantean) consciousness, the mind becomes better organized and a much more effective (potent) instrument. But one of the tasks of the spiritual student today is the conscious cultivation, discipline, and application of the mind along useful, spiritually meaningful lines, well in advance of ordinary humanity. Not only must the mind be developed through proper exercise, but the student must gain conscious control of the mind and qualify it directly with the spiritual purpose of the soul. Otherwise there is considerable danger in having an overdeveloped (and therefore relatively uncontrollable) concrete mind. So mental development must be balanced properly with the natural (mature) development of the heart.

One of the keys to this mental development is the conscious organization and utilization of the mind. The mind should be trained as a servant of higher purpose, as an organized, effective, and responsive instrument of the soul (rather than the self-centered instrument of the personality). Mental organization begins with mental discipline: through the study of appropriately disciplined subjects; through the exercise of concentration, meditation, and contemplation; through continued personality cultivation and refinement using the mind as an instrument of integration, alignment, and self-control; through the exercise of the student as an observer (with subsequent evaluation and assimilation); and through purposeful (and reasonable) organization of the daily life for more effective use of the time and energies available (remaining ever flexible and responsive to inner (higher) guidance and outer circumstances).

The training of the mind (toward more effective organization) should continue by conscious and deliberate exercise of association and correspondence. This is a very important aspect of philosophical development (leading to deeper understanding and realization), for the fabric (pattern) of evolution (manifestation) is fraught with correspondence and interrelatedness. Therefore the mind should be trained (properly organized) to study and assimilate patterns of association and correspondence, for those patterns (and their mental analogues) provide the mind with the power of relating elements of experience (observation, study, realization), and thereby integrating (assimilating) (synthesizing) the experience into a unified (interdependent) (expansive) whole.

If the mind is properly organized (disciplined) (trained) (cultivated), it will be a much more potent force for understanding. But the mind will also be a much

more potent instrument of experience and expression, for it will easily be programmable by the waking-consciousness (and more easily qualified by the soul). The practical object of mental organization is therefore the ability of the student to consciously and effectively program the mind as a powerful and responsive instrument (of study, understanding, application, and service). The well-organized mind can be a potent instrument of subjective analysis and for the helpful application of spiritual energies.

† Commentary No. 414

Mindlessness

Mindlessness is defined as the state of being deficient in mind or consciousness, lacking obvious (mentally-based) intelligence, being inattentive, heedless, or unresponsive. For a human being, mindlessness is a condition that inhibits experience and impairs abilities. Since the development and perfection of the mind as a synthetic and highly qualified instrument is a principal evolutionary activity of (present) humanity, any condition of mindlessness or tendency toward mindlessness should be addressed and overcome, either during the normal course of experience in the case of evolving humanity, or during the conscious evolution of those upon the spiritual path.

The actual condition (extent) of mindlessness may be partial or substantial, intermittent or continuous, temporary or (relatively) permanent. Mindlessness can be the result of any one or a number of causes, major or minor, including lack of mental development, lack of training, an impaired or damaged mental body, absorption in some glamour or illusion, stress (fear) (worry), distraction (attachment) (desire), self-deception, lack of integration or mental connectivity, arrogance, willfulness, hypnosis, drugs, etc. The treatment for mindlessness depends to a large extent on the actual condition (extent) and the cause or causes. As in any healing activity, treating the effects cannot lead to a satisfactory solution unless there is also a realization (adjustment) in consciousness.

One of the complications of mindlessness is that the condition itself makes it difficult (if not impossible) for a person to recognize and diagnose his own condition. Another complication, at least for the spiritual student, is that the

majority of humanity suffer mindlessness to a considerable extent, and therefore there is a continual encouragement toward mindlessness. This general condition is balanced by evolutionary forces which encourage mental development, increased awareness, etc. Understanding mindlessness in this general sense is relatively easy (for those who are mentally polarized) and the solution is straightforward (gradual mental development and realization resulting from human experience and increased qualification).

The mindlessness (mental sheepishness) of humanity relates principally to the prevailing emotional polarization and consequent absorption in mundane (personal) energies, and lack of mental development and training. With further experience and training, humanity will gradually overcome the current conditions, and begin thinking along more reasonable lines (being less biased by emotional, mundane, and personal energies). But the progress of humanity is necessarily slow, and the treatment is one of simple encouragement and qualification. For humanity, moderation in development is relatively important, and particularly so in the case of mental development.

In the case of an individual whose mindlessness is traceable to particular causes, the treatment is potentially much more difficult, for the simple reason that karma so manifested is not as simple as the general conditions for humanity. Such a treatment must remain general until properly diagnosed (and causes revealed); then those processes should be treated explicitly (e.g., specific mental discipline and training, repair of the mental body, detachment, self-purification and balance, integration, etc.). In this particular case, treatment of mindlessness normally requires the cooperation of the personality. Given the realization (understanding) (adjustment in consciousness), the treatment of the causal chain is able to be successful, and the individual will be restored to whatever degree of mental abilities have been properly achieved.

The Triple Point of the Mind

The mind is the only human vehicle that is part of the personality and part of the soul, the concrete mind being the highest aspect of the personality and the abstract (subjective) (higher) mind being the lowest aspect of the soul. At the interface between the concrete mind and the abstract mind a triple point exists. A triple point (point of equilibrium) (in this context) is a point of tension (focus) where three phases, aspects, or perspectives coexist. The triple point of the mind allows the (qualified) waking consciousness (the focus of conscious awareness) to look (up) into the depths of the soul, (out) into the external environment, and (down) into the depths of the personality.

The significance of the ability of the waking consciousness to dwell at the triple point of the mind lies in the clarity of vision that is evoked at that point in any of the three directions. Provided the focus of the mind can be maintained at the triple point, the evoked vision (perspective) is unhindered by the glamour (illusion) of the personality. If the point of focus is lower than the triple point, then the personality distorts the vision. If the point of focus is higher than the triple point, then no viewing is possible since the soul per se does not have the faculty for such perception (the vision of the soul is an entirely different phenomena (process)).

It is relatively important for the spiritual student to (be able to) view the personality honestly (dispassionately) and without being subject to the normal glamour and illusion (distortion) of the (absorbed) personality. The personality cannot view the personality domain honestly or clearly, but the waking consciousness focused at the triple point of the mind and looking down into the personality can generally see the truth or relative reality of the personality (character, temperament, values, etc.) and in such recognition can then invoke the requisite forces (energy) to more effectively qualify (refine) (transform) the personality and its instruments. Similarly, it is relatively important for the spiritual student to (be able to) view the (lower) external environment without hindrance of personality bias. The student must be able to effectively assess the personality and its environment if the student is to work effectively within (upon) the path (service).

It is also relatively important for the spiritual student to (be able to) view the nature of the soul, for in such recognition the student can comprehend the place and purpose of the soul and in such recognition can actually evoke the qualifying forces (energy) of the soul. It is not generally possible for the unintegrated or unaligned personality to evoke the soul's energy directly, but at the triple point of the mind the waking consciousness opens (and sustains) a rapport of personality and soul. Every time the waking consciousness returns to the triple point of the mind it strengthens that rapport, and as that rapport is strengthened then the soul can (and will) continually (and eventually continuously) directly qualify the lower self (personality consciousness). The problem then is in achieving the ability of the waking consciousness to reach that triple point and remain there more than merely momentarily.

The prerequisites are few and simple (but quite difficult in practice to fulfill): (1) the personality must be refined and properly integrated (the emotions must be properly calmed and subordinated to the mind), and (2) the mind of the integrated personality must be further refined and disciplined to enable the quiet mind to emerge as a more natural state than that of the active (thinking) mind (the mind must be stilled to the point where no thoughts can disturb the focus of the mind).

† Commentary No. 680

Syncategorematics

Syncategorematics is the study or consideration of various concepts represented by words that are traditionally syncategorematic (or words or symbols that traditionally have no independent meaning but need to be joined with some categorematic (word) in order to be meaningful). The concept of syncategorematics arises (in the orthodox sense) from traditional and modern logic (e.g., the realm of categorical propositions or syllogisms), but in the metaphysical sense arises from occult discipline in abstract thinking and the cultivation of buddhi.

In the orthodox (academic) sense, syncategorematic words have no independent meaning, but in the metaphysical (occult) sense all words have independent

meaning (even if only strictly by symbolic association or by virtue of mantric value), however practical or impractical they may be. Examples of words dismissed orthodoxically as syncategorematic are “all” “and” “some” “large”, etc. In this sense, orthodoxically, something is large only relatively (i.e., in relationship between the “something” that is large and something else). But in abstract metaphysics, “large” has independent meaning (apart from any subject or predicate), as do “all” “and” and “some” (as well as comparable words (e.g., “a” “an” “the”, etc.). From the standpoint of concrete thinking, these words and concepts (alone) may be illusive if not insensible, but from the standpoint of abstract thinking and intuition they can provide a considerable (subtle) stimulation as the various mental attachments are challenged, overcome, and properly disposed.

For example the word and concept of “and” can serve as a meditative or contemplative focus of considerable depth and breadth, on both concrete and abstract levels. Concretely, “and” is a linking, combinative concept rich with associations, while abstractly, “and” is a potent mantra of subtle detachment. The closed mind is quick to dismiss matters that are not so obvious or not already within the personal opinion field of the personality, but the open mind will (fortunately) consider fairly (futilely or otherwise depending on ability) any idea or concept, however apparently unrelated or however abstract it may seem to be.

The power of syncategorematics (by whatever name) goes beyond merely cultivating the inner awareness (disposition) and linking of abstract and concrete minds, but also facilitates the breaking (destruction) of (necessarily limiting) attachments to ideas or concepts, habits, patterns of thinking, etc. But one also needs to distinguish between the value or meaning of the syncategorematic word or concept and the value of the exercise in syncategorematics. The exercise is usually more meaningful than the focus, but one should not preclude insight from a particular syncategorematic focus. Of course care should be taken to avoid categorematic association so that the abstract value of the syncategorematic is lost by concrete or objective dilution.

Consideration of the non-relative “large” or an independent “the” can provide a considerable challenge of dissociation, refining the concrete mind and cultivating cooperation between the concrete mind of the personality and the

abstract mind and intuition of the soul. Even though all things are relative, the exercise of non-relativity (detachment) is quite potent (non-relative does not mean absolute). Syncategorematics is, ultimately, a path of freedom related in part to Zen Buddhism and other fields of practical and more-than-practical experience.

† Commentary No. 845

Focus and Attention

Focus refers to “the center of activity, attraction, or attention” or the point (area) (volume) at (to) which such activity, attraction, or attention converges. In the context of the human mind, which is, after all, the principal instrument of the incarnated individuality, the relative focus of attention and the relative quality of that relative focus of attention are indications of manifested character and quality of consciousness.

The mind is, at once, both the greatest instrument of the human personality and the greatest curse and impediment to the evolving consciousness (assuming that the physical appetites and emotional instabilities and distractions have been more or less overcome). In order to effectively utilize the mind, that it should be both (1) an effective instrument for integrating and maintaining the personality and (2) responsive to the higher self (soul), the student must develop the mind in two distinctly different and apparently contradictory directions. The mind must be trained to be able to focus sharply on any subject or object, at will. And the mind must be trained to expand the focus of attention in the broadest and deepest manner feasible.

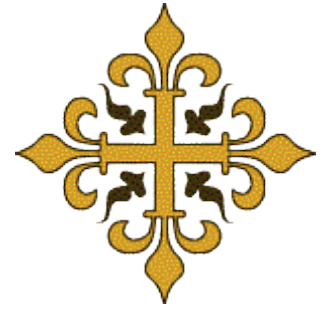
Much of conventional education, and particularly that of mathematics and the physical sciences, involves training the mind in the narrow focus and associated analytical and logical (rational) techniques. This gives rise to the ability (and curse) of the mind to be attached to and involved with (entangled in) the subject or object at hand, without, generally and necessarily, the ability to see beyond that narrow focus or attachment. The real value of this ability (narrow focus) lies in the constructive evocation and concentration or application of force (and associated occult practices and methods). But in order to be effective in the broader and more noble sense, one must also avoid the perils of narrow focus,

i.e., avoid becoming attached to or entangled in either the object or the process. Narrow-minded occultists are among the worst (most dangerous) of humanity and are naturally drawn to the left-hand path. And narrow-minded people in general are greatly hampered by their lack of depth and breadth (conversely, broad-minded people, in the extreme, are useless).

Thus esoteric training properly involves both development (and service) along occult lines (relatively narrow focus) and mystical lines (relatively broad focus), more or less simultaneously. The breadth (broadness and openness) of focus is important to understanding and comprehension (i.e., wisdom) and temperance (general qualification), while the narrow focus is useful for special qualification. As one truly grows spiritually, one must necessarily expand one's natural focus of attention, without attachment (opinions, etc.) in order to embrace more and more of the higher worlds and concepts. Even in the lower worlds, that breadth of view affords understanding and comprehension (correlation and assimilation) that would be precluded by any sense of narrow-mindedness (including having opinions or making unconscious assumptions).

But in order to progress in an even-handed (balanced) manner (which is ultimately quite important), the spiritual student should devote time each day to both lines of development and service. By exercising the mind in concentration and then in contemplation (or vice versa), the student retains the sharpness of focus that is needed, without the curse of attachment and entanglement, while simultaneously being able to draw on (be qualified by) the higher human attributes (the energy and higher vitality of the soul). The bridge between concentration and contemplation is proper meditation, particularly where it is extended to the meditative life.

Section 5.32



Thinking

- Thinking is the utilization of the mind, through concentration, meditation, contemplation, through interpretation of sense impressions, etc. There is abstract thinking and concrete thinking. There is discrete thinking, linear thinking, and matrix thinking. There is relationship between thinking and feeling and behavior. There are important matters of honesty and objectivity in thinking. And there is ultimately a matter of non-thinking.

Abstract Thinking

Though the spiritual student is usually and rightfully concerned with practical philosophical and spiritual matters, there remains considerable value in the exercise of abstract thinking, provided that the concrete or lower mind has been sufficiently developed. Most of humanity are presently concerned with emotional control and concrete mental development, while the spiritual student is more concerned with personality integration and the alignment of personality with the soul. One of the values (merits) of abstract thinking is that it contributes substantially to the alignment of soul and personality and the consequential flow of soul energies into the lower self. But this all supposes that the concrete mind is properly developed and responsive to the soul.

If the lower mind is not sufficiently developed, abstract thinking may even be counterproductive since it may discourage the concrete mental training. But if the concrete mind is already reasonably developed, then the exercise of abstract thinking will naturally complement and encourage a more responsive concrete mental development, especially where spiritual motives prevail.

The primary value of abstract thinking is in the training of the concrete mind to work in close and responsive cooperation with the abstract mind. This activity generates a number of helpful byproducts in addition to the mental training itself. The development of a number of useful qualities is quite naturally encouraged by abstract mental efforts; qualities such as broadmindedness, inclusiveness, tolerance, reasonableness, creativeness, and understanding. Abstract thinking leads to an expansion of the focus of the mind such that the resulting perspective is broad enough and inclusive enough to allow the recognition of relationships and concepts (truths) otherwise impossible. Thus, abstract thinking leads to a greater awareness and a deeper understanding of life and consciousness (experience).

Desires prevent the recognition of truth, but in abstract (impersonal) thinking the mind rises beyond desire (and critical thought) into a realm of unimpeded and undistorted truth. The mind then stands clear from the senses, and realization prevails. The exercise of abstract thinking itself is a function of

buddhi-manas, a linking of the spiritual intuition and the enlightened mind. So the exercise itself also fosters the manifestation of the intuition through a trained and responsive mind. In fact, the intuition cannot work properly unless the mind is suitably developed. Likewise, understanding or realization achieved on abstract levels cannot be properly brought down to the levels of brain-consciousness unless the concrete mind is properly aligned and free from personal energies. The concrete mind must be trained to interpret the higher energies properly, to translate those higher (formless) thoughts into the accurate concrete thoughts (thought-forms) needed by the responsive personality.

Many (impersonal) human studies can lead to the proper exercise of abstract thinking: such as mathematics, theoretical physics, abstract philosophy, art (in its various forms) and symbolism; and any meaningful form of imagination, visualization, conceptualization, or creative ideation. Some powerful objects of contemplation and abstract thinking include the nature of time, the reality of God, the nature of impersonal love, the purpose of life, the meaning of truth, the significance of consciousness, etc. Through abstract thinking the reality of principles and concepts can be experienced, through the knowledge (realization) of participation in the energies themselves. If the soul is characterized as the deepest ocean, it is the abstract mind that can penetrate the depths, while the concrete mind is forced to remain at the surface.

† Commentary No. 328

Positive Thinking

The concept of positive thinking forms one of the foundations of metaphysical philosophy. The basic idea is that energy follows thought, that (generic) man is a creator, and as a person thinks so is energy projected which tends to bring about the manifestation of the thought in more objective terms. Positive thinking can be causal in the case of an overall (pleasant) disposition, or more deliberate in terms of affirmation, visualization, or projection of mental (astral) (etheric) energy. The processes of positive thinking are similar to those of negative thinking, except that positive thinking is inherently constructive (but potentially selfish) while negative thinking is inherently destructive.

Positive (negative) thinking (the projection of positive (negative) energy) can be conscious or unconscious (generalized (disposition) or careless (or habitual)), potent and coherent or relatively impotent and incoherent. Considerable momentum can be achieved in positive or negative thinking, regardless of deliberation. In the more deliberate sense, positive thinking involves the projecting ahead (in time) of energy in the form of a visualization or mental construct (which may be an intricately conditioned formula). The novice will normally intensify the projection (with desire) (which complicates the process) and may actually project a looking back in time from the projected reality (i.e., placing the manifestation of the desire reality in the past tense in order to evoke subconscious processes indirectly). The properly trained student will project without desire (and without any personal considerations) and will condition the projection as well as the subconscious mind.

The advantages and merit of positive thinking are considerable. Positive thinking (as a process) is an integrating force for the personality; it strengthens the mind and its hold upon the personality, via concentration, affirmation, visualization, and projection. Positive thinking can be a creative force to bring about desired (appropriate) effects, both in terms of the development of the personality and in terms of external conditions. However, there are inherent problems and potential dangers in positive thinking, particularly where it is carried to an extreme. Unless the mind is properly subordinated to the soul, the mind is likely to grow too strong (independent) (separative) and actually inhibit spiritual responsiveness while encouraging personality-centeredness.

Another problem of positive thinking (and of prosperity-consciousness) is proper motive. Desire involves personal energy and generally reflects a degree of self-centeredness which is enhanced by positive thinking along personal lines. Carried to an extreme, positive thinking fosters illusion and concretion leading to a serious denial of reality and a preponderance of extreme (binary) thinking. Highly specific positive projection is generally less effective. A substantial potential problem associated with positive thinking is interacting naively (arrogantly) with intended destiny (attempting to change or improve (circumvent) conditions intended via karma to afford certain learning opportunities (karmic fulfillment)). However, such circumvention (if effected) only constitutes temporary evasion (postponement) and a denial of opportunity.

The student is encouraged to incorporate positive thinking as a general disposition and (positive) energy projection in properly qualified (impersonal) ways, in harmony and cooperation with karmic forces. In working with consciousness (and realization) rather than specific events, conditions, or circumstances, the student actually encourages effective karmic fulfillment.

† Commentary No. 340

Thinking Processes

Coincident with the development of human consciousness and mental development is an expansion and evolution of the various thinking and reasoning processes exercised by human consciousness. In the early stages of human evolution there is no real thinking or reasoning; experience is principally physical and emotional and that experience is assimilated indirectly (more or less unconsciously) (by association) and contributes to the basis of acquired instinctual consciousness. As evolution proceeds a rudimentary mind or mental body is developed and eventually the experience becomes dominated by kama-manas (the desire mind), a relatively developed mind operating under emotional influence. Further along, the mind matures and becomes an integrating force for the entire personality and, ultimately, a means of alignment with the soul.

As the mind develops, so does its physical instrument (the brain) (actually the brain is developed well in advance of mental development, but the mind must learn to use the brain effectively, which takes time), albeit the fully developed mind ultimately evolves beyond any need of any physical instrument.

During the stage of development associated with kama-manas, the thinking processes are rather lacking in organization and discipline, being rather fragmentary, disjointed, and easily distracted by sense-impressions; the consciousness is generally absorbed by sense perception rather than thinking or reasoning, but gradually various thinking habits are acquired, developed, and exercised. Those processes begin with relatively short trains of relatively concrete, practical, logical, non-rational, linear, objective thinking, and culminate after considerable mental experience in relatively abstract, impractical (but enlightened), super-logical, non-rational, correlative and subjective thinking. The various characteristics of thinking processes are

developed interdependently (more or less simultaneously). The major stumbling blocks to such development are mundane absorption and mental concretion.

One element or characteristic of thinking is the degree of abstraction, which depends almost entirely on the bridge of consciousness between the concrete mind and the abstract mind. The ordinary mode of thinking (as a personality) involves primarily the concrete mind, but as the individual evolves so do patterns emerge which link the lower, concrete mind with its higher, abstract counterpart (similarly for the emergence of an enlightened blend of subjective (higher) and objective (lower) thinking. Another element or characteristic of thinking is rationality (and associated or analogous logic). Rational thinking depends principally on the concrete mind and provides an important mechanism for the transition from dependence on sense-impression. However, rational processes are deficient in the sense of dependence on assumptions and particularly where carried to an extreme.

Irrational thinking processes are the consequences of impaired mental faculties, or in the case of close association of mind and brain, of a defective brain. Non-rational thinking processes are the culmination of reasonableness (and openmindedness (flexibility)), as rational thinking is elevated onto non-rational (abstract) (subjective) levels, in which case the rational mind becomes the instrument or mechanism of interpretation of higher, non-rational (superior) processes. The logical analogues of rational, non-rational, and irrational processes are logical, super-logical, and illogical, respectively, though rationality and logicity are not necessarily related. The more advanced elements or characteristics of thinking involve the dimensionality of thinking; i.e., matrix or correlative processes rather than linear thinking.

Discrete Thinking

Some of the challenges associated with mental development, self-mastery, and the expansion of consciousness involve habits in thinking and the difficulties of transition from narrow-mindedness to broadmindedness. When the individual begins to develop the mind, the individual tends to think in an extremely concrete fashion, where phenomena are perceived and interpreted narrowly according to limited experience and an oversimplified sense of values. That sense of values generally involves pairs of opposites (e.g., black and white) in an either/or mentality (accepting either one (extreme value) or the other).

This either/or condition can be called binary thinking, where the possible range of values for any given character, quality, etc. is limited to two. Interpreted in a binary or dualistic fashion, philosophy is reduced to a series of arguments (right or wrong, black or white, true or false) and a concrete form of logic in which the (supposed) proof of one premise eliminates the opposite. This way of thinking constitutes narrow-mindedness that actually inhibits mental development in a number of ways. There is, however, some merit to passing through a stage corresponding to binary thinking, for it does exercise the mind (concretely) and helps it to develop a (primitive) sense of discrimination.

Binary thinking is actually an extreme subset of a more general concept, discrete thinking. Discrete thinking is still rather concrete-minded but allows some range of values (e.g., black, white, and various discrete shades of grey rather than exclusively and distinctly black and white). Some (few) phenomena can be adequately described in binary terms, but many more can be (more) reasonably described in multi-valued discrete terms. Discrete thinking is important because it provides a transition from the fallacy of dualism and expands the mental processes somewhat. But even in discrete thinking (vis-à-vis binary thinking) there are potential problems of close-mindedness and attachment. The (lower) (concrete) mind of the personality easily forms attachments to personal values and easily takes exception to the contrasting values and a continual testing of one's own values (and a willingness to change them on the basis of experience).

The spiritual student is encouraged not to be attached to personal values (which implies ego and self-centeredness), but rather to be flexible and open-minded with regard to individual values, tolerant of other ways of thinking, and increasingly subjective (inclusive) (broadminded) in thinking and realization. Discrete phenomena and discrete thinking have their place and serve many useful (intermediate) purposes in mental development (experience), but the spiritual student must ultimately embrace the higher concepts of balance and relativity in all matters, continuum values rather than discrete values, and integral perspectives rather than differential perspectives.

Discrete thinking should lead to continuum thinking where a given quality or characteristic may involve a continuous spectrum of values, each relative to every other. But the evolution (transition) from binary thinking through discrete thinking to continuum thinking (and beyond) is not an easy one, for all progress is the result of effort (harmony), and the concrete mental and emotional attachments and habits of the lesser self (personality) are inherently difficult to overcome (due to the inertial resistance of matter). Even after considerable mental development, the mind may remain relatively narrow in its habits and relatively potent. But once the reality of the soul is accepted by the mind, the mental attachments and resistance can be fully overcome as the mind becomes an instrument of cooperation and subordination to higher processes.

† Commentary No. 347

Linear Thinking

The intermediate stages of human (mental) evolution involve one-dimensional (linear) (analytical) thinking, where reasoning and logic are important ingredients (and where physical and emotional (personal) distractions are not prevalent), and where unbroken (linear) chains of thought lead to relative (limited) and conscious understanding. Linear thinking is intermediate between kama-manas (the desire mind) (emotionally-biased thinking) and the cooperation of the abstract (subjective) mind with the concrete (objective) mind.

Though most of humanity are enchanted by kama-manas, the vast majority of those who are not so enchanted are able to think in a linear fashion, which is the

path of least resistance for the ordinary (semi-trained) concrete mind. Linear thinking involves focusing the mind (the waking-consciousness) upon a single object (concept) (problem) (question) and proceeding more or less deliberately upon a relatively logical, rational (objective), straightforward path (or analysis). For a more complex problem, the problem would be separated into component problems or elements, and each component would be analyzed in turn, with components being correlated one with another (in a linear, step-by-step fashion). Linear thinking (and linear analysis) may involve relatively short, simple trains of thought, or relatively long, complicated (yet essentially linear) trains of thought, with or without decision points.

Decision points involve the conjunction of two or more apparently diverging chains. A decision may involve a conclusion, and/or it may involve a choice of which trains to follow (or abandon) (or defer until a former train is reasonably exhausted (completed)). Ordinary speech (listening) (writing) (reading) involves simple, linear trains of thought, where the speaker (listener) (writer) (reader) flows naturally from one point to another without impediment or distraction in a smooth, easy-to-follow fashion (for the concrete mind), where decision points are recognizable within the form or organization of the speech (conversation) (writing). Linear thinking processes externalized (linear communication, interactive or otherwise) (via speech or writing), if well-organized and coherent, involve relatively simple sentence structure and conventional word order. Through years (and lifetimes) of concrete mental experience and development, the mind grows quite accustomed to linear processes.

Considerable are the advantages of (ordinary) linear thinking over kama-manas, yet even so, there are a number of problems or limitations. Logical (deductive and/or inductive) and rational analysis (or communication) is limited by language, perception, understanding (consciousness), and (significantly) by assumption (or presumption). Making assumptions is often necessary to rational thinking or analysis where knowledge is limited. But assumptions complicate the thinking process (particularly where assumptions are confused with facts), even though they may allow conclusions to be drawn (correctly or otherwise). The real limitations of linear thinking are the limitations of the concrete mind and its associated personality (habits, bias, perception, experience, knowledge, etc.). The individual is particularly limited by the

(ordinary) field of human (concrete) knowledge and the extent of mental ability (training) and experience.

Linear thinking is enhanced by an overall qualification of reasonableness (balance) (avoidance of extremes (narrowness) in thinking and incorporation of continuum thinking (values). On the other hand, broadmindedness (in moderation) is helpful to linear thinking (analysis) (understanding), but broadmindedness (openmindedness) leads to more correlative and inclusive thinking, as a transition between linear thinking and the more subjective, matrix thinking.

† Commentary No. 348

Matrix Thinking

The relatively advanced stages of human (mental) evolution involve multidimensional (matrix) thinking processes, where linear thinking is gradually replaced by thinking along several (or more) correlated threads of consciousness (linear thinking remains available as a subset of available processes). Matrix thinking involves following two or more correlated (interactive) threads of consciousness (which may or may not be thought-forms) simultaneously, or in the greater case, of intuitively embracing the entire substance (matrix of correlated energy).

Linear thinking and linear analysis (as a thinking process) are primarily the domain or function of the unaligned concrete mind. As that concrete mind is brought into association with the more subjective, abstract mind (of the soul), more and more of the knowledge and wisdom (and correlative mental capacity) of the soul (its quality and character and relationship to the field of knowledge) is brought to bear on the responsive lower mind. Matrix thinking and matrix analysis (as a thinking process) are thus the domain of the objective, concrete mind working in harmony with the subjective, abstract mind (and therefore require (evoke) considerable inner awareness).

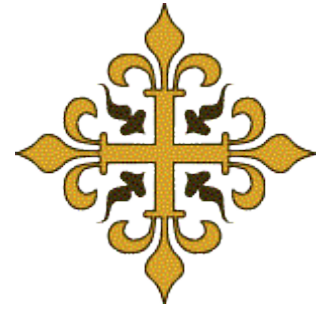
Where linear thinking involves thought-forms and linear chains of related thought-forms, matrix thinking is much more inclusive (multidimensional) (highly symbolic) and unconstrained by attachment (focus); or in other words, in

matrix thinking (analysis) the focus of the mind is split into two simultaneous modes: one aspect holds the object or subject in focus (at a point of tension, without attachment), while the other aspect is a greatly expanded focus that embraces the field of knowledge, correlating that field with the principal focus (subject), thus bringing considerable insight and understanding (which is normally beyond the ability of the unaligned personality). Thus matrix thinking is multidimensional and inherently (naturally) correlative. Relationships can be easily and instantly realized that would be impossible or extremely difficult and/or time-consuming to achieve via ordinary, linear processes.

Matrix (subjective) analysis is the soul-centered source of intuitive genius and enlightenment, available in isolated cases of partial alignment of mind and soul, and to the trained and qualified disciple as a normal course of spiritual development. While linear thinking processes are easy for the concrete mind to follow, non-linear matrix processes are difficult for the concrete mind without training and without considerable (alignment) of mind and soul. Matrix (multi-path) thinking processes manifested in writing often involve symbolic logic, correlative (multidimensional) word structure, and relatively complicated sentence structure (and/or word order) (to allow the mind to correlate what might otherwise be missed). To the trained, aligned mind, correlative writing is as easy and natural to follow as linear processes are for the superficial (unaligned) mind. The problems of habits in thinking, however, makes the transition from linear thinking to correlative thinking a rather difficult one.

Some opportunities exist in the orthodox educational system for correlative mental training, but once the concrete mental habits have set, the transition to subjective, correlative thinking is virtually impossible. As a training tool, correlative (multidimensional) writing usually requires the relatively untrained mind (trained only in linear patterns) to proceed slowly and deliberately, impeding prevalent habits of superficial, linear thinking, allowing the mind to adjust to unfamiliar patterns. In time, the mind adapts to the more general form of thinking and this encourages a closer association of mind and soul.

Section 5.321



Aspects of Thinking 1

- There are many aspects of thinking. The spiritual student must eventually deal with and overcome all of the limitations of the mind and its thinking patterns. There is a vital matter of honesty. And there is the matter of bias and conditioning.

Variable Analysis

In the study of truth and in the presentation of a number of concepts within the esoteric philosophy, it is often helpful to consider a subject from various (different but interrelated) aspects or perspectives in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the whole by means of constituent relationships. The study of some aspect or some variable (quality) (characteristic) within some aspect is necessarily a consideration of a limited or partial truth, as all things (perspectives) are necessarily partial and relative, yet in the subsequent study of relationships and in the integrated realization of some aspect (subject), these fractional contributions may well be considerable.

Variable analysis is the study (consideration) of some variable within some subject, to evaluate the significance of the various states or values of that variable. A simple variable is one-dimensional, having two extreme values and some spectrum or spread of values in between. An oversimplification is the consideration of some such variable in binary or dualistic terms, i.e., constraining the variable to only its extreme values where in fact most variables are continuous and not binary (or even discrete).

Nothing is really one-dimensional, but some consideration of one-dimensional variables may be helpful, particularly where relationships are indicated with other variables or aspects. Most concepts are multi-dimensional, but are more easily studied first from the perspective of partials (parts) (aspects) (constituents), then from the perspective of relationships between partials, and finally from the perspective of the whole (subject). This analysis may be performed to some extent utilizing mental resources, but it is more properly (more effectively) performed utilizing the (proper) intuition (buddhi or buddhi-manas rather than manas).

Variable analysis is simply the consideration of some subject through the perspective or focus of a particular variable or aspect, in the context of that subject. The study of the seven rays is a major example of a subject (all that exists) considered from the natural perspective of the seven constituent energies or forces and their relationships. The study of one of the rays in a particular

context, with consideration for variation in quality, is an example of variable analysis. The real significance of variable analysis lies in the contribution of some aspect (variable) to the whole, since every whole is the integrated sum (overall quality) of its constituent elements or aspects. The fact that the objective world (illusion of substantial reality) is necessarily a realm of partials (and not normally or easily perceived as a whole) lends further significance to variable analysis, since, in fact, most aspects or subjects in the human domain (with human resources) can only be considered from the standpoint of partial perspectives. But the partial should not be mistaken for the whole.

With expanded and refined consciousness and concomitant abilities, the student can eventually do more than simply relate the products of variable analysis or the study of partials and their relationships; the student of higher (intuition) (soul) consciousness can embrace whole subjects and achieve considerable realization and understanding, but even such will normally result in an understanding of the aspects and constituents (variables) and relationships, due to the relative significance of their respective contributions and since, in the final analysis, the spiritual student is as concerned with the application of wisdom (understanding) as he (she) is in the consideration of universal life and the more abstract truths.

† Commentary No. 597

Ideation

Ideation is the capacity for (the act of) forming or entertaining ideas. In the philosophy (theosophical) terminology, an idea is an abstract mental entity (pattern) (standard) (ideal) (plan) (design) that induces or otherwise stimulates some concrete mental response (thought-form). In this higher sense, a formulated thought, opinion, or concrete mental image is not an idea but is merely “what exists in the mind as a representation or as a formulation.”

In this (higher) sense, ideation is the purview of the soul and (primarily) the higher lives (e.g., logoi) who (which) formulate the evolutionary plan (on (their own) relatively high levels) or represent those plans (on (their own) somewhat lower levels), such (proper) formulation and representation being an abstract exercise of the will (in the higher sense) and the highest faculties. Ideas (at that

level) are (primarily) held at a point of occult tension, being sustained by higher resources to enable consequences to be induced (the plan to be made manifest by induction). In a sense, all of the manifested universe is (in reality) merely an idea, with what is actually manifested being the representation (illusion) (reflection) of that idea. For every (true) idea, there is a multiple causal chain of manifestation (representation), as life (consciousness) on each successively lower (more concrete) level responds to the (qualified) energy conveyed on its level. Each response is, in part, a translation to some more concrete level of representation, such that each unit of life (lifewave) participates in some manner or another.

For human beings, the response (to the plan (idea)) is largely a matter of induced representation on concrete mental and (for those less able to respond mentally (who are not integrated)) astral (emotional) levels. The human being need not be (and is generally not) conscious of the fact of his or her response, but (generally) embraces the response as if the idea or feeling were his own. In fact, the idea (in this lower sense) is the individual's (largely unconscious) interpretation of the idea (in the higher sense). That interpretation is subject to all of the biases and qualifications of a person's character, temperament, values, etc., and thus is, in a sense, a person's (individual) response. Though each person's response to an idea is different, often large numbers of people can and will respond in more or less the same overall manner, according to their overall nature.

Because of the (relative) remoteness of the original idea (plan) and the large number of intermediate formulations and representations (translations) and because of (horizontal) divergence, the resulting thought-forms and feelings on human levels may not resemble the original in any way (except in the causal sense); however, since all things are interrelated, a feedback process allows integration (assimilation) of consequences and further adjustment (qualification) of the top-down process in order to bring about the intended results. This feedback is never specific, but simply qualitative.

At the levels of human mentation (and astral/etheric qualification and response/reaction) there are three basic processes: (1) direct response to some idea, induced with relatively good (clear) translation, (2) indirect response to some idea, induced with less effective translation (e.g., partially or with some

distortion), and (3) conventional ideation (in the lower sense) of formulated thinking, generally in response to some internal or external (non-archetypal) stimulation. All three processes can result in the (unfortunate) formulation of opinions (attachments) and/or (more fortunately) ideas (in the lower sense) for consideration without (relative) attachment.

† Commentary No. 854

Thinking and Feeling

If one is physically-polarized, then emotional experience is necessary in order to develop the capacities for higher experience and expression and in order to develop the adaptability and flexibility that is needed in consciousness. The process of emotional development is, initially, a rather painful one, literally, as one learns to feel (pain and pleasure), and is further painful, eventually and figuratively, as one learns to deal with one's emotions and rise above them. In so doing one first learns to think by having others' thoughts imposed, by accepting others' thoughts (passively) as one's own. And, in time, one learns to think more actively and less passively.

If one is emotionally-polarized, then the path (evolution in consciousness) does not imply further emotional experience and expression as an end in itself, but rather it implies a refinement of the emotional capacities and emotional experience and expression increasingly subordinated to mental experience and expression. For emopols, the path implies mental development through the faculty of reasoning and a lessening of the pull of the emotions. The mind must be brought into activity (dominance) in order to overcome the distractions and entanglements and glamour implied in the untempered emotions. Thus thinking supersedes (the lesser) feeling and further mental experience is needed in order to refine the mind and make it a more fitting instrument of the higher self.

The emopol generally speaks without thinking (as does the menpol where the ego is involved), but the refined menpol (properly) thinks without speaking (and speaks only with discretion). In thinking, one naturally learns, over time, to distinguish, to differentiate, to discriminate, and to judge. If one values honesty and fairness, as one should (and eventually as one must), then one also develops

an increasingly refined sense of objectivity, discernment, and discretion in all things (thoughts, feelings, and activities). One must, in order to succeed in this endeavor, learn to think for oneself.

If, on the other hand, one is mentally polarized, the path does not imply further mental experience and expression as an end in itself, but rather the path (evolution) implies intuitive development through the faculty of buddhi or non-thinking (which also conveys self-realization). And in this way, feeling (in the greater, higher sense of intuition) supersedes thinking. In realization (buddhi), one naturally grasps what is needed, without recourse to reasoning or thinking of any kind. In fact, as soon as one thinks, whatever sense of intuition may have been possible, is lost. The inpol (one who is intuitively-polarized) is one who speaks without thinking, if one speaks at all. One must, in order to succeed in this endeavor, learn to not-think. Yet, in the absence of intuition, one must (should) be reasonable.

The emopol cannot achieve any real understanding, but functions (survives) through instinct (which the educated emopol usually confuses with intuition, much as the educated thinker usually (foolishly) takes credit for ideas (thoughts) that are not his or her own). The menpol can (eventually) achieve understanding, but cannot achieve any true realization. It is only as one rises above the mind, entirely, that realization truly occurs. There are no shortcuts to realization, though the emotional aspirant may very well catch glimpses of what is to come (intuition) (as a form of encouragement). And those who over-rely on the mind are doomed to be its victim. But those who pursue refinement and integration and service, who develop their sense of values (truth and harmlessness), are destined for the higher experience. And in so doing, properly lose themselves.

Contrivance

Contrivance is defined as the act or faculty of contriving, the state of being contrived, or a thing contrived. Contriving implies deliberation toward some conscious objective. At best contrivance is a rational and reasonable process (e.g., applied to some reasonable objective), while at worst contrivance is a process of unconscious and self-deceiving fabrication (distortion of reality). All forms of manipulation and scheming, which are by definition selfishly motivated, sincerely or otherwise, fall within the range of contrivance. The true objective of the spiritual student is simply non-contrivance, meaning that “nothing comes from the ego.”

The problem of contrivance is two-fold: (1) the relatively simple effects or consequences for others, i.e., victims beyond oneself, and (2) the relatively more complex effects or consequences for the one who contrives (the one who contrives is his or her own principal victim). Contrivance is compounded by force of habit and by the broader consequences of furthering the human perception (more properly mis-perception) of world maya (glamour) (illusion). Every contrived action (behavior) (feeling) (thought) furthers the entanglement of the contriving person in maya (glamour) (illusion) and thereby further limits the freedom of the contriving person for enlightened action. Every act of contrivance (on any level) relatively and substantially undermines any attempts toward honesty and truthfulness (including realization of truth).

Contrivance involves the personality at the expense of precluding alignment with the overshadowing (indwelling) soul or higher (spiritual) self. For most people contrivance is an ordinary and routine practice and commensurate with their relative consciousness (quality). Since most people are not approaching any consideration of (or responsiveness to) the soul, the problem of contrivance is (should be) mostly a matter of ethics and responsibility, and, depending on the relative place upon the path, a matter of preclusion. However, for the spiritual student, that preclusion is the central issue. For the spiritual student, any habit or tendency toward contrivance is undermining, and must be overcome to enable realization and responsiveness to higher impression.

In a sense the personality is self-contrived. The soul on its level contrives to develop the personality in the first place, albeit that contrivance is not so deliberate as it is conforming to the karmic flow and obligation of the soul. On its level, the personality becomes more contriving as it develops, and ultimately becomes self-contrived, believing (hopelessly) in its own existence (separateness). From that point on and until this sense is fully overcome, the personality (ego) contrives to sustain the illusion in consciousness. This is inner contrivance. The outer contrivance (activities of the self-sustaining (self-centered) personality) follows from the inner, and greatly (and necessarily) compounds the difficulties of life in the lower worlds.

In a sense, the self-contrived personality and the great illusion of objective existence are simply intended for the experience of overcoming, of rising above these inherent limitations. Consequently, much in terms of capabilities and wisdom ultimately derive from the struggle and experience in the lower worlds. As the truth of contrivance (maya) (glamour) (illusion) gradually dawns (over several lifetimes) and as the student gradually unfolds the inherent potential selfness, then the student gradually becomes less and less contrived, and ultimately becomes non-contrived (embodies non-contrivance), as truth and the Way prevail.

† Commentary No. 914

Intellectual Honesty

The intellect is the rational or reasoning capacity of the mind. The intellect is necessarily superficial in every respect. It consists of the superficial levels of the concrete mind, both conscious and unconscious levels (but nonetheless superficial), and is unable to function in ways other than superficial. It has access to sense-impressions, is somewhat intelligent in its own right (but not particularly so), and operates largely independently of the waking-consciousness or focus of consciousness.

The intellect is directly related to the ego, and both are artificial entities. That artificiality is compounded by identification (of the waking-consciousness with the intellect) and by its own lack of realization of its artificiality. The intellect is therefore naturally self-absorbed and protective of its apparent existence. It

fears the truth about itself and creates protective buffers and barriers. The habits of thinking and feeling (and all other personality conditioning) all contribute to the illusion of independent existence and the (false) potency or superiority of the intellect. The intellect is able to induce and/or manipulate physiological, emotional, and mental activity in support of its (self-centered and/or egoistic) interests.

Although the intellect is a considerable and evolutionarily-intended achievement, it is intended as an effective tool within the mind, and is not an end in itself. Identification with the intellect is a natural stage through which we all pass. But if the intellect is over-developed, overly-relied-upon, or overly-identified-with, then the intellect becomes a rather formidable barrier to higher consciousness (much like over-developed, over-relied-upon, and/or overly-identified-with emotions inhibit proper mental development). A "fair" intellect is one that is trained in logic such that there is a continual awareness of distinctions between facts, assumptions, premises, conclusions, etc. A "good" intellect is one that exhibits intellectual honesty, which realizes the limitations (futility) of logical (rational) (reasonable) thinking, and which is responsive to higher impression (intuition).

The first key to progress in this regard then is intellectual honesty. Intellectual honesty is the recognition and realization of the superficial nature of the intellect and of its inherent limitations. Intellectual honesty is the means by which one can gradually overcome the inherent limitations of the mind (intellect) (ego) and pass beyond the mind to the intuitive levels of the soul. The mind that is filled with its own ideas and/or compounded by assumptions taken as facts, is a mind that is unresponsive to the truth. Thus intellectual honesty also involves intelligent discrimination, emptying the mind of its (false) notions, its habits, its mechanicalness, learning to defer judgment (conclusions) until realization can occur. Of course the intellect will naturally fabricate "realization" to compound matters (and protect itself), but with a commitment to truth one is able to gradually establish an intellectual honesty that allows one to recognize and realize the fallacies of the intellect even as they occur and/or dominate the waking-consciousness.

Intellectual honesty is not so easy to achieve. It requires dedicated persistence (to honesty) over a relatively long period of time. It requires a continual habit of

self-observation. It requires the rejection of certainty and the rejection of identification with intellect (certainty is just another form of self-delusion) (certainty is an aspect of close-mindedness). Intellectual honesty does however lead to greater things, such as greater and higher qualification and the dawning of the (spiritual) intuition.

† Commentary No. 1057

Distinctions

The world of human endeavor is a world of distinctions, of illusion of separateness and focus-on-individuality in the personal sense, of many contrasts leading ultimately to union as the lower sense of individuality is replaced by the deeper sense of humility-in-oneness. Thus while the goal is self-realization in the oneness of the God-within, the means through which this is achieved necessarily involve living in the outer world, suffering the various illusions of that world, and ultimately transcending those illusions and distinctions as union is realized.

Distinctions therefore are a means to an end and are not ends in themselves. But they are quite helpful in the process of (preparation for) self-realization. If one attempts to deny the reality of distinctions before one has realized the distinction between the Self and the not-self (and before one has transcended or passed in consciousness beyond the not-self), then that lack of distinction serves as a very effective barrier to enlightenment. One needs to understand the lesson of each distinction, and the lesson of non-distinction, without conflict (denial). Yet, ultimately, as the heart unfolds and that higher Self is embraced, distinctions are transcended altogether.

In a broader sense, evolution in consciousness is a progressive cycle of alternation between a sense of distinction and a sense of non-distinction. Recognizing distinctions is a matter of consciously understanding the field of human experience and expression, of understanding human nature, and in that understanding being able to place experience and expression into proper context. But that understanding must need be real, and not merely intellectual. For if understanding is merely intellectual, and not truly embraced through the heart, then the understanding is superficial, and one will not properly be able to act in

accord with the understanding that is (merely) presumed. But if the understanding is real, then it can be properly and effectively assimilated into quality (love-wisdom) (which, after all, is the only essence that one can actually take beyond this lower life).

If the recognizing of distinctions is made in the egoistic sense, then it is a separative process, but if the recognizing of distinctions is made in the non-egoistic sense, of understanding the role of distinctions without feeling that sense of separateness, then the contrast (of distinction) has value and, moreover, that contrast can be more effectively transcended (in real understanding). The method of denial of contrast simply does not work (it simply leaves the student at some plateau and effectively inhibits further substantive growth (which may be, however, necessary for assimilation of that which has been encountered to date)). Denying distinctions is not realization. Recognizing that distinctions hold the key to non-distinction, the esoteric student non-egoistically studies distinctions without being distracted by them, and in letting go of attachments to distinctions, transcends them.

In transcending contrast and distinctions one does not deny any lower reality, and one does not deny the distinction between higher and lower realities, but in recognizing that (relatively important but temporary) distinction, one simply passes beyond any sense of distinction between lower and higher realities, by embracing the higher rather than being absorbed in the lower. If one is absorbed in the lower, then one at best can only suffer the delusion of oneness. If one is self-realized, then there are no distinctions, and one suffers a higher, more subtle, more meaningful delusion of oneness. Yet oneness is real. And the delusion of oneness is also real.

Realism and Denial

The perennial new age notion of positive thinking to the exclusion of anything negative or ego-challenging is a mixed blessing. On the one hand there is the inherently constructive, creative character of affirmations and positive thinking. On the other hand there is often the unfortunate accompaniment (likelihood) of consciously denying the reality of things-as-they-are, leading to some increased measure of delusion (dishonesty) (inhibition of truth).

One example has to do with belief or recognition of one's ignorance. A "positive" approach might have one deny that one is ignorant, affirming rather that one is filled with all needed knowledge and understanding. In fact, we are all ignorant to some extent, but within us is an unlimited potential for experience, learning, assimilation, and growth. Better to affirm, more honestly and realistically, the existence of that potential and see it being fulfilled in practice than to deny one's ignorance. Another example has to do with belief regarding one's deficiencies or personal shortcomings. A "positive" approach might be to deny the need for self-improvement and affirm one's capacity for growth. A healthier and more honest approach would be to not deny one's deficiencies, but to view self-improvement as a healthy and continuous process (honestly facing and releasing one's weaknesses, without dwelling upon them, by replacing them with or transforming them into positive qualities). Some deny that there is any struggle in life, that by ignoring resistance and stress one somehow rises above it. That may be so, but in denying the reality of struggle (stress) (tension) one is ignoring the afforded lessons. Better to affirm that one faces all experience openly, allowing learning and growth to occur.

Denials of negatives do have some value, for people who lack self-esteem and are attached to or immersed in their own negativity. In these cases, there is some benefit in releasing the negative views and replacing them with more positive notions. But ultimately one needs to be honest and realistic in this process, for otherwise one is simply moving from one self-deluded state into another (happier but equally self-deluded state). The affirmation of one's own perfection is not so potent, simply because of the contrast between practical reality (imperfection) and higher reality (perfection in principle). In one sense it

is still creative, i.e., in denying the practical reality and affirming the higher reality one evokes force to restore equilibrium (i.e., to make the practical reality consistent with higher reality). But, if this is unrealistic, then one is left only with conflict (contradiction) of one's own making.

There is also a somewhat insidious dimension to positive thinking in this unrealistic sense, and that is that such thinking tends to strengthen the ego and the hold of the ego on the whole personality life. This may be quite valuable to someone whose personality life is weak, undeveloped, or negatively focused, but for someone whose personality life is already strong, or at least stable, it tends to strengthen that personality (ego) and undermine its responsiveness to higher impression. By feeding the personality strength (ego), one becomes satisfied at that level, effectively preventing any growth that would come at the expense of the hold of the ego on the personality life (of course one can still experience and express at that level, and learn substantially, but it is ultimately a rather limiting experience).

If one suffers the delusion that one is perfect in practice, then one hinders the sense of humility that is ultimately required. That humility need not be in any sense negative, just realistic and life-affirming. True humility brings great joy and weakens the hold of the ego.

† Commentary No. 1066

The Emotional Mind

While the emotions on their level and the intellect on its level are nominally independent, the personality consciousness of the human being links these two (internal) functions together through the various extant chakras. Although the various planes of consciousness are interpenetrating, the chakras are the principal means of energy transference between levels. Thus in the human being (and in any being able to function on both levels simultaneously), emotions can induce or affect the intellectual activity and thoughts can induce or affect emotional responses.

For the emotionally-polarized person (emopol), the link between emotions and thinking is reasonably strong and the thinking processes are very much

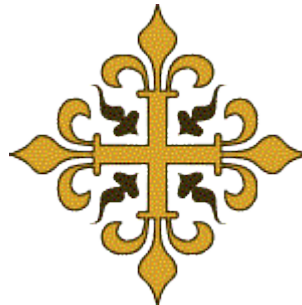
constrained thereby. If the student is emotionally-polarized and functioning intellectually, then the intellectual activity will be largely affected by the emotions and vice versa. Even if the intellectual activity is "strong" the emotions will still play a substantial role and be affected in turn by any intellectual activity. For the emopol, the intellect may be developed but is, by definition, heavily biased by the emotions and therefore generally unable to function (wholly) objectively.

In practice, until the student is mentally-polarized, thinking is relatively superficial, lacking generally in clarity and objectivity, and very much reliant on mass thought-forms for appropriation and expression. Thus emopols are not usually able to think very clearly for themselves and their thoughts are primarily drawn from whatever trends and habits they have been exposed to. The range of ideas available are rather limited and the whole thinking process tends to be dominated by previously acquired automatic or mechanical correlations (habits). On the other hand, emopols are generally much better able to sense feelings and respond with feeling than menpols, except that "responsiveness" is generally a matter of conditioned reactivity. Wherever the "thinking" is defensive and/or reactive (or mechanical or trendy), then that indicates that the person is generally (likely to be) emotionally-polarized. During the phase of emotional polarization, the ego is substantially developed and plays a major role in emotional and mental experience. And that experience will be necessarily biased by the emotional nature.

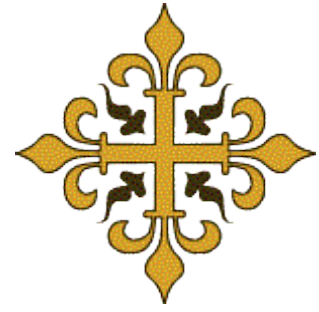
But if the student is mentally-polarized then there will likely be only a relatively modest bias by virtue of feelings. The menpol is one who has integrated the personality and for whom the personality nature as an integrated whole dominates, so that neither the emotions nor the intellect will dominate (except as the intellect is synonymous with the integrated personality nature). The ego may still dominate, but at least there is in the menpol the possibility (inevitability) of tempering and ultimately transcending the ego.

On the other hand, even for the menpol, thinking is generally superficial; but the menpol has a much broader dynamic range of thinking than the emopol (just as the emopol has a much broader dynamic range of feeling). And the menpol is generally much better able to think "independently" of the emotions but remains conditioned in other ways. The objective, however, is for the spiritual student

to become mentally-polarized with sufficient heart-unfoldment to enable the re-polarization of consciousness onto intuitive (buddhic) levels. Only at the intuitive level is the student able to stand free of the ego and experience the full and meaningful dynamic range of both feeling and thinking without the impediments and conditioning of the (otherwise substantially tempered) lower nature.



Section 5.322



Aspects of Thinking 2

- It is essential for the spiritual student to understand how the mind works and how to overcome the various biases and conditioning.

Baconian Prejudice

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

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

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

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

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

† Commentary No. 1093

Projection

One of the various hindrances to realization (growth in consciousness) is the tendency of the personality to project itself and its values into the communication process and into the perception process. Projection into communication hinders understanding. Projection into perception hinders understanding even more substantially.

Projection into communication is generally a matter of unconscious presumption (bias). Many people tend to unconsciously presume that another person has the same experience and understanding as their own, so they tend to further

presume that a person understands when indeed the experience and understanding may be substantially different. But in (unconsciously) presuming understanding, the lack of understanding is compounded. Similarly, many people tend to generalize from their own experience and project it, unconsciously, onto others. Another aspect (difficulty) is that many people presume, consciously or otherwise, that their own understanding of something is "correct" and/or that the same understanding should be obvious to others.

The solution to this particular problem is to consciously appreciate the diversity of experience and values that various people have, to accept as fact, and without judging, that other people have different experience and different consciousness and therefore tend to understand in different ways. In respecting other people and their backgrounds, one can be more objective in communication and through honest feedback discern the extent to which there is a similar understanding. In not presuming that one's own understanding is necessarily correct, one can learn through experience with other people and their respective understanding. In the final analysis, it is not what a person learns or understands and assimilates that matters, it is the collective understanding based upon diverse experience within each race (culture) (period). Or in other words, each (diverse) experience contributes to the collective consciousness. That collective (unconscious) consciousness (understanding) is available, indirectly and in varying degrees and on various levels (e.g., through instinct, intellect, and intuition), to everyone.

Projection into perception is a relatively more subtle, relatively more complicated, and relatively more serious problem. Many people tend to unconsciously interpret sense impressions in accordance with their own experience, disposition, values, etc. People tend to see what they want to see and hear what they want to hear. This lack of objectivity compounds and greatly hinders the process of perception and the process of assimilation of information received through perception. Through proper training and the discipline of spiritual practice, one gradually tempers these tendencies (biases) and perception becomes more objective. One learns to be detached from the senses, merely observing (outer) impressions and relying more on inner senses (intuition) for understanding.

It is all a matter of adherence to truth. If the student looks for the truth, without expectations or other forms of bias, then the student is able to perceive the truth to the extent that he or she is capable. If assumptions are not made, or if in making assumptions there is a fully conscious realization of the fact of making assumptions and what they are, the perception becomes a more objective process. If beliefs are not also opinions, i.e., if one is not attached to one's conditioning (and if one is not dependent on the intellect), then it is possible to perceive and understand and assimilate matters more clearly. Likewise communication.

† Commentary No. 1138

Equivalence

Though it is relatively easy for the objective mind to see distinctions within the diverse field of manifestation, the more fundamental basis for manifestation, and the inherent potency of comprehending manifestation is found in equivalence. Equivalence is defined as the state or property of being equal in force, amount, or value, alike in significance, being virtually identical, especially in effect or function. Equivalence in the more metaphysical sense recognizes the sameness of various aspects or dimensions of manifestation. There are different levels of equivalence, but all rely on the seven rays (or some comparable and equivalent perspective) and the various relationships between the rays (or components). In equivalence, the same energy is perceived in different ways, yet through appreciation of equivalence there is revealed additional insight concerning that energy.

At the level of one of the seven rays, the nature of the ray is revealed through its energy and quality of energy. Through the auspices of the first ray, for example, purpose and life and will and power and the monad are all equivalent. Through the second ray love and wisdom and consciousness and energy and the soul are all equivalent. And through the third ray light and matter and the personality are all equivalent. In a sense, life is power. Each reveals the other. In another sense, each is merely an aspect of something that each represents. If one touches love then one also touches wisdom and consciousness. One cannot touch an aspect of something without touching all aspects of that something to some extent.

At the level of ray relationships, all of the rays in a given relationship are equivalent. The odd-numbered rays reveal each other. The even-numbered rays likewise. Each pair of reflected rays (1:7) (2:6) (3:5) likewise. The odd-numbered rays reveal the head-nature of manifestation. The even-numbered rays reveal the heart-nature of manifestation. Each pair of reflected rays reveals relationship between the higher and lower aspects, between the essence and its manifestation. Yet each is equivalent. In touching the lower one is also touching the higher (to some extent). Each provides a link to the other. The objective mind may dwell in the realm of distinctions between all of these things, but the subjective mind sees the more essential nature (equivalence). For example, in addition to appreciating the nature of love and the nature of wisdom, the student can appreciate that love-wisdom is an essential equivalence having deeper and broader dimension than either love or wisdom perceived separately. Love-wisdom seen in equivalence rather than combination reveals the underlying and overshadowing soul (Christ consciousness).

At another level all of the rays are equivalent. In touching one, in this higher sense, the student touches them all. The personality ray becomes a means of approaching the soul. The soul ray becomes a means of touching the monad. Any ray becomes a means of touching the whole. It is all a matter of perspective. A third ray personality, for example, who sees himself (herself) as an individuality is apparently isolated and substantially limited in consciousness, but a third ray personality who sees all rays within himself (herself) is not only not apparently isolated in consciousness but is much more definitely linked to all the energies of the seven rays.

So, the real value of equivalence is two-fold, namely (1) energetically, it provides a means of embracing the whole from any part and (2) practically, in consideration of merely apparently distinctly different aspects seen in equivalence, the higher truth of something can be revealed.

The Cultivation of Bias

Bias is ultimately a factor that the spiritual student must transcend in order to realistically embrace truth. Because bias is a distortion of perception that leads to limitation in understanding. But as that factor is gradually overcome, one must first overcome the negative bias, and one method that is particularly effective in qualifying the mass consciousness is the cultivation of a more positive bias. Then, eventually, one must overcome positive bias.

The atmosphere is substantially influenced by the character and quality of behavior, feeling, and thinking. And lives are as affected by the atmosphere created through thinking and feeling as much as by behavior. The student is encouraged to consciously cultivate positive-but-realistic thinking. Many of the events taking place in the world influence individual and group thinking. People and the media tend to focus on the unusual and particularly on the negative side of reported experience. This negative focus fosters additional negative focus and compounds the process of restoration of balance. Focusing on positive experiences, instead, encourages more positive experience. The various negative and positive thought-forms that linger on subtle levels are all stimulated and sustained by mass thinking and feeling. People who are passive (conditioned) (as most people are) are generally affected by these thought-forms. Thus considerable motive exists for cultivation and expression of generally positive (but honest and realistic) bias.

Despite the attention being given to some of the more negative aspects of current events, there is some growing publicity for the more positive side. Economic interdependence among groups and nations is leading toward world goodwill and brotherhood. Cultural activities are flourishing, being available to more and larger segments of the world population. Organizations for the alleviation of human suffering abound. Governments are showing concern for their disadvantaged populations and in some instances for those of other nations. Organizations that provide assistance in times of trouble, from the personal to the international level, are plentiful. At all levels it is apparent that man's humanity to man exceeds man's inhumanity to man. Many heads of state and general populations are becoming more sensitive to the enormity of

war. In many cases, nationalism is gradually being transformed into humanitarianism and world brotherhood.

Many metaphysical groups encourage the realization that thoughts are really quite significant factors in human behavior. Even though thoughts eventually disseminate and dissolve, they can have appreciable lifetimes. One's mental outlook upon the events in one's life has a great deal to do with one's health, peace, and happiness. It would seem just as easy to be biased towards a we've-never-had-it-so-good frame of mind as it is towards a civilization-is-going-to-pieces bias. The habit of positive thinking is a most simple deed that one can do for oneself and for the world with very little effort. As one looks for the good in everyone one meets and in the events of this life, one finds that good; and as one finds the good one is also strengthening that quality and reinforcing the positive side of life.

Thus one is encouraged to cultivate a positive bias. And eventually, that bias results in considerable and constructive (progressive) (evolutionary) changes in civilization (culture) (human attitudes and behavior). Eventually, in order to embrace truth and reality, one must transcend bias altogether, and in so doing, one contributes even more, albeit more subjectively.

† Commentary No. 1214

Thinking Clearly

There are three fundamental objectives in concrete mental development, the first being the ability to think clearly, the second being the ability to discern truth, and the third being the ability to respond intelligently to higher impression (intuition). Unfortunately most people, and most spiritual students, (unconsciously and incorrectly) presume that they are thinking clearly, when in practice, virtually all thinking is substantially biased in some way or another.

There is emotional bias (kama manas) where the thought processes are unduly and largely unconsciously distorted or biased by emotional feelings (including desire). Most people think in accordance with their desires, they think what they want to think, without realizing that this compromises the clarity of

thinking that might otherwise be possible. Wherever there is personal interest in something, the thinking in that regard is necessarily distorted by that personal interest. There is also a concrete mental bias based in logic and/or personal interest. Logical thinking is generally merely the illusion of logical thinking, as a person's logic is often (generally) distorted by personal interest. Wanting to believe something necessarily biases the way the mind processes information, so that information that supports the intended belief is more acceptable than information that does not support the belief. And there are more subtle biases in thinking due to the presence of ego.

Thus virtually all thinking is conditioned (mechanical), biased in some way, and filtered by the ego. So. The question then is how to think clearly. The answer is the elimination of bias, the elimination of conditioning factors, and the elimination of the ego in thinking. The process begins with self-observation and honesty. One must strive to be as honest as possible in every regard, else one will not be able to see the bias and conditioning and filtering that affects thinking. The process includes being as objective as one can be, actually cultivating objectivity (which is really just an extension of being honest). Logic has value only to the extent that one is honest and objective and to the extent that one understands the limitations of logic (the existence of assumptions, the tentative nature of all conclusions).

But the real key to thinking clearly lies in overcoming the propensity for having beliefs and opinions. What a person believes constitutes a formidable barrier to the truth of something. When beliefs become opinions (attachments) the problem gets substantially worse. The whole objective of thinking clearly is apprehension of truth and reality. When one has beliefs (opinions) (attachments) (biases) (conditioning) they form barriers to further discernment of truth. There are many beliefs that most people consider self-evident (and therefore do not question) which in fact, while more or less true and valid, nonetheless inhibit, impede, or preclude further realization.

Obviously if a belief is false then that belief is a barrier, but even if a belief is (generally) true, it inhibits the person from seeing (perceiving) (realizing) what else might also be true about something. The problem is that the mind tends to be exclusive in its thinking rather than inclusive. If a person believes that an object has certain attributes or characteristics, then the person (mind) is

inhibited from realizing that the same object might appear otherwise to someone else. People tend to see some truth without seeing the whole truth. There are many (valid) perspectives. The spiritual student needs to understand this and begin to practice inclusiveness in thinking. Being open-minded and inclusive in thinking is a major step forward.

† Commentary No. 1433

Dichotomy

Dichotomy is the division or process of (artificially) dividing something into two apparently mutually exclusive or contradictory or distinctive groups, the separation of a class into two (or more) subclasses, one of which has and the other of which has not some quality or characteristic. In the proper sense, dichotomy is binary. In the less proper, more general sense, it is multi-valued. Dichotomies can be natural or unnatural (less natural). An example is humanity as a class, where human beings can be categorized or sub-classed as being either male or female. Another example is characterizing people as either cognitive or affective. Dichotomy is a reflection and indication of binary or distinctive thinking and is inherently separative. Some dichotomies are valid or legitimate, in some sense or another, others are not so. Most dichotomies are merely apparent and misleading.

The problem with dichotomy is that almost everything is integral. Men have a within themselves a feminine nature, women have a masculine side. The soul is not of one sex or the other, the soul is sexless and embraces both sexes as components. The human being in incarnation may be physically male or female, but that simply means that the "other" side to one's nature is not as readily apparent as the form itself. The relatively unevolved human being in incarnation is indeed mostly one or the other, but the relatively evolved person has developed both dimensions (male and female) and is able to function essentially and effectively with all the faculties and higher characteristics. To identify with being male or being female is simply to miss the truth about oneself. Of course there is a practical dimension to being of one sexual orientation or another, but the truth is greater than the dichotomy.

Dichotomies usually arise from the delusion of separation, of being in the lower world and not being aware of or in touch with the higher nature. Thus there is an internal world and an external world, a higher world and a lower world, all of which is true, to some extent, but all of which is also somewhat misleading. Dichotomies arise from apparent distinctions, even where most of these distinctions are not significant (i.e., age, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, etc.). These distinctions provide for breadth (diversity) of experience and expression, but in the final analysis these (all) distinctions are necessarily transcended (in unity) (unity is a greater truth than diversity).

In the more general sense, dichotomy (dichotomization) (divergence) (separation) (subdivision) (diversity) (diversification) (differentiation) (discrimination) is a reflection and consequence of manifestation, of the sending forth of life (consciousness) (form) into matter. The ebb and flow of manifestation is first one of sending forth and increasing diversification in space and time, for experience and expression (evolution in consciousness), through various cycles (aeons) (illusion), followed by a process of integration and overall assimilation as the life (consciousness) returns to the source (embracing truth). Of course there are many imitative-correlative cycles within cycles, but there is throughout manifestation a basic dichotomy of evolutionary force (the pull of matter (independence, separateness, diversity) and the pull of spirit (integration, inclusiveness, unity).

With regard to dichotomy, the goal of the spiritual student is to think and feel and act inclusively, not based upon distinctions or separative thinking or feeling. Distinctions may offer some insights, but should not be the basis for separation-in-consciousness.

Thinking and Violence

Many people realize the futility and inherent harmfulness and separateness of violence. Violence is one of the most intense and intensive of causes, leading inevitably to intense and intensive consequences (karma). And those consequences are more often than not also a matter of violence in some way and on some level.

But few people appreciate that physical violence is related to what one thinks and how one feels and how one speaks, and that thinking and feeling and speaking "violence" or hostility are also quite harmful, both to the thinker-feeler-speaker and to the object of one's thoughts and feelings and speech. Violence on any level is an outcome or expression of a number of factors, but mostly a matter of relative coarseness. Coarse people, those having relatively coarse consciousness, are simply more prone to engage in violent behavior, feelings, and thoughts. Unfortunate words are a violent projection of etheric energy. All of the negative emotions contribute to the projection of violent energy. And every manner of criticism or judgment of people is also a violent expression, whether or not it is actually verbalized.

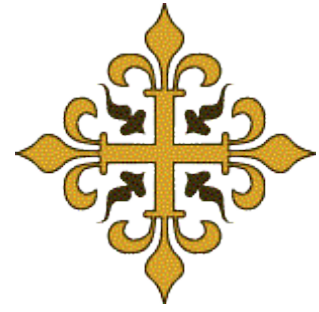
To bully or tease or make fun of someone, privately or publicly, verbally or mentally, is to hurt someone. To criticize or judge someone, mentally or verbally, is to hurt someone. The victim may not consciously feel the pain or harm, but the damage is there. And the one who bullies or teases or criticizes and judges is nonetheless responsible and ultimately accountable. To feel hostility toward someone, likewise. The facade of pleasantness cannot hide one's true feelings. For how one feels is a projection of energy on subtle levels, as one feels and thinks so are energies projected that impact upon their object. So most of the realm of violence is not actually physical, but is mostly etheric, astral, and concrete mental. One's attitude toward someone constitutes an energy relationship. Thus the spiritual student is encouraged (urged) (trained) to soften the thinking and feeling, to look for the good in all and not dwell upon that which may not be so good. To not ever criticize or judge others, but simply accept and respect people as they are and not as one might wish.

But every projection of energy, every thought, every feeling, every word, every attitude, every action, every violence on every level, must inevitably return to the source, and the one who thinks or feels or speaks separatively must necessarily incur the assault (pain and suffering) of that return. The return of violent energy is cumulative in the sense that what one faces at any given time may come from any time in one's past, and through various means such as accidents, injuries, and illness. But the spiritual student is encouraged and urged and trained not only to (generally) avoid unfortunate projections, but to recall any that are inadvertently or otherwise released. The result is more intense than "normal" but facilitates the ability of the student to grow and learn and serve more effectively (through freedom).

The lesson may not be readily apparent in the consequences, but the lesson is there, and is assimilated eventually at some level or another. To assimilate consciously and deliberately is most effective. Otherwise, through pain and suffering one learns ultimately to be gentle in all things. To live harmlessly. To act and speak and think and feel constructively and harmoniously. To fully realize the oneness of all lives and that to injure anyone (and life) is to injure oneself, literally and figuratively. One must therefore live gently, in peace and harmony with nature and in peace and harmony with one's fellows.



Section 5.323



Belief Systems

- To a not inconsiderable extent a person is not merely how he or she thinks, but also what he or she embraces in terms of beliefs and corresponding personal values. In growth there is a natural struggle between old beliefs and old values and new beliefs and new values. As a person grows, beliefs and values tend to change, as they reflect growth in understanding.

The Basis of Belief

The human lifeform is somewhat unique in this planetary scheme in the sense that of all the (few) self-conscious species, only the human being has not achieved self-realization and must therefore depend on lesser means of cognition. Lesser species depend on instinct and other forms of unconscious direction, while greater (and some parallel) species depend on more direct realization. But for the human being there must be some recourse to believing, either through some sense of faith, reasoning, and/or proper intuition.

Because of the complications of perception and reasoning, the problem of illusion (glamour) (maya), and the problem of proof (i.e., that nothing is provable) (i.e., that every belief however compelling or convincing cannot be proven one to another but only to oneself), every human being must necessarily develop a personal (relatively unique) body of beliefs, conscious and unconscious, that tend to influence the human activity (motivation, thinking, feeling, action). Though specific beliefs may be significant in themselves, the basis of belief (for any particular individual) is essentially more significant, because the basis determines to some extent the quality and relative credibility of the belief system and indicates the next stage of evolutionary development and qualification.

For all practical purposes, physically polarized people have no significant basis of belief; they still act largely on an instinctive basis and are largely dominated by external forces. Emotionally polarized people depend to some extent on faith and to some extent on reasoning (depending on mental development) as a basis for belief and are generally largely influenced by external forces (e.g., mass consciousness and the beliefs inherent therein) (which are partially emotionally based and partially mentally based). Mentally polarized people depend primarily on reasoning as a basis of belief and are generally somewhat influenced by mass consciousness (world opinion) (prevailing illusion). Intuitively polarized people depend primarily on the proper (spiritual) intuition as a basis for belief, but normally also to some extent upon qualified reasoning, and are largely free from external influences.

Most people are somewhere between an emotional polarization and a mental polarization and subject to faith and reasoning, while some (few) are somewhere between a mental polarization and an intuitive polarization, and subject to reasoning and intuition. For each basis (faith, reasoning, intuition) (kama, kama-manas, manas, manas-buddhi, and buddhi) there are problems (limitations) that determine the effectiveness of the basis for any individual belief system. These problems include the degree or extent of knowledge and understanding implied (and the nature of knowledge (i.e., one cannot really know anything, one can only believe, through some basis)), the degree or extent to which that knowledge is first-hand (and the degree of passivity implied), the relative strength of the belief (e.g., being rigidly held, moderately held, or loosely (tentatively) held (and the stability thereof)) and the degree of adaptability, consistency, broadness, relativity, and coherence (objectivity (subjectivity)), and the degree of truth (reality) embraced.

Due to the relative nature of truth and reality, one of the most important considerations is the potential of an individual (given his basis of belief and attributes thereof) to progress both his beliefs and his belief basis. It is only as one's beliefs are allowed to broaden (become generalized) (become more inclusive) and as one becomes more and more devoted to (and responsive to) truth that a person can truly deepen and grow.

† Commentary No. 442

Faith and Reasoning

Those who are unable to reason clearly for themselves are necessarily dependent on faith as a basis of belief. In a sense, faith is superior to reasoning since it is so much less complicated by ego and the self-deception potential of the ego, but in most respects, faith is less satisfactory than reasoning and must ultimately be sacrificed (as reasoning must in its turn be sacrificed in favor of buddhi and self-realization).

Faith implies belief in things for which there is no proof (so in a sense even reasoning and intuition imply some faith, and the overwhelming devotion to God necessary to self-realization is a faith based upon higher, inner guidance,

but never validated by proof in any sense other than personal), or confidence “even where there is no evidence of proof.”

Where faith is based on instinct or feelings (kama) it is generally sufficient for one who is physically or emotionally polarized but nonetheless relatively blind compared to reasoning. Faith is typically a recourse to external forces, unconsciously in the sense of the mass-consciousness (world glamour), more consciously in the sense of acceptance of beliefs (tenets) (truth) imposed or asserted by some supposed external authority.

The problem of faith is, therefore, largely the problem of an inability to think for oneself and arrive at reasonable conclusions (beliefs). Recourse to external authorities may be fine for one otherwise unable to reason and evaluate concepts, ideas, principles, etc. on their own merits, but is wholly unsatisfactory for the spiritual student (in which case the basis of belief is as important or more so than what is actually believed). There are no external authorities; the only acceptable authority is the God-within, necessarily the soul, its quality, and the self-realization implied therein. External sources may provide useful information, but simple acceptance based upon some supposed credibility is unwarranted. What is warranted is a careful consideration of all experience and all inputs, evaluated in light of inner wisdom (at best) or at least qualified reasoning. Faith based upon kama or kama-manas is one thing (inadequate for the spiritual student); faith (knowledge) (understanding) based upon manas or manas-buddhi is another thing, for such faith (born of reason and/or proper intuition) is far more likely to be closer to truth (reality) and far more likely to help in personality development and progression (the evolution of consciousness) than the faith based upon external means.

Reasoning (manas) has its own problems and albeit superior to faith (kama) in many respects, reasoning is still not entirely sufficient for the spiritual (esoteric) student. Proper reasoning depends on the quality, character, discipline, experience, and training of the mind (i.e., the objective and subjective (concrete and abstract) mental abilities). Reasoning can be heavily biased or prejudiced by feelings (kama) (personal energy). Reasoning is generally subject to the intentions of the ego, whether or not consciously recognized. The ego can (and will tend to) dominate the reasoning processes (logic, correlation, assessment, etc.) to result in what it (the ego) wants to obtain (i.e., a person believes what he

wants to, regardless of evidence to the contrary). The ego, like the astral body, seeks to sustain its own level of domination (self-justification). One can improve the reasoning process (i.e., improve the objectivity and impartiality) only by purifying and qualifying and training the entire (integrated) personality, developing an impersonal approach to the consideration of all experience and developing an (almost) overwhelming love of truth and a willingness to adhere to the truth thus perceived.

† Commentary No. 443

Reasoning and Intuition

While the problem of reasoning for the emotionally polarized is the degree and extent of the bias due to kama (desire) (astral vulnerability), the problem of reasoning for the mentally polarized is the degree and extent to which the mind (ego) is allowed to exert its independence (domination). Though potentially a tremendous instrument of experience, the mind is inherently self-deceptive in its natural (undisciplined and unqualified) state. Reasoning is to some extent a necessary basis of belief for most spiritual students; the mind (mental abilities) can be improved with discipline, qualification, and training, but there are some basic limitations (e.g., the material or separative nature) that are virtually impossible to overcome completely.

Therefore the recourse of the spiritual student is to gradually develop the spiritual intuition (buddhi) in order to provide a basis of self-realization and validation of truth. Unfortunately (in the superficial sense, fortunately in the sense of challenge, difficulties, and potential for progress), no truth is absolute in the practical or operational sense and no means of testing for truth is absolute or infallible. But with the proper development of the spiritual intuition (through purification, integration, and elevation of the waking-consciousness), it is possible to irradiate the mind such that a deeper sense of knowledge and understanding results.

One of the necessary ingredients for effective buddhi-manas is a properly and well-developed sense of discernment, for every mental impression must properly be tested, challenged, and weighed according to the degree of alignment (of personality and soul) achieved and the corresponding degree of impersonality

(quality of consciousness) embraced. Without an integrated (purified) (aligned) personality, even well-developed discernment is insufficient. Besides discernment, impersonality is (absolutely) essential, for the presence of personal energy will invariably distort any impression of (from) higher consciousness. The potential for self-deception is considerable, particularly where the student lacks impersonality and a highly objective sense of discernment.

While reasoning is generally considered an objective process, and intuition a more subjective one, the proper (qualified) alignment results in highly objective impressions (necessarily impersonal or otherwise highly suspect) (e.g., intuitional telepathy is inherently objective, even though subjective energies are encountered and abstract concepts embraced). The student must always be on guard for personal energy (desire) (bias) (distortion thereto) and egoic deception (the mind masquerading as the intuition). The student must also discern between astral impressions, mental impressions, and intuitive impressions (or at least be able to discern sufficiently the quality of every impression). Many people wrongly attribute feelings (astral or emotional impressions) to the intuition thereby gaining false confidence (credence).

In the final analysis, whether by qualified reasoning or intuition, all impressions and conclusions must be considered tentative in all respects. To the extent that they are discerned as qualified they can be considered less tentative, but the nature of the path (evolution) is such that tentativeness and relativity are necessary ingredients. There are effectively no absolutes. One can have reasonable confidence but not infallibility. With self-realization comes considerable ability (e.g., higher forms of discernment and correlative insight), but the self-realized student still remains necessarily the final arbiter of his basis of belief and beliefs thereof.

The Old and the New

The underlying force of evolution in consciousness is quite progressive. It urges growth and deepening through experience and expression, ever onward and upward. But growth is based on assimilation, and how a person approaches assimilation, how a person believes, what a person wants, determines the effectiveness of that assimilation and therefore the effectiveness of growth.

In this process of growth there is a natural struggle between old beliefs and old values and new beliefs and new values. As one grows, old beliefs and old values get challenged by new, broader experience, and new beliefs and new values enter the picture. But this does not mean that all old beliefs and old values are wrong, or that all new beliefs and new values are right. There also needs to be some discrimination, some process of valuation in which the value of a belief or value, and the context of a belief or value, is placed into perspective. More properly, (genuine) new beliefs are more inclusive and allow for the context of old beliefs (and allow those old beliefs that continue to be relevant to continue as part of the belief system).

Much of what is progressive thinking is just a refinement of previously poorly-understood principles. For example, in theosophy there is a basis of knowledge pertaining to root races that has been misunderstood by many to infer racial superiority for the so-called "advanced" races or "advanced" natures. As the issue is more properly understood, there is not (properly) a rejection of the principle of root races, but a refinement of understanding and placing the role and contribution of each race into some broader perspective. Other teachings (and values) depend very much on the place of consciousness of the student, e.g., some students need teachers, others are better able to learn and grow without relying on external authorities. Some students are in the ego-building stage and others are in the ego-transcending stage.

But there is also an inherent struggle of ego and the desire of a person and how that desire affects the belief system and determines how a person relates to experience and opportunities. Thus many people who are otherwise metaphysically-minded and/or spiritually-oriented believe things because those

beliefs support what they want to believe rather than what they need to believe in order to go beyond their current stage. Sometimes people will reject “old” teachings because the old teachings do not allow them to fully rationalize or justify what they want (e.g., the ego will naturally rationalize and justify anything that it needs to maintain control, and feeling threatened by spiritual practice (discipline) will naturally invent “new” values that allow a person to sustain the desired self-indulgence).

Teachings (knowledge) (principles) (understanding) (values) serve a purpose. Some teachings endure for the entire period of human evolution (e.g., the role and value of “love”) while other teachings serve for a while and are then overtaken in significance as a person can understand a broader context (e.g., authoritarian religion is replaced by non-authoritarian (self-centered) “religion” which is subsequently replaced by genuine inner experience). There are no really “new” teachings, but only some that seem new. New teachings may be genuine (progressive) (encouraging evolution in consciousness) or they may be simply whatever is needed to rationalize and justify one’s desires (which is counter-evolutionary and inertial even while appearing to be “progressive”). Ignoring claims of external authority, the truly progressive student learns to discern truth for himself (herself), and beliefs and values are embraced according to their actual value in consciousness and context.

† Commentary No. 1239

Mainstream Thinking

In every human culture there is a mainstream of thinking and values that constitutes the prevailing sentiment of the majority of the people. In some cultures mainstream thinking also embraces diversity and some measure of tolerance, while in other cultures mainstream thinking is relatively non-dynamic (static) and intolerant of other perspectives or values.

Mainstream thinking is simply what most people think or believe, and mainstream values are simply those values that most people embrace, consciously or unconsciously. The mainstream is a reflection or indication of the relative (collective) consciousness, and what is considered mainstream (hopefully) grows (rather gradually) as the majority of people progress through

experience and expression. A healthy mainstream allows for harmonious (respectful) diversity in thinking and values, for beliefs and practices and values to be (hopefully gently) questioned, so that progress can be attained more readily. But in most cases that progress occurs very slowly and largely unconsciously. But collective thinking does change (progress) and collective (common) values likewise.

For example, there was a time in modern western culture when mainstream thinking fully embraced smoking and uninhibited drinking (alcohol) and eating of flesh foods (meat-fish-fowl). Gradually the mainstream has developed to the point where smoking is discouraged and drinking is somewhat tempered. Vegetarians were in the progressive fringe but are now closer to the mainstream, being perceived by the majority more tolerantly. Eventually the mainstream will include non-smoking, non-drinking, vegetarian values. These changes occur as more and more people realize for themselves the respective dangers and values. But it is necessarily a gradual process and one that cannot be (effectively) imposed.

Thus within or about the mainstream there are inevitably (and necessarily) two fringes, a progressive fringe and a regressive fringe. The regressive fringe represents attachment to (older mainstream) beliefs and values such that there is some (considerable) inertia, some not inconsiderable resistance to change. The value of the regressive fringe is twofold: it allows people who need to the time they need to assimilate the lessons of those (older mainstream) beliefs and values, and it balances the otherwise unrestrained progressive fringe and tends to prevent that fringe element from going too far too fast. Of course a mature (reasonable) (balanced) mainstream also serves that purpose. Thus progress tends to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

But mainstream thinking is not necessarily an improvement in beliefs and values, and so the regressive fringe may also represent some very meaningful beliefs and values that the majority will eventually return to, as appropriate. And, similarly, the progressive fringe does not generally or necessarily represent the intended evolutionary frontier. In general, the progressive fringe represents a stimulation in "new" thinking without the requisite maturity to assimilate what it really means in some broader context. Thus the real pioneers are not so much in the progressive fringe as they are in the moderate realm between the

mainstream and that progressive fringe. While real pioneers are somewhat non-conforming, the real pioneers are not those who are emotionally embracing changes that they do not really understand, promoting their newfound causes and glammers, but those who encourage progress in more subtle ways, without causing fundamental (external) conflicts between value systems, but through gradual changes.

† Commentary No. 1240

Cults

Fringe thinking is very much a matter of perspective. Some "fringe" thinking is actually quite healthy, while some is decidedly not so. People on the fringe may not perceive themselves as being on the fringe. People who join "cults" generally believe that they are doing the right thing and that the majority of people (i.e., those in the mainstream) are misguided. Sometimes those in the mainstream are indeed misguided; more often, those on the fringes of society are. But some on the fringes are actually very insightful. And some so-called cults can be quite constructive.

The problem is that "cults" covers such a broad spectrum of unconventional thinking, that it is not really fair to use the term prejudicially. Some "cults" are simply minor (incremental) progressions beyond the conventional and mainstream, while others are extreme and dangerous in their thinking and practices. Of course what is perceived to be "dangerous" and "extreme" is also a matter of perspective. People in the mainstream tend to be (feel) threatened by anyone who is unconventional, who embraces "fringe" values. But many of these "fringe" groups have some value, in encouraging progress. And yet many are regressive and many are progressive, in unhealthy ways.

What really matters are the ethics of the various "cult" practices. Those groups who aggressively promote themselves, who aggressively recruit, who intimidate or brainwash or impose ideas, who substantively (non-harmoniously, non-progressively) separate themselves from the mainstream, and/or who wield fear or emotion as weapons, are generally unhealthy and potentially dangerous. And yet those who are victimized by these groups (cults) are sufficiently immature in their thinking, sufficiently vulnerable (not integrated as personalities), that they

are naturally attracted to the fringe elements. But other cults, who do not embrace these (unethical, unhealthy) practices, are generally harmless (indeed, may actually be progressive in some sense). But many people in the mainstream are unable to discern the substantive differences between such (fringe) groups, and may label anything unconventional as dangerous. This is a regressive practice but contributes nonetheless to the overall dynamic.

The really valuable "fringe" groups are simply those who encourage honesty in thinking and practice, who allow, indeed encourage, people to question the mainstream values and determine for themselves what is to be valued, without any form of imposition, without coercion or promotion. Healthy "cults" are based on freedom, and allow people to come and go, allow people to believe what they wish, and allow people to progress in their own time and in their own way. Healthy "cults" do not present or impose the "truth" but simply encourage self-discovery. Healthy thinking and healthy practice is based on honesty and harmlessness, with oneself and with others.

One of the keys to resolution (progress) (understanding) is open-mindedness. Open-mindedness allows for the possibility that some "fringe" beliefs and practices may be true and may have value. Reasonableness implies that if a person has one "fantastic" belief, that does not mean that all that person's unconventional beliefs are fantastic, that some fringe beliefs are indeed without basis in truth, while others are, to some large or small extent, relatively true. Evolution in collective consciousness implies that "new" ideas should be presented in non-threatening ways, allowing people to consider the merits (consciously or unconsciously), allowing people to adapt to the new insights, gradually and comfortably.

The Occult Basis of Beliefs 1

One might wonder how various “fringe” (minority) (non-mainstream) (unconventional) beliefs become so convincing for those who embrace them. A person generally believes something that is self-evident or reinforced through culture, that is, substantiated by the senses, through experience, observation, education, conditioning, etc. Beyond that, a person generally believes something that is either appealing or reasonable or both, through wanting something to be true or by rationalizing its truth, particularly if there are (respected) others who embrace that belief. Beyond that, even, a person believes something because it can be discerned as true, or relatively true, through (enlightened) intuition.

But there is also a psychic or occult basis for beliefs. When a person believes something, that “belief” is actually created on non-physical levels, i.e., in substance on the astral (emotional) and concrete mental planes. If it is a strong belief, with emotional attachment or strong rationalization, then it tends to persist, otherwise it will gradually decay and eventually dissolve. If others believe the same thing or similarly, then that “belief” is reinforced in its psychic basis. Any such “belief” is then available to someone who is susceptible (either non-thinking or thinking along similar lines). In other words, there is a resonance.

This is also the way that paranoia works. Fear strengthens itself through attraction of resonant substance from (mainly) astral and (to some (lesser) extent) concrete mental levels. Whenever a thought-form (belief) is vitalized by emotion (e.g., fear) and/or reinforced through some collective embrace (larger numbers of people), then people who are susceptible to that “energy” are naturally attracted to that belief and its associated peoples (cult). People who are well within the mainstream tend not to be susceptible, which also means that the learning experience (open-mindedness) is generally somewhat inhibited (in the mainstream). But people who are alienated in some way, through pain or suffering, through oppression, through emotional or mental illness, etc., from the mainstream, tend to be more amenable to unconventional beliefs because their psychic basis is different, they are more open to external impression, less

conditioned by conventional thinking. This (being asleep on some fringe) is not necessarily any more (or less) healthy than being asleep in the mainstream.

Of course the main problems of beliefs are attachment (wanting to believe something) (feeling secure in “popular” beliefs) and lack of objectivity (lack of ability to discern the truth). So it is hard, even for the trained occultist, to discern the underlying truth from within the framework of his or her own conditioning and psychic environment. And there are so many vitalized (emotionalized or rationalized) thought-forms of various “feelings” and “ideas” that prey on the human personality consciousness. And some are actually quite valuable, e.g., the ideas of sexual equality and racial equality have always been “true” but were not widely embraced until their respective thought-forms became sufficiently vitalized so that sufficient numbers of people could “embrace” them comfortably.

But many of the “ideas” floating about the astral plane have no substantive basis, although each has a genesis. For example, there are many cataclysmic thought-forms that susceptible people can inadvertently embrace, that are based on historical events or imaginary events rather than the intended future. The wave of belief in alien contact, etc., similarly, has a basis in fictional (imaginary) accounts mixed up with the reality of deva lives.

† Commentary No. 1242

The Occult Basis of Beliefs 2

Fictional accounts are actually “real” in the sense that they are created substantially and therefore “exist” on the astral and concrete mental planes, and as people read these accounts, or hear the story or watch the film, the astral-psychic basis is reinforced. In other words, there are aliens on the astral plane, but they are artificial creatures, created and vitalized through (human) thought-forms. And devas are real. But most people cannot discern the difference (and people who happen to believe something that is true are not therefore necessarily intelligent, mature, or insightful, and conversely, people who believe in something false are not therefore necessarily unintelligent, immature, or lacking insight) (the new age movement is almost filled with people who are

generally (but not necessarily) gullible, inconsistently insightful, and relatively immature).

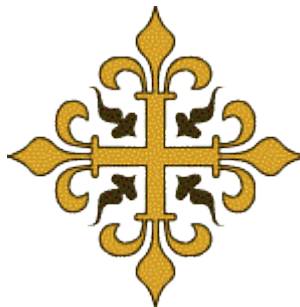
The problem is compounded by the fact that if someone believes something, even tentatively, then from that point onward there is a tendency to semi-consciously or unconsciously interpret experience and observation in a way that reinforces the belief. Coincidences tend to be over-interpreted, etc. Observations are distorted. That which does not support the belief is conveniently (unconsciously) discounted or ignored. This "halo" effect (and its opposite) or bias is really quite widespread. For example, people who are generally predisposed to see other people as fundamentally "good" will have their beliefs reinforced through experience, and are more likely to be not disappointed in others, while people who are predisposed to be pessimistic will similarly have much of their expectations fulfilled. Bias is inherently and creatively self-fulfilling.

Another problem is that of promotional ideas (e.g., advertising, preaching). Sometimes a company may create a market for its product through advertising, or manipulating the mass thought-form such that people perceive the need or desire for something that they would otherwise not have needed or desired. The promotion (promulgation) of religious or political beliefs (values) can follow the same pattern. Most people are emotionally-polarized and simply do not (much) think for themselves (even while believing that they are thinking for themselves), and so can relatively easily be manipulated into believing something or buying something or embracing some practice or behavior.

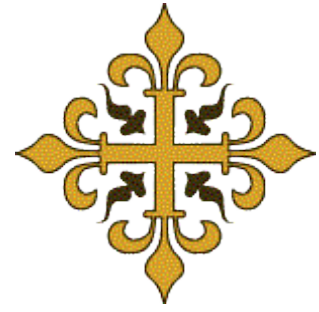
This is fundamentally a problem of ethics, and the proper occultist is very averse to engaging in any form of advertising or promotion and (somewhat) averse even to the atmosphere created by advertising or promotion. The proper occultist (spiritual student with sufficient and proper training) is mentally or intuitively polarized, has learned to transcend much of his or her conditioning, and is simply not (very) susceptible to external (artificial) forces (thought-forms).

The solution of course is the cultivation of discernment and objectivity through non-attachment. If one is committed to discerning the truth, and refuses to have opinions, then it becomes progressively easier to see what is real and what

is not real. But becoming free from the conditioning of mainstream or conventional “thinking” is not an easy undertaking. There is tremendous inertia in the form of mass (collective) thought-forms. And “waking-up” also constitutes a form of separation from the collective (lower) consciousness, and conveys difficulties in its own right. But there is a thought-form of “waking-up” that conveys a gentle encouragement to those who are susceptible, and it is necessarily growing.



Section 5.33



The Monkey Mind

- Three of the perils and challenges of mental development in the context of the spiritual path are overcoming the monkey mind, the grasping mind, and the advertent mind.

The Monkey Mind

One of the perils of mental (and to some extent intellectual) development is the monkey mind. The monkey mind is a lower or concrete mind with a propensity for flitting or fluttering or fluttering from one object or topic or focus to another, almost incessantly, in an almost continuous chain of uncorrelated thinking.

The mind that flits tends to pass quickly or abruptly from one place or object or focus to another. This monkey mind is passive in the sense that monkey-ness (monkey-mindedness) is triggered by almost anything and everything, internally and externally. Whatever impinges upon the senses or comes to mind in any way tends to lead to a chain of casual and fleeting focus where each object of mind leads to another, or each sense impression tends to refocus the mind accordingly. Given the barrage of external impressions, and given the natural associative nature of every object with every other object, each such impression or focus tends to lead the mind to the next focus. In the case of the (actual) monkey this (monkey-mindedness) relates to lack of mental development and the inability to focus. In the case of the human being it relates more generally to overdevelopment.

The problem is two-fold: the passivity of the phenomena or process and the lack of duration and sensibility of focus. Passivity implies that one is reactive to stimulation and not actually responsive and sensible. The lack of duration of focus, due to the (generally unconsciously) allowed distractiveness of the next stimuli or associative focus (one thing leading to another in the superficial sense), means that one is not actually comprehending anything. The monkey mind is not really conducive to learning or growing. If it collects or retains anything at all it collects and retains superficial, uncorrelated "data" that is accepted without it being placed into perspective or context. In short the monkey mind lacks both focus and discrimination, which means it lacks assimilative ability.

The causes of monkey-mindedness are relatively simple. Curiosity is a natural attribute of human development. It is part of the way in which people learn and grow, by being curious about things and looking into them. But as one matures

(intellectually and spiritually), natural curiosity needs to be balanced by some growing and deepening sense of discrimination (discretion). With sensible discrimination one can focus on what needs to be focused upon, instead of being focused on what is not really pertinent. But where one is curious and where one lacks discrimination, monkey-mindedness emerges as the mind develops beyond the natural or intended limits. Thus the monkey mind is caused by curiosity coupled with a lack of discrimination and the overdevelopment of the (concrete) mind.

The cures for monkey-mindedness are not so simple or straightforward, especially where monkey-mindedness is coupled with other perils of mental development. For the spiritual student the long-term remedy is proper meditation practice, starting with concentration exercises. This tends to help the mind to focus, and to lessen the vulnerability of the mind to stimulation, and it tends to remove much of the independent power of the mind. The overdeveloped mind is one that dominates the personality and is therefore unable to respond to the soul. As the power of the mind as an independent entity is reduced, it becomes possible to temper the mind and train the mind, through meditation discipline. Eventually this will allow a balancing of heart and mind and make one's life experience more sensible.

† Commentary No. 1442

The Grasping Mind

Another peril of mental development is the grasping mind. The grasping mind is one that exhibits a tendency to cling to ideas or concepts or beliefs or a subject with an almost unrelenting focus. The grasping mind tends to embrace many beliefs and opinions, with some (considerable) degree of attachment and rigidity. The grasping mind is usually so focused that it has difficulty being open to knowledge or truth or understanding that contradicts what is already believed or embraced. The grasping mind, despite its focus, tends to lack objectivity and tends to cling to beliefs and opinions in spite of evidence to the contrary.

The grasping mind (or in some sense the opinionated mind) is the concrete mental analogy to attachment on physical or emotional levels, i.e., materialism and entanglement in the senses. In a sense, the grasping mind is one that is entangled in intellect or thinking, without having either objectivity or overall (balanced) discrimination. Indeed, grasping is also an extreme form of discrimination, where only what is grasped is embraced. Thus the grasping mind is also very separative. But the reliance on intellect, with rigidity and narrowness rather than flexibility and openness (broadness) means that feelings and other impressions (contrary thoughts, intuition) are usually discounted, consciously or unconsciously. Which means that balance is not possible. The grasping mind is capability of (facilitating) integration, although not in its proper sense, but the grasping mind precludes any possibility of alignment or balance.

The monkey mind is about the superficial quest for knowledge and understanding. The grasping mind is usually about focus and always involves attachment. The grasping mind requires some if not a great deal of intellectual development, but can emerge as a consequence of (excessive) concentration exercises. The unfocused mind (including the monkey mind) needs to develop the ability to focus. Over time, concentration exercises help in this regard. But if the concentration practice does not move into (proper) meditation, the mind can become crystallized in its patterns and exhibit a tendency for grasping. And these tendencies (attachments) can be very difficult to overcome.

Of course the grasping mind may also be coincident with the monkey mind, in which case the combination is particularly devastating. The monkey mind is driven usually by an overdeveloped sense of curiosity, whether or not the intellect is developed, while the grasping mind is usually a consequence of an overdeveloped intellect. Consequently, the grasping-monkey mind is almost entirely insensitive and unresponsive to truth, to broader and deeper knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. The grasping-monkey mind suffers attachment without lingering focus, which means that a person with such a mind is almost continuously absorbed in fleeting mental attachments, to the exclusion of almost everything else.

In the final analysis, both the monkey mind and the grasping mind (and the grasping-monkey mind) involve habits of thinking that inhibit reasonableness

(balance). Depending on the extent of these habits, a considerable trauma is generally required in order for the afflicted person to return to a more sensible development process. The habits must necessarily be broken, and the mind tempered in a more balanced manner. The mind that dominates the personality is a hard (concrete) mind and can exhibit monkey-mindedness and/or grasping. But the mind that is properly tempered can exhibit neither. The gentle mind is able to develop more properly.

† Commentary No. 1443

The Advertent Mind

Yet another peril of mental development is the mind that tends to focus overly on details without any real appreciation for substance. Attention to detail can be helpful in some instances, especially where there is relevance and some sense of discrimination. But attention to detail without any real context or relevancy leads to senseless absorption in detail.

The problem of advertency is simply a lack of discrimination or discernment coupled with entanglement in intellectual (concrete mental) focus. The fact is, that details are only significant or important in some context, and only to some limited extent. Details are never important in themselves. So the mind that is overly fond of details, without any proper context (and especially without any real focus) is an advertent mind. Advertency may or may not accompany monkey-mindedness, but advertency does oftentimes accompany grasping. The monkey mind is not generally focused, or at least not for long. The grasping mind tends to be attached to whatever is focused upon or grasped. And the advertent mind tends to be entangled in details to the exclusion of sensibility. It is the seeing of the leaves without seeing the tree, and the seeing of the trees without seeing the forest. It is not about relevance or (true) significance. It is simply about details.

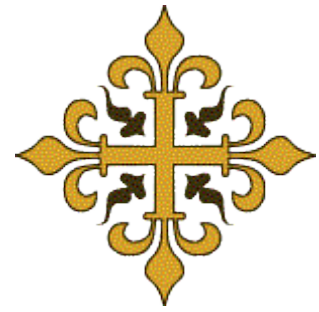
Advertency undermines both discrimination and reasoning. Instead of discerning distinctions and realizing both relative significance and context, the advertent mind simply embraces the details as ends-in-themselves. It is a losing of the mind, a lessening of reasoning ability. And of course it also undermines the intuition. The objective of mental development is the

facilitation of learning and growing, in consciousness. If one is lost in the details then one cannot then learn or grow. The accumulation of data has no real value unless it is placed in context, and even then it is not the data or details that matter, but what can be gleaned, what has import in consciousness. Knowledge is properly much more than the details, but even knowledge is not carried forward to the next life. What conveys is understanding, even more so wisdom (conscience).

Details (and advertency) are necessarily superficial. The mind that is mired in detail is functioning at the lowest possible (functional) level. And because the mind is engaged at that level it cannot then really embrace anything on a higher (functional) level. But if the details are placed into perspective or context. If the details are seen merely as data to be sifted through rather than absorbed in. If the mind can get above and beyond the details, then there is hope for balance and eventual tempering of the mind. Then there is hope for a broadening and deepening of the mind. So that a larger, broader, deeper context can be apprehended. So the mind itself will not dominate. So the mind will then be merely an instrument (of higher consciousness) rather than an end in itself.

Many who suffer from monkey-mindedness or from the grasping mind or from advertency also suffer the delusion that they are seeking and embracing truth. When in fact truth is something else entirely. Details are not truth. Knowledge is not truth. Even understanding is not truth. All of these things are merely pointers to truth. If the mind (and heart) are truly open. But advertency (grasping) (monkey-mindedness) is often a means of evasion. Of avoiding truth. So the spiritual student should exercise considerable care in thinking, so that one is actually dedicated to truth rather than mired in the details or even in the intellectual process.

Section 5.34



The Quiet Mind

- The quiet mind is characteristic of the third and final stage of mental development. The achievement of the quiet mind is a major goal of the spiritual student and comes only as the mind is stilled and the entire personality becomes fully responsive to the soul. It is both a consequence of considerable progress and facilitates progress.

The Passive Mind

From one point of view, the development, utilization, and subsequent mastery of the mind involves the distinction and relationship between the concrete mind of the lower self or personality and the abstract mind of the higher self or soul, and the process by which one becomes centered in the higher mind and released from the attachments and distractions (thinking, reasoning, etc.) of the lower mind. From another point of view, that development, utilization, and subsequent mastery involves the measure and character (quality) of mental activity or process rather than the objective (concrete) and subjective (abstract) aspects of the mind per se. These two points of view are complementary and each conveys insight into the nature of the problem (process).

From the point of view of relative (and qualitative) activity, the first stage of mental development (experience) (expression) is that of the passive mind and is governed or qualified by the third ray or the seventh ray. In this first stage the emotions dominate and the person (not yet a student in the spiritual sense) suffers emotional attachments and strong feelings. In this first stage, mental activity is almost overwhelmed by the preponderance and intensity of emotional activity (without being aware of either that preponderance and intensity or the fact of being overwhelmed by same). Whatever thoughts there are (in this first stage) come either from or are induced by external sources (via (primarily) the astral (emotional) plane or (secondarily) the concrete mental plane) or (more likely) are induced by emotional activity in response to those external forces (impressions of the lower nature).

In this early stage (recapitulation) of mental development (experience) (expression), a person is necessarily emotionally polarized and relatively passive to external impressions, meaning that the person reacts (naturally and mostly involuntarily) to emotional experience and therefore lacks any real objectivity or even any capability for objectivity (i.e., the concrete mind (kama-manas) suffers and has yet to develop its inherent characteristic objective nature). In this first stage (which characterizes the bulk of humanity), thinking is a passive experience (expression) since one's thoughts (at this stage) are not really one's own. There is a net inflow of lower (emotional and concrete mental) energies

and one is imposed upon by the (emotional and concrete mental) environment and whoever is active therein.

The problem, from the standpoint of the spiritual path, is that people at this first stage are passive and very easily manipulated. That manipulation is generally incidental since most people suffer the same mental passivity, but there is still a considerable amount of direct (indirect) and deliberate manipulation by those who are stronger mentally (but who do not yet realize the ethical conflict). Examples of manipulation include religious doctrine, commercial advertising, political campaigns, etc. In a predominantly mentally passive society (as all human cultures are today), the few tend to manipulate the many. Where that manipulation is deliberate it is considered a more serious imposition. However, most people at this stage are self-deceived and have no awareness or realization that they are not really thinking for themselves.

This first stage in mental development is nonetheless stimulating and conveys considerable and extended opportunities for (passive) learning (corresponding to involuntary experience). The real leaders of humanity do qualify the mental environment of the planet, but not to the extent of imposing upon the minds of humanity. Their qualification allows those who become responsive to embrace the ideas that will lead from this stage to the next.

† Commentary No. 742

The Active Mind

While the first stage is characterized by mental development (in the face of emotional preponderance), the second stage is characterized by mental utilization (in the face of mental attachments or opinions). The first stage is a very lengthy process involving the gradual cultivation of the mind (through qualification and karmic experience (stimulation)) and leads to some relative balance between the demands of the emotions and some basic abilities of the mind to process sense-impressions (while being rather biased by the emotions).

The second stage begins with that precarious balance between the mind and emotions, leads through a period in which the mind dominates the emotions

(and the entire personality), and ends with some moderation of that mental dominance. The second stage of mental development, utilization, and subsequent mastery is that of the active mind and (that process) is governed or qualified by the second ray or the fourth ray (with the mind ever qualified by the third ray and the fifth ray). In this second stage the concrete mind dominates and the personality becomes integrated. Thinking (in this stage) results primarily from the evaluation of impressions and the mind learns to discriminate and eventually overcomes the emotions. As the concrete mind begins to dominate it acquires (mental) attachments (opinions) that induce or manipulate emotional attachments or strong feelings. There tend to be cycles (lifetimes) of questing for knowledge and understanding, times of reflection and assimilation, and times of more active expression of what one has learned or what one believes.

At its peak (illusion of independence), the concrete mind (persona) can be rather opinionated and impositional, potent and unresponsive to higher qualification. Those who are able to moderate this phase (due to experience prior to the current recapitulation) have less difficulty with opinions and avoid imposing their ideas upon others. In any event, during the second stage thinking becomes a very active experience (expression) and there is a net outflow of personality energy as the immediate astral and concrete mental environment is conditioned by the (imposing) thoughts (and induced feelings) of the active (probably self-centered), concrete mind.

At this stage (of relative immaturity and imbalance between head and heart), one naturally (albeit wrongly from a higher point of view) imposes oneself and one's views upon others, i.e., the active mind tends to manipulate and orchestrate those (majority) in the first stage and compete with those (minority) others in the second stage. This second stage is one of more active learning rather than passive (although one still learns a great deal passively) and corresponds to (active) evolutionary experience and expression rather than involutory experience. As the emotions are overcome and the personality is more properly integrated, one tends to think more and more clearly (and one tends then to impose that thinking upon the immediate environment). However, the second stage mind is still subject to a large extent to embracing or reacting to external thought-forms (without any awareness of distinction between one's own thoughts and those brought in from the external world).

With deeper, inner growth, that mental activity tends to become channeled toward more noble causes than one's own apparent welfare (i.e., the attention is directed away from self-centered value expression to more humanitarian values and causes). With further growth, the student gradually replaces discrimination by discretion and the mind and activities are gradually restrained. In this stage one ultimately learns reticence and the practice of non-imposition (and of course somewhere along the way some measure of humility must be embraced).

† Commentary No. 743

The Quiet Mind 1

The quiet mind is characteristic of the third and final stage of mental development per se (beyond which the mind plays a minor or incidental role (and ultimately no role at all)), that in which the abstract mind and intuition dominate and in which there are no emotional or mental attachments (i.e., no substantive emotional or mental bias and no opinions). The third stage is governed or qualified by the first ray (as the higher self finally imposes its (higher) will (need) upon its instrument (the properly and fully prepared personality) (i.e., as the personality is finally able to fully submit to the wisdom and quality of the soul)). While the first stage primarily involves development (experience) and the second stage primarily involves utilization (more active experience and expression), the third stage involves self-mastery and the complete qualification of the mind by the soul such that thinking per se does not even occur (i.e., thinking is replaced by realization).

The achievement of the quiet mind is a major goal of the spiritual student and comes only as the mind is stilled and the entire personality becomes fully responsive to the soul. It is not really an achievement or an accomplishment, as it is "achieved" not by effort but by allowance. The effort is required in preparation (as one cannot "allow" until one is properly prepared (refined) (qualified)), but ultimately one learns to allow the higher self to manifest as it will (and in so doing one ceases to exist in any separative or independent sense) (this is a "great" sacrifice as far as the ego is concerned but nothing at all to the

soul per se). Thus the quiet mind occurs only as the ego is wholly overcome and the noise of the mind disappears.

The quiet mind is an indication of the perfect peace of the soul, of perfect balance between head and heart, between mind and soul, between God and individual existence (i.e., between God transcendent and God immanent). While the first stage is predominately passive and the second stage is predominately active, the third stage is predominately reflective and expressive only in the higher sense and on higher levels. The presence of the quiet mind induces considerable qualification on lower (etheric, astral, and concrete mental) levels, but that inducement (induction) is not the result of mental activity or effort. It is, rather, a result of quality and existence (being).

In the beginning of the third stage, the emotional and mental biases are carefully qualified or programmed out of the personality. The resulting emotional freedom (third aspect) is desirelessness while the resulting mental freedom (second aspect) is selflessness (the first aspect is the ultimate object or being). The fundamental concern (in this sense) is the progressive embrace (and demonstration through quality) of truth (true service) and that embrace requires considerable refinement in the lower consciousness to enable the higher consciousness to manifest unimpeded by coarseness, attachments, distractions, ego, etc.

As the student achieves progressive refinement and overcomes the inherent bias of the material bodies (etheric, physical, astral or emotional, and concrete mental) and their natural reactivity to environmental forces (i.e., as the personality is fully qualified by higher impression (which is the same thing as undoing the material qualification and replacing it with more "advanced" programming)), greater freedom in thinking is attained (meaning that thinking becomes first unfettered, then primarily abstract and subjective (as in realization), and finally entirely reflective as the independence of the mind is fully overcome).

The Quiet Mind 2

In the (nominally) first and (primarily) second stages, on necessarily lower levels and through lesser channels of energy (and information content), the sincere student endeavors to reflect whatever truth he or she can sense or embrace. But that is necessarily (and heavily) biased by the emotional and mental nature (the noise of relative coarseness and relative self-centeredness) (or the noise of worldly absorption (experience) and personal expression (ego)). As the student becomes more and more refined (properly integrated) (more responsive to the higher nature), that noise is progressively eliminated and the student becomes more and more able to respond to (embrace) higher truth and in higher ways (unimpeded by ego or personality considerations (e.g., unimpeded by feeling or thinking)).

This is not the lack of feeling or lack of thinking of earlier cycles (where the lack indicated inability), but the lack of feeling and lack of thinking that comes from having developed the capabilities of the emotional and mental natures to the point where they can now accurately reflect the energy of the higher self. As the capabilities for feeling and thinking are developed over many lifetimes the personality necessarily acquires a considerable measure of independence (noise) (extroversion) (or even spiritually unresponsive introversion (compared with spiritually responsive introspection)). On the major turn of the spiral following that development and utilization (i.e., the third stage), the noise is eliminated and the capabilities for reflective (non-distractive) emotional and mental expression are achieved.

At each major and minor turn of the evolutionary spiral attachments give way to new freedoms. Those who are emotionally absorbed eventually become thinkers. Those who are mentally absorbed eventually become intuitive. At each major and minor turn of the spiral, that which is closely held is recognized (even unconsciously) as unfulfilling, and the individual passes on into a new sphere of experience and relative activity. The major spiral is fulfilled with the achievement (more properly the realization) of the quiet mind, and a new spiral (beyond humanity) is thereby afforded.

The means of achieving the state of consciousness or ability implied by the quiet mind includes (1) refinement and qualification (initially), (2) proper (thoughtless) meditation and contemplation (in the intermediate phase of this third stage), and (3) illumination and inspiration (in the highest sense) (in the final phases). From the higher point of view, the human aura is rather noisy and coarse during the first stage (that of the passive mind), relatively noisy and relatively coarse during the second stage (that of the active mind), and rather quiet yet blazing forth (in its quality and silence) during the latter phases of the third stage (that of the quiet mind).

These means and measures of achievement are indicated in Patanjali's seven (six) stages of meditation ((1)(0) mundane absorption (not normally enumerated), (2)(1) aspiration, (3)(2) concentration, (4)(3) meditation (proper), (5)(4) contemplation, (6)(5) illumination, and (7)(6) inspiration) (of course what Patanjali means by aspiration, concentration, and meditation (and more particularly, by contemplation, illumination, and inspiration) is not what these words normally convey). These words mask considerable processes and substantial adjustments in consciousness, leading ultimately to the quiet mind (and the light of the soul). Considerable insight into the process of cultivating the quiet mind can be found in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and in particular Alice A. Bailey's commentaries on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras entitled The Light of the Soul.

† Commentary No. 1250

Quiescence

Quiescence is defined as the quality or state of being quiet, at rest, and refers (metaphysically) primarily to the mind. Quiescence in this sense is not a passive state, nor is it an active state, but is a non-active state. The intent of quiescence is progressive disentanglement and awakening leading to self-realization.

Almost everyone in the world is entangled in the world, entangled in sense perceptions, entangled to some extent in materialism and egoism, and/or entangled in thinking, such that there is no (real) awareness of greater truth. People identify with their bodies, with their emotions, with their thinking, such

that the reality of who they are is simply not apparent to them. Being entangled in the world is a necessary phase of experience and expression, and leads gradually to assimilation of that experience and growth in consciousness, but ultimately, being entangled in the world precludes growing beyond the worldly experience. The spiritual student begins to realize this and embarks upon the journey of self-mastery leading to liberation and service, by gradually becoming disentangled.

The body, the emotions, and the mind are instruments of attachment and entanglement (immersion in worldly (predominantly self-centered) experience). These instruments are necessary to intended experience and expression in the lower worlds, and necessary to evolution in consciousness at this level, and should therefore be properly cultivated and cared for. But as the student progresses, these instruments must be tempered and brought under control and not allowed to function independently. They should be respected as instruments and tempered (refined) for greater usefulness, but the student should not identify with them.

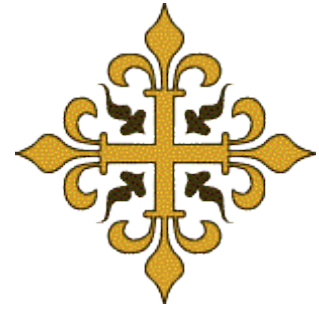
Most people are emotionally-polarized and entangled in their senses. The mind can be utilized to temper the emotions, through meditation, so that a person eventually becomes mentally-polarized, but the mind cannot be utilized to temper itself. And so bringing the mind to quiescence is necessary in order to go beyond the mind. But the mind has two natural states, and most people (unconsciously) engage the mind in the lower sense (lower natural state) (monkey mind). The (monkey) mind naturally forms attachments and naturally (actively) embraces experience in consciousness. But the human being is not the mind. And while the experience at the personality level is useful for most people, and while the mind is an important part of that experience, (conscious or unconscious) identification with the mind and with thinking is (ultimately) a great hindrance.

Bringing the mind to quiescence is a very considerable challenge. There are many prerequisites (self-discipline in various levels), without which the effort is daunting and ultimately not possible. But where the (preliminary) work is accomplished, and where the will and determination to achieve quiescence is sufficient, then it becomes a matter of allowing the mind to rest in its (higher) natural state. The mind cannot do this work. The student must “operate” from

a higher place, through meditation, so that the mind is not engaged in any conventional sense. In quiescence (proper) the mind simply reflects (clearly) whatever is evoked from higher levels, without filtering or interpreting or biasing the process. In quiescence the mind is simply there, at a point of tension, neither active nor passive. In quiescence, the connection between lower self (personality) and higher self (soul) is unimpeded, and the higher senses (intuition) flow(s) naturally.



Section 5.35



Depth

- In the context of consciousness, depth refers to the quality or characteristic of being deep, the extent to which one is functioning at other than superficial levels. The challenge for the spiritual student is to transcend superficiality and allow the inner depth to be properly engaged and realized.

The Deepening

The process of deepening involves spiritual activity in which the student seeks to build and maintain his momentum upon the path. This deepening implies inner experience and inner (mental) effort. The student must continue to seek to understand himself on successively deeper levels. Until a student knows himself consciously and fairly completely, he cannot really be honest with himself. Over the course of many lifetimes, the personality becomes confused by the illusions of objective manifestation. And so, along the spiritual path of liberation, the spiritual student must free himself from the subconscious (and sometimes conscious) illusions and self-deceptions that have been created within his personality consciousness.

The average person knows himself only superficially, understanding only the bare surface of his being (on personality levels only). But the spiritual student is expected to understand himself in considerable depth in order for him to become aligned fully with the path. The secrets and mysteries of life that remain esoteric and therefore unspeakable are hidden within. And it is only as the student deepens himself that his inner resources become available to him and the understanding of the path (and associated mysteries) becomes possible.

Deepening involves a number of inner and outer efforts that should be applied on a daily basis. Any one of these efforts alone will be of some benefit, but it is as all of them are applied in a serious (dedicated) daily program that the full benefits (of understanding) can be obtained. These daily tasks include meditation, study, observation, and self-analysis. The entire process has meaning for the beginning student (aspirant) as well as for the advanced student (the committed disciple). A program of consistent and serious daily meditation is quite essential for any real progress to be made on the path. Meditation is the medium of relevance, for meditation conditions the other efforts and sustains the momentum that is built up. It is only with some determination that the student can apportion enough of his daily attention (and therefore energy) to his spiritual task. The meditation period(s) should therefore be a determined effort, and one that consciously strengthens the overall program of deepening.

The inner work, however, should be complemented by outer work. A program of study in the philosophy or in related subjects helps in the deepening effort by training the mind to dwell upon thoughts of spiritual value (taking the mind off of thoughts of purely mundane value). Knowledge and experience are prerequisites for understanding. Reading and studying in the philosophy provide a foundation for thoughtful and meditative contemplation. Through the efforts of meditation and through the work of putting into practice what is understood, knowledge and experience are assimilated. Observation of oneself and one's surroundings assists the students in developing awareness, discernment, and understanding. The student should frequently (if not continually) examine and evaluate his thoughts, feelings, actions, motives, responses, and his overall disposition (on as many levels as can be perceived).

The spiritual path requires progress, and progress requires momentum (to overcome spiritual inertia). It is not how much or how far a student progresses in a given time that is important, but that he has progressed. Though the student may not be aware of his own progress, he can assume that the effort expended with reasonable intention (right motive) will result in some progress. As the aspirant frees himself from the lower values, he builds a path of effort based upon successively higher values, as he further deepens himself.

† Commentary No. 241

The Superficial Mind

The superficial mind is that aspect of the mind with which most of humanity are familiar. But the mind itself is vastly greater and much more complicated than its superficial interface with the objective world.

The superficial mind is the waking-consciousness that functions as the focus of the mind; the external surface of a much deeper (potent) instrument. The superficial mind (as a mental focus) may be active on virtually any level or dimension of the mind depending on the training and mental capabilities of the student. The waking-consciousness usually resides in the concrete (lower) (objective) mind where ordinary thought-forms are created and projected. In the

case of the spiritual student, the waking-consciousness resides increasingly on abstract (higher) (subjective) (relatively boundless) mental levels, where actual thought-forms can only exist in terms of quality.

Another way of viewing the superficial mind (waking-consciousness) is to relate it to the two depths of mental activity: the super-conscious and the subconscious. The super-conscious (superior) mind is that which exists above and beyond the normal waking-consciousness, while the subconscious (inferior) mind is that which exists below the threshold of normal thinking. The superficial mind remains the focus of the mind, where the mind is brought to bear on some object, whether well-defined (sharply focused) or otherwise (relatively) vague. The concrete mind and the abstract mind are fixed in terms of purpose and level of consciousness. The super-conscious mind and the subconscious mind (as aspects of the mind) are relative because they depend on the nature of the waking-consciousness, which is itself a floating focus (rather than a fixed focus).

The subconscious mind usually includes much of the concrete mind and serves as an unconscious, programmable interface for both heredity and environment. The super-conscious mind usually includes part of the concrete mind and most of the abstract mind, and serves as the correlational mind and as an interface with the soul. The familiar waking-consciousness is only a small (trivial) fraction of the true individuality and mental being. The subconscious (mostly concrete) mind is completely programmable and is usually programmed (unfortunately) carelessly and unconsciously through habit. Much energy can be expended (wasted) through unconscious (subconscious) (subterranean) thinking of a mundane (useless or unnecessary) nature. As this is realized, the student can endeavor to qualify the subconscious experience and learn how to access information or experience gathered unconsciously (whether programmed or otherwise).

Furthermore, the increasingly enlightened student should also begin to work more closely with the super-conscious mind, for it too, can be programmed (though the process is far more delicate (refined) than is the case for the lower mind). The student is urged to (learn to) meditate effectively (truly, without a specific objective or focus), whereby the waking-consciousness can look into the great depths of both subconscious and super-conscious levels. Considerable

understanding (and self-mastery) can be achieved by studying these aspects of the mind, through the practice of holding the mind steady in the light. The subterranean patterns can be thereby revealed and can therefore be restored to more practical purposes. And super-conscious abilities can be tapped for even greater effectiveness. But the student must learn and acquire a considerable amount of self-control, and the mind must be held steady or it (the waking-consciousness) will remain superficial. The waking-consciousness that can clearly reveal the great depths of mental and spiritual (internal) existence is superficial no more, but functions at will through the depths of being.

† Commentary No. 572

Superficial Mentality

Mentality is the mental power or capacity (capability) (intelligence) and the mode or way of thought (thinking) (or mental outlook). Mentality refers as much to mental expression (exercise) as it does to mental capability (for each (mental expression and mental capability) is derived from the other). Superficial mentality refers to a rather shallow or cursory mental capability (expression), to thinking about superficial things and thinking of more substantive things in superficial ways, to dealing (mentally) with appearance (without recognition of substance (proper significance) (depth)).

A superficial mental capacity or capability generally indicates a lack of balanced mental development or the consequence of rather superficial mental habits (absorption in relatively superficial experience). Superficial mental expression (exercise) (experience) may be the consequence of having a superficial mental capability or the consequence of mental insecurities (fear) or both. Both (mental capability and expression) are compounded by (derived from) the illusion of separateness (ego) (mundane absorption) (physical reality) (individuality).

Superficial mentality is one extreme of a spectrum (continuum) of mentalities of which the other extreme (in this dimension) is over-concern with (unimportant) details (i.e., for their own sake). This mentality dimension is primarily a fifth ray concern (dealing principally with the concrete mind and its (fifth ray) domain) (while another mentality dimension (relative coherence (vagueness)) is

primarily a third ray concern). This does not mean that superficial mentality is merely a concern for fifth ray types (personalities), but, rather, that superficial mentality is (should be) a concern for any who are in incarnation and developing or refining (training) the concrete mind, whatever the ray of the mind or personality may be. A proper mental balance (between concrete and abstract capabilities (expression) and between simplicity and complexity) is particularly necessary for the spiritual student (in order for the student to be an effective bridge between the inner and outer worlds).

The dangers or consequences of superficial mentality (oversimplification) (shallow decisiveness) (simplemindedness) are many and varied, but all lead in one manner or another to greater (compounded) self-deception (delusion). Superficial thinking leads to wrong assumptions, bad (poor) judgment (false conclusions), false understanding, etc., which in turn lead to the deception of reasonableness in the absence of any real understanding or reasonable process. Deception (more properly self-deception) then further complicates the misunderstanding through a causal (mental) chain based upon false intermediaries. Humility requires that the student be not deceived by assumptions or presumptive conclusions, that the student should seek to understand based not upon appearance and superficial embrace but upon recognition of the limitations of appearances and assumptions and therefore upon more realistic (qualified) knowledge and understanding.

The spiritual student who becomes and remains reasonably humble (relatively devoid of ego) (i.e., with a properly tempered and qualified personality (mind)) is not so easily deceived, for such a student deals with relative depth and relative uncertainty. Thus the spiritual student should properly avoid treating any (worthy) subject superficially (which also implies a lack of interest in unworthy (mundane) subjects) and as well avoid absorption in unnecessary details and needless complexities. Thus a certain (proper) mental balance should ever be sought (more properly allowed) and maintained (naturally sustained).

Superficialness

Superficialness is a property or characteristic of the lower worlds (which are material in nature). It is based in the inherent inertia of matter (and the inertia of consciousness immersed in matter (e.g., the ego is an artificial entity induced by virtue of or through this immersion)) and it is this inertia that makes life difficult (and affords such opportunities for experience). But in transcending this superficial experience, the student emerges into realization.

Superficiality, or superficialness, is the quality or state or condition of being superficial. It is a serious problem of life (the immersion of consciousness) in the material world, particularly for the spiritual student. Every experience in the lower worlds of human endeavor tends to be superficial, that is, every experience tends to involve the mind and emotions (waking-consciousness) merely superficially, both in the sense that people are (generally) asleep with regard to higher consciousness and in the sense that people are therefore not aware of how superficial their experience really is. This is okay, except for those who need to go beyond this experience.

This is not to say that life is necessarily shallow or without meaning or without value, but that life in the lower worlds involves only the rudimentary (superficial) aspects of consciousness. The human being as a whole is much more than that part of the human being that seems to live in these (lower) worlds. The vast preponderance of humanity live lives that are meaningful in the sense of having experience and expression, and in the sense of growing thereby, but which are nonetheless superficial with regard to consciousness. Most of the human experience and expression is unconscious and mechanical (passive). Even the willfulness of the ego is part of mechanicalness and is not part of (higher) realization.

Thus most people are superficial and are not aware of the nature of superficialness. Some people are aware of the existence of superficialness, at least intellectually, but remain superficial (absorbed in personality-centeredness if not self-centeredness). A few become aware of the reality of superficialness, and become observers of their own superficial nature (anyone who declares his or

her own lack of superficialness is merely deluded). Through proper qualification (refinement in consciousness) and proper training (in methods of working through consciousness), one can overcome much of the conditioning (mechanicalness) (superficialness), at least in terms of conscious awareness (and therefore in terms of ability to evoke higher quality of consciousness).

This process involves progressive detachment (more properly non-attachment) and progressive (deepening) self-observation (non-identification with the superficial nature (personality-intellect-ego)). The student gradually becomes more and more aware of the superficial nature of one's own personality experience and expression, and in becoming aware, and in merely observing this, allows a deeper unfoldment of (in) consciousness to occur. Any instance of emotional and/or mental expression is necessarily superficial, or has at least a substantive superficial component. The problem (for the spiritual student who needs to transcend these things) is that waking-consciousness naturally identifies with this (superficial) experience and expression instead of merely observing. But as the student grows and deepens, as non-attachment becomes the rule, then experience becomes less superficial and the higher nature (awareness) begins to dominate the waking-consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1381

Depth 1

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

However, depth is commonly used to refer merely to intellectual depth, which is simply a matter of uncommon intellectual capacity, and does not necessarily or generally imply or convey any real depth. Intellectual depth involves utilization of the mind in relatively uncommon ways but still necessarily involving the

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

For the spiritual student, the challenge includes not being entangled in that which is superficial, e.g., intellectual activity, mental attachments, having opinions, being focused in the external world, engaging materialism and egoism, etc., all of which are ultimately limiting. The challenge includes cultivating the inner senses through developing the quiet mind (more properly allowing the quiet mind (removing the barriers to intelligent (non-passive) quiescence)), so that the presence of the soul may be realized (actively manifested). The challenge includes being able to engage both the super-conscious and subconscious dimensions of the mind (and consciousness) consciously and intuitively, without intellectual activity. Thus depth implies the ability to derive insight (awareness) (understanding) (wisdom) from both subconscious and super-conscious levels, which is not something that the ordinary (superficial) mind can do and which is not something the mind can do by itself. In fact, depth does not involve "doing" at all, but rather involves being.

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

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

† Commentary No. 1382

Depth 2

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

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

A person of depth does not rely on ordinary intelligence nor upon the intellect. A person of depth relies on the inner senses and the intuition, which means that understanding supersedes knowledge and that wisdom supersedes

understanding. A person of depth does not “have” knowledge or understanding or wisdom, but is able to evoke whatever knowledge and understanding and wisdom are needed. A person of depth is necessarily not extroverted (nor significantly introverted though he or she may appear to be relatively shy). A person of depth is personable but not gregarious. A person of depth communicates effectively but is not talkative. A person of depth simply speaks according to (felt) need and not in any contrived or superficial manner. For a person of depth there are no facades, no acting, no playing of games. The (ordinary) barriers (of ego) (e.g., lack of honesty, lack of humility) are simply not there.

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

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

