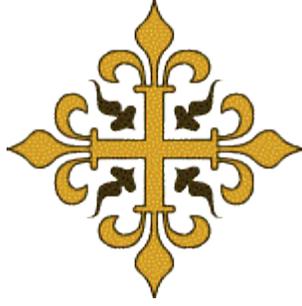


The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 5.4

Perception

The Delusion of the Senses



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Perception

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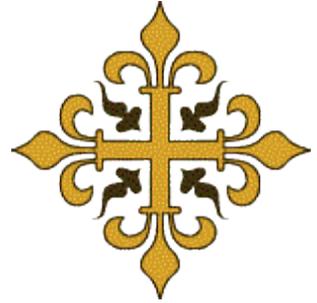
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Chapter 5.4

Perception



The Delusion of the Senses

- Of special consideration is the matter of perception, because it is through perception that the human being is deceived and it is through perception that the human being acquires much of the knowledge and understanding to eventually overcome the deception of the senses and the ego, and it is in transcending perception that the human being is liberated.
- There is a matter of perception and truth. There is the problem of bias and conditioning. And there is the threefold problem of maya, glamour, and illusion.

Perception

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

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

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

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

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

† Commentary No. 522

The Johari Window

The Johari window is an application of set theory from orthodox psychology that illustrates certain aspects of interpersonal awareness. Although the Johari window per se is artificial, the principles that it illustrates are natural nonetheless. The Johari window is a two-dimensional model or framework for perception, with one dimension being the extent to which a person has self-knowledge or self-awareness and the other dimension being the extent to which others are aware of that person's personality.

In the simple case, the Johari (total) window has four arenas. The public arena involves (illustrates) (symbolically) all that is known to oneself which is also known or perceived (generally) by others. The blind arena involves all that is unknown to oneself which is (however) known or perceived by others. The private arena involves all that is known to oneself which is unknown or not perceived by others. And the opaque (double unknown) arena involves all that is unknown to oneself which is also unknown or not perceived by others.

The Johari model does not really take into account the validity of the information (beliefs) (knowledge) in each of the four arenas, but it does illustrate discrepancies or inconsistencies in perception (belief); for example, one might perceive oneself as honest (in a given situation) and others may concur, but in fact one might be dishonest and self-deceived but sincere enough that others might not be aware of the truth (in this instance). On the other hand, one might perceive oneself as strong while others might perceive (believe) otherwise, due to different values or interpretation of behavior (perception).

The shape (configuration of arenas) of the Johari window depends on the relative strength of the four arenas and the particular situation to which it is applied, so that the configuration (relative sizes of the arenas) might change from one situation (value) (aspect) to another, from one person to another (since it is basically self-centered (relating an individual perception to that of others)), and from one audience (others) to another. The two processes which affect the shape of the Johari window are called feedback and disclosure. Johari feedback is the extent to which an individual learns from others' perceptions or becomes aware of the (relative) truth of others' perceptions (relative to that individual and situation). Johari feedback tends to increase the relative size of the public arena while decreasing the relative size of the blind arena. Johari disclosure is the extent to which an individual shares information about himself with others, which tends to increase the relative size of the public arena, while decreasing the relative size of the private arena. In either case (Johari feedback or Johari disclosure) the (symbolic) size of the opaque arena is inadvertently decreased (which is not necessarily warranted by either).

For the spiritual student, the central significance of the Johari window (model) is the dynamic nature of interpersonal awareness and the continuing need for the spiritual student to be increasingly honest with himself and honest (and

sincere) in all of his interactions with others. With increasing (improving) awareness, the blind and opaque arenas should be reduced in magnitude, but the student should nonetheless take into consideration the existence (and relative magnitude) (and relative significance) of each of the four arenas, remaining aware that others' perception may vary considerably, that others may see us differently than we see ourselves, that our own perception (or others') may not be correct in some instances (or even generally), and that some aspects remain unknown (opaque) and some even unknowable for the time being.

† Commentary No. 825

Bias 1

Virtually everyone is not only emotionally and mentally biased, but the vast bulk of humanity are largely unaware of their biases and even the fact that they are biased. Emotional and mental bias is a major impediment to open-mindedness and the embrace of truth (and concomitant growth and refinement in consciousness). Awareness of one's bias is a first and major step toward the reduction of bias and its ultimate elimination.

Bias is defined as an inclination of temperament or outlook and is a more general form of prejudice. Bias can be positive or favorable in the sense of being favorably disposed toward some object, process, or person, or conversely, bias can be negative or unfavorable in the sense of being unfavorably disposed. Bias can be constructive in the sense of yielding some net benefit, or, more generally, bias can be somewhat destructive in the sense of yielding some aspect or element of separateness. Bias can be strong or weak, conscious or unconscious, or more generally somewhere in between. Bias provides a filter for one's experience, emphasizing (strongly or weakly) one aspect or interpretation of sense impression or perception over another. Bias is also multidimensional in the sense that one's bias is an accumulation of habits (biases) in thinking and feeling that vary depending on focus (object, process, person, etc.), i.e., one can be favorably biased about some things and negatively biased about others, one can be strongly biased in some ways and weakly or slightly biased in others, and one can be conscious of some biases and unconscious of others.

Bias is an inevitable part of personality development as one's experience contributes more or less directly to one's bias and one's previous experience contributes to one's character, consciousness, temperament, etc., which in turn contribute to one's bias. In fact, having a generalized positive bias (in the sense of being good-natured, having a positive or constructive outlook on life, seeing the good side of things rather than emphasizing the more negative (destructive) side, etc.) is "good" and implies a relatively well-adjusted personality. But the spiritual student also needs to be aware of the fact of that bias, in order to see things more clearly (honestly and accurately), thereby being able to assimilate experience more effectively.

A particular manifestation of bias normally and generally begins at the level of polarization of consciousness. An emotionally-polarized person (emopol) will generally "suffer" emotional bias which will then color both the feelings and subsequent thinking. A mentally-polarized person (menpol) will generally "suffer" mental bias which will then color both the thinking and subsequent feelings. A secondary "flow" often occurs in the reverse direction, generally unconsciously, in the sense that an emopol's thoughts can lead to unconscious emotional biases and a menpol's feelings can lead to unconscious mental biases.

In order to effectively embrace truth, one must be substantially open-minded and intelligently responsive to truth. The extent of one's biases is the extent to which one is not so open-minded and to which one is not so responsive. One should therefore make a conscious effort (1) to be honest (and particularly to be honest with oneself), (2) to earnestly and honestly scrutinize (retrospectively if not simultaneously) one's own thoughts and feelings and actions with a view to discerning or recognizing one's biases and how they are manifesting, and (3) to establish the habit of intelligent (non-passive) open-mindedness (and its corollary of relative freedom from beliefs, opinions, and/or other attachments).

Bias 2

The problem of bias is compounded by the existence of attachments to various thoughts and feelings (as the emotional and concrete mental nature is wont to do). Objectivity in thinking and feeling, i.e., expressing or involving the use of “facts” without distortion by personal feelings or prejudices (bias) and being fairly rational and reasonable, is relatively rare due to the preponderance of bias and associated attachments (as well as the existence and manifestation of maya, glamour, and illusion).

There exists a multi-dimensional spectrum of relative attachment or one’s relative conviction of the truth of something. This spectrum includes impression, faith, sentiment, view or perspective, loosely-held belief, belief, opinion, and strongly-held opinion, and conviction. Impression implies some tentativeness (relative non-attachment). Faith implies confidence without rational or objective substantiation. Sentiment implies the bias of one’s nature or character. View or perspective implies one’s relative bias but without necessarily any substantial attachment (particularly where one is more or less conscious of that relative bias). Belief implies relative certitude or confidence (which may vary with the degree of attachment) and generally implies “deliberate acceptance and intellectual consent” to what is believed. Opinion implies more of a judgment or appraisal of the belief (which implies greater relative attachment). And conviction implies great attachment (entanglement).

There are those who passively and/or foolishly accept whatever others suggest as true, without intelligent consideration and self-determination. And there are those who unconsciously allow their emotional and mental biases to determine their beliefs and opinions, with or without substantial conscious (rational or otherwise) consideration and judgment (self-determination albeit substantially biased). The skeptic is just as much enslaved by his or her opinions as the proponent. But there are also those (more moderate and preferable) who defer judgment (and who accept beliefs either tentatively or provisionally [tentative acceptance implies lack of confidence, while provisional acceptance implies (higher or inner) confidence but (open-minded) qualification for revision]).

(allowing subsequent experience to guide the modification, refinement, or elimination of general or particular beliefs)).

There is no hypocrisy in this matter of bias greater than that of the scientist (or anyone) who has a belief or opinion and sets out to prove it, with the illusion of objectivity (the possibility of proving something being another fallacy in itself). The existence of a belief or opinion definitely biases the mental approach of the scientist, effectively compromising his or her objectivity by the extent of the relative attachment to the belief or opinion, even if the outcome (conclusion) happens to be true. Anyone who believes something and attempts to prove it will naturally (and largely unconsciously) interpret whatever "evidence" is acquired in a way such as to reinforce the conclusion that is sought.

The significance of "positive" or supporting evidence will be (foolishly) exaggerated (greatly or otherwise according to the relative bias and relative honesty of the seeker) to support one's contention and the significance of "negative" or contrary evidence will be (likewise foolishly) rationalized away or otherwise discounted to some extent. On the other hand, the degree of intellectual honesty that a person has may very well be sufficient to prevent too much bias from being applied and a "reasonable" outcome or conclusion may be achieved in spite of the bias in the process.

† Commentary No. 827

Bias 3

So where in all of this should stand the spiritual student? Somewhere between having provisional beliefs and being entirely free from such bias. The spiritual student is ever urged to embrace the truth that is realized, but without being attached to that truth (i.e., without having opinions). While all opinions convey and contain attachments, beliefs may (if properly qualified) be more provisional and less impedimental. In consciousness there is (some) bias, but it is up to the student to minimize that bias and eventually preclude the filtering of one's sense-perceptions, thoughts, and feelings by that bias.

In the worst case, the professed student has opinions and convictions that are strongly held and defended reactively. In such a case the (questionable) student

is deaf, dumb, and blind, being closed to the truth and naturally separative. He or she hears and sees only what he or she wants to hear or see (i.e., only that which reinforces his or her own beliefs and opinions). Having opinions is a very strong indication of ego manifestation, as it is only the ego that can have beliefs or opinions in the first place (the soul is free). Occultly, anyone who has opinions is literally entangled in them (to their extent) (and the consciousness is thereby dulled) (and the responsiveness to truth or realization is thereby impeded or subdued).

In the best or ideal case, the spiritual student has no beliefs or opinions, but has only a generalized (intuitive) feeling of direction (upward and onward along the spiral evolutionary circuit in consciousness and being). Such a student will have some (considerable) realization of truth and a refined sense of appropriateness (for himself or herself), but will be free from judgment and rationalization and will be open to greater and progressive realization. More realistically, the spiritual student will have some beliefs but will be aware of the bias that those beliefs represent and will work toward non-attachment (and corresponding freedom). The (true) student is not afraid of being "wrong" and does not mind admitting that his or her provisional beliefs have been moderated, for such implies both honesty and a willingness (and ability) to grow spiritually. Every belief impedes subsequent realization (while every opinion more severely impedes subsequent realization), for human perception at its best has fewer dimensions than reality and is therefore inherently impaired.

In consciousness there is an inherent (progressive) seeking of (progressive) truth. In order to be effective, the seeker of truth (as all spiritual students are) should not have any beliefs or opinions, nor make assumptions, nor make or have judgments concerning whatever aspect of truth is being sought. Any preconceived beliefs or opinions will filter or bias the process of truth-seeking and potentially bias the outcome (perceived understanding). All beliefs and opinions (preconceived or otherwise) impede the realization of truth, but that which is preconceived represents a more substantial if not cumulative bias that affects the process as well as the conclusion. Objectivity (intellectual honesty) is more valuable than its lack, but subjectivity (true realization) is even more valuable (particularly when the mind is well-developed and properly tempered). Discernment and discrimination are likewise more valuable than their lack, and particularly where tempered by the intuition and self-realization.

Ultimately, the self-realized student ceases seeking. Truth is revealed most properly without being sought, for the very act of seeking (and any form of expectation) is a (subtle) bias and filter of truth and impediment to the realization of truth. Without seeking there is only realization. And with true realization there is only being (beyond consciousness).

† Commentary No. 903

Inner and Outer Senses

Sense is the faculty of perceiving by means of sense organs. The traditional human senses include hearing, smell, taste, touch, and vision. The so-called psychic senses are merely extensions of these functions into the super-physical realms (etheric, astral, and concrete mental) by means of analogous sense organs. All of these (physical and psychical) are considered “outer” senses in the sense that they rely on organic (physical and super-physical) means and are focused on external phenomena.

There are a number of problems or challenges associated with the outer senses, not the least of which is the self-deception involved in accepting sense impressions as factual reality (rather than merely indicators of reality but having inherent distortion). All of the outer senses rely on material means (organs) and material methods (perception by virtue of sense-impression followed by (largely unconscious) interpretation). Reliance (merely or predominantly) on the outer senses means continuing the absorption in the outer or external world (and its inherent delusion of separateness (individuality)). The psychic senses certainly (potentially) broaden the range of perception, but it remains “external” and usually leads to even greater self-deception in the sense that one falsely believes thereby that one “understands” what is being perceived. The psychic senses are notoriously misleading because without effective training the psychic observer allows all sorts of personal factors to distort and influence the perception, leading to further confusion (and compounded by the fact of not realizing that one is confused).

Even ordinary sense perception is filtered (conditioned) (distorted) by personal factors (the aura) (and largely unconscious assumptions, beliefs, character, desires, expectations, experience, feelings, habits, knowledge, memory, temperament, values, etc.) so that one tends to hear (see) (feel) (smell) (taste) (touch) [perceive] what one wants to and without realization of that “wanting” and its inherent distortion of reality. This is further compounded by language and the (false) assumption of common understanding.

All of these (outer) senses are contrasted with the various inner senses which are largely undeveloped and unrealized by the bulk of humanity. The “inner” senses are those which do not rely primarily on artificial (organic) means for perception and which are not focused (primarily) on external circumstances (impressions). For the inner senses to be developed and effectively utilized, one must be free from the preponderance of delusion implied by or conveyed with reliance on the outer senses, psychic or otherwise. Examples of “inner” senses are discernment (discrimination) and intuition. Both rely on the (refined and uplifted) mind for brain-registration (conscious awareness) but are essentially a matter of understanding and realization rather than “feeling” in the emotional sense or rationalization in the concrete mental sense. Both discernment and intuition (direct realization) are effective in inverse proportion to ego, as it is the ego which traditionally blinds and blocks the inner senses. Of course the outer senses are also more effective where the aura is clear and unbiased by personal factors (material absorption) (personality-centeredness) (self-centeredness) (ego).

The key to effective utilization of the outer senses is the development and primary reliance on the inner senses, while the key to effective utilization of the inner senses is freedom from the bias conveyed by the (personal) aura. As long as one has any mental or emotional attachment, one is not free. In freedom (humility) comes clarity, discernment, and direct (self) realization.

Perception and Truth 1

One can make a distinction between what is true in fact and what is merely believed or perceived to be true. However there are a number of problems in these regards. (1) One generally fails to make that distinction between perception and truth, as one generally unconsciously equates what is perceived to be true to be actually true. (2) One can never really know what is (absolutely) true, because the nature of human experience (manifested existence) is dominated by relativity. Perception is a relative and partial process and perspective. Knowledge, understanding, and wisdom are all relative concepts. The human being is not omniscient and does not perceive the whole of anything and is therefore subject to very substantial limitations.

(3) All perception (and associated beliefs) is (are) biased by whatever one already believes (and by whatever other conditioning is in effect). Our beliefs and opinions (i.e., our (presumed) knowledge and understanding) serve to help in our experience and expression but also to hinder in the sense of that bias and resulting conditioning. If one believes something, then there is a tendency to interpret whatever one perceives to support what one believes, neglecting to some extent what may appear to be contrary to our beliefs and focusing largely on what appears to support our beliefs and values. We tend to see and hear and feel whatever we want to see and hear and feel. We tend to seek to be comfortable and “accept” whatever generates comfort and “reject” whatever lessens that comfort. This problem is exaggerated wherever beliefs become opinions, i.e., wherever one is attached to one’s beliefs. (4) One generally does not believe that one is biased, that one is attached to one’s beliefs, etc.

(5) The ego is a help and a hindrance. It is the ego or self-centered aspect of the lower (personality) consciousness that does whatever it takes to sustain its own (artificial) existence. It is the ego that makes judgments, has beliefs, forms opinions, etc. These things (judgment, beliefs) are relatively necessary to ordinary (practical) human existence (experience and expression) but become substantial hindrances to the spiritual student (who seeks to transcend these limitations of lower (personality) consciousness, in union with the higher). It is the ego that prevents or inhibits any realization that might threaten its own

position and influence. (6) One normally fails to make any distinction between ego and (real) self. Most people operate as if they were their respective egos, without any realization that they are, indeed, something else (higher, deeper, more inclusive). In other words, what most people "are" is merely the most superficial part of what they truly are. That superficial part is still (relatively) real and useful, but it is not even a substantial part of the whole self.

(7) Tentativeness is relatively awkward for most people. Most people find comfort in being attached to beliefs, to things being right or wrong, one way or some other way, of things being settled or established with certainty, without gradation or relativity or tentativeness. But truth is, unfortunately, quite relative, and in order to be able to (effectively) embrace truth, one needs to embrace relativity and tentativeness, and transcend the whole arena of having opinions.

(8) There is a tendency of the ego to make relativity and tentativeness excuses for evading the truth as it could be more effectively understood and to use relativity as a means of justifying what one wants to believe or do rather than recognizing what is truly needed and appropriate and acting accordingly. Shades of grey do not convey the right to ignore the conscience.

† Commentary No. 1034

Perception and Truth 2

There is relativity to truth. Since the whole is generally not regarded (and is not practically or practicably regardable), truth is relative and depends on the context of the truth being regarded and the context or conditioning (bias) of the person or consciousness regarding. That which is beyond one's experience is most difficult to properly perceive and interpret. The natural human tendency is to perceive everything in terms according to one's own previous experience and understanding (and beliefs), however limited (partial) and unrelated (and unrealistic) that experience and understanding (bias) may be.

There is also tentativeness to truth as it is perceived and embraced. Information may be regarded as true, as tentatively true, of undetermined truth,

tentatively false, or false. The human tendency is to perceive something as either true or false. With some measure of honesty and objectivity, one can perceive something as being undetermined in truth. But, believing something as true or believing something as false is limiting and inhibiting of understanding. Believing something as true or believing something as false conveys inertia to deeper or broader understanding, even if what is believed is relatively correct.

For the spiritual student there is a more potent range of embracing truth, and that is to perceive something as relatively and tentatively true (or as relatively and tentatively false (or as undetermined in truth)). In this way the inertia of belief (which leads to having opinions or attachments to beliefs) and the inertia of conditioning are minimized (and eventually transcended) and the student is more able to remain open to deeper and broader understanding. However, to be effective in this regard one must learn to minimize the role of the intellect. If the ring of truth is determined largely by the intellect then all conclusions should be suspect. If the ring of truth is less conclusive and determined largely through intuition, then there should be some (tentative and relative) confidence.

The human being experiences normally primarily through a process that is largely unconscious, involving observation, perception, judgment, and conclusion. Perception is clouded and hindered or constrained by beliefs and conditioning. The intellect tends to judge and thereby convert beliefs into opinions resulting in more substantial bias. However, the student who remains relatively open-minded, who is more conscious in observing and perceiving, and who tempers the process of judgment and conclusion, is more able to realize the truth. In this sense, perception with openness leads to realization, and perception with closed-ness leads to judgment and opinion.

The whole process is compounded further through the distinction between what one really believes and what one merely thinks one believes. What one believes is generally not the same as what one thinks one believes or what one professes to believe. What one really believes, one believes on unconscious levels and results in some appreciable extent of manifestation through character, temperament, and values, even while there is little conscious realization of same. For someone who is basically honest and uncontrived, what one believes consciously becomes what one believes unconsciously. Otherwise there is a growing tension between the two aspects of belief. In either case, the spiritual

student should endeavor to be consciously aware of the subconscious dimension (beliefs, conditioning, and other biases) and to avoid “having” conclusive beliefs (opinions).

† Commentary No. 1215

Non-Conscious Factors in Perception

One of the problems with perception is that there are so many non-conscious factors, so much of which a person is generally unaware. Most people are not aware that they are biased and conditioned, that their desires and beliefs and opinions directly affect their manner (process) of perceiving and the content of perception. Most people are not aware that they are conditioned and mechanical in their thinking, by all of their experience, by all of what they already believe, by all of what they want to believe.

Most people are completely unaware of the true nature of the physical world and the true nature (object) of the human presence in this world. Most people take for granted whatever it is that appears to them through the senses. Most people see whatever is convenient for them to see. The world appears to be so, therefore (unconsciously) it is presumed to be so. People (groups) (countries) (races) appear to be separate from one another, and therefore people act accordingly. Most people unconsciously embrace only the apparent physical reality, without appreciating the underlying energies and forces, without appreciating the cause and effect relationships that govern experience in this world. And those people who are able to perceive things differently (correctly or otherwise) (with or without understanding) are often shunned, because they threaten the artificial stability (status quo) of things (ego).

The key to overcoming these limitations is for the spiritual student to become conscious, to become consciously aware of limitations, of actuality in thinking and feeling and perceiving, to awaken to the extent and nature of maya (glamour) (illusion). To achieve clarity in thinking is not easy. To become consciously aware of the actuality of things is very difficult, because virtually every force in the external world is inertial and encourages a person to remain asleep. And much of the personality nature (motivation) (conditioning) contributes directly to creating and sustaining these delusions. Overcoming

these non-conscious factors requires consciousness, awareness, realization, based in determination and intelligent preparation.

Much of a person's basis for experience and expression in the lower worlds is based on unconscious and assumptive beliefs. This is fine for ordinary experience and expression, which after all requires that a person be asleep. But for the spiritual student who is nearing the end of experience in the lower sense, it becomes increasingly necessary to wrestle with those unconscious factors, to realize their existence, to recognize their nature, and to overcome their influence through replacing them with more realistic, more qualified factors (i.e., going to sleep at a higher level). Eventually, however, the self-realized spiritual student is able to be directly aware of all of these things, without being compromised by them.

In order to become aware of otherwise non-conscious factors in perception a person must learn to be observant in a wholly detached manner, without judging, without analyzing, without drawing conclusions. Just observing things as they appear to be, without judging, leads eventually to being able to perceive things as they are (what is is necessarily substantially different than what appears to be). Being honest in every sense is absolutely essential. Being open-minded and non-judging likewise. To consider the possibility of things rather than believing things. To act and proceed in accordance with one's values without being attached to those values. To consciously realize that one is growing and deepening and that in this process of growing and deepening one's values necessarily grow and deepen as well.

People and Perception

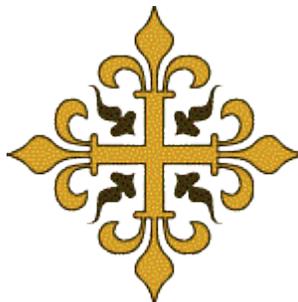
People tend to perceive each other in various ways, largely according to their conditioning and expectations. There are people as they are. There are people as they appear to be. And there are people as they are imagined to be. If one fails to realize which of these three means are being utilized, then perception becomes rather more complicated and likewise the consequences and implications.

When people meet there is a tendency to perceive each other according to the facades that are faced, consciously or otherwise, deliberately or otherwise. Similarly and simultaneously, when people meet there is a tendency to perceive each other according to superficial impressions (e.g., physical appearance, body language, credentials), according to stereotypes that are generally unconsciously embraced. This is perceiving people as they appear to be rather than as they are. If the existence of the likely or potential difference between appearance and reality is recognized, then there is a possibility of learning the truth of someone. Otherwise one's perception is compounded and confused, as inferences are made (usually unconsciously) based upon appearances rather than truth.

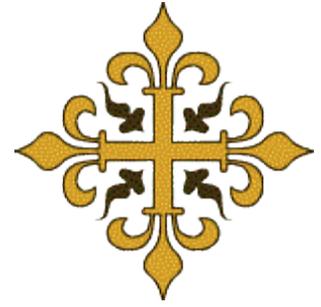
The worst case is a matter of unconsciously perceiving someone wrongly (superficially), based on conditioning, appearances, etc. The next-to-worst case is a matter of making judgments about someone, likewise wrongly and superficially (as all judgments are in some sense both wrong (limited) and superficial). Far better to not judge, but to remain non-judgingly observant, to learn more of someone and to simply appreciate whatever there is to be appreciated. In remaining open to the truth, without judging, without forming opinions, without making inferences or assumptions, without drawing conclusions, then is there a real possibility of apprehending the truth. As a general rule, one should accept people as they seem to be, and as one learns more then people can be accepted more so as they are. But one should not assume that a person is as he or she appears to be, even if that person truly believes that his or her appearance is genuine. For in most instances it is simply not so.

Another complication arises from the absence of knowledge or understanding about someone. People have the tendency not only to stereotype but to actually (largely unconsciously) imagine what someone is like, filling in the gaps with however one would like to perceive them to be (much like many people “project” how they would like people to see them, even if it is not consistent with how they really are (and in some instances not even consistent with how they perceive themselves to be)). The problem is that as one gains experience with someone, the new information that is inconsistent with the imagined person tends to be ignored or discounted, instead of being assimilated and realized and accepted. It is therefore important that the student simply be aware of the role of imagination, and being honest about it, then being able to adapt to the reality of someone as it is apprehended.

There is also a halo effect (and similarly an anti-halo effect), where one who is viewed favorably (unfavorably) continues to be viewed favorably (unfavorably) regardless of evidence to the contrary. In other words people tend to perceive people as they want to perceive them (if not as they want to be perceived), rather than even as they appear to be, and rarely as they are. In this whole process (people and perception), it is not how a person is imagined to be that matters, nor how they appear to be, nor even how they are. What matters is awareness, and how honest the perceiver is about all of this.



Section 5.41



Maya

- In a sense maya, glamour, and illusion are a single phenomenon, with maya being maya-glamour-illusion on physical and etheric levels, glamour being maya-glamour-illusion on emotional or astral levels, and illusion being maya-glamour-illusion on mental or intellectual levels. More properly, maya is the Sanskrit term that embraces maya-glamour-illusion and indicates the cosmic illusion of duality, or appearance in contrast with underlying reality, of that which covers or hides reality and encourages (compels) the deception of external focus. Maya is the fundamental basis of limitation, and includes the common notions of matter, individuality, and ego.

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Maya is both the power which makes phenomenal existence and perception thereof possible, and the power which englamours consciousness and leads to comprehension (illusion) of external reality as reality. That which is changeless in the abstract sense is considered reality, while that which is transient and subject to change in the practical sense is considered illusory, not in the sense of non-existence, but in the sense that what appears to be is not, generally, what it appears to be. The external world exists, but the human perception and understanding of that world is illusory. By virtue of absorption on mundane levels, "man" has fabricated ideas based upon external impressions which constitute serious and substantial, albeit temporarily necessary, illusion. This fabrication results from man's need to interpret and understand his existence in these lower worlds (without any realization of subjective reality). Through evolution in consciousness, clarity of perception and realization of the illusory nature of external existence is gradually developed. Through gradual and progressive realization, the various pairs of opposites (contrasts) (duality) (illusion of separation) are resolved and a more unitary consciousness is unfolded.

In a deeper sense, maya implies and conveys comprehensive knowledge, understanding, even wisdom. In this sense maya is formative consciousness, that which facilitates experience and expression in the lower, relatively objective worlds of human endeavor. Formative consciousness embraces the external universe, observing, measuring, judging, etc., and therefore is a

distraction in consciousness from that which is real (inner reality). The experience and expression of formative consciousness is necessary to the human passage through externalization (lower worlds), yet, ultimately, having fulfilled the needed external experience, one must transcend formative consciousness and associated limitations and overcome all of maya, glamour, and illusion.

In the practical sense, maya refers to being absorbed in the illusion (illusory aspects) of physical-etheric existence (while glamour refers to being absorbed on emotional levels and illusion refers to being absorbed on mental levels). Maya contributes veils upon (within) veils in (of) consciousness, contriving walls and barriers to realization which, having served their defensive and protective purposes (i.e., having provided temporary (wrong but acceptable) understanding of external existence), must be faced and overcome (as consciousness is better able to comprehend greater and deeper truth).

In the final analysis, maya is that which facilitates the illusion that self-fulfillment occurs externally rather than internally, that external reality is more real than internal reality, when in fact, internal reality (God) (the soul) is more real than the external (more properly the internal and the external are one and the same reality, with the external not being what it appears to be).

† Commentary No. 1201

Maya 1

The basis of maya is matter. Maya is a characteristic of material existence, of consciousness immersed in matter (form) at the physical and etheric levels. Since matter and consciousness (and spirit) are so interrelated, in one sense consciousness descends into matter, in another consciousness is induced within matter, in yet another consciousness emerges from matter. All are true. There is the consciousness of matter (material existence) (elemental life). And there is the consciousness of the form (physical body and etheric double or vital body). And there is the consciousness of the human being at the personality level, which necessarily works through the consciousness of the form and the consciousness of the elemental life (atoms of the body).

The consciousness of the elemental life is very, very primitive. It is material consciousness. It cannot be dissociated from material existence. It is so bound to matter that for all practical purposes it is synonymous with matter. At the elemental level there is no awareness, even unconscious, of anything external to the atom, even though there is interaction with other atoms. Interactions are entirely mechanical (vibrational). The relative quality of consciousness at the elemental level is very coarse and therefore very unresponsive to anything higher. It is analogous to a very, very deep sleep.

The consciousness of the form (body) is much more "advanced" over that of the elemental life, in the sense that the lifewave is much more advanced, in the sense that there has been much more experience and it (the form) (its consciousness) is much more complex than that at the elemental level. But the consciousness of the form is very primitive compared with that of human consciousness. And the consciousness of the form is very closely linked to the elemental level, as it is immersed wholly in the physical realm. It cannot "see" beyond its own existence as a body and is not even aware of its own existence as a body. Awareness at this level is primarily internal and to some extent an awareness of external forces that have been brought into the body (there not being awareness that they are external or that there is even an external existence). For all practical purposes, the consciousness of the form is wholly bound to that of the underlying elemental consciousness. It is simply more complex. But it suffers virtually the same limitations as the elemental. And yet it has its own (conditioned) purpose.

But there is also the consciousness of the human being at that level, the animal consciousness associated with the physical body and etheric double. This is very much more "advanced" than that of the form itself and it is the animal consciousness that animates and expresses through the form. But the animal consciousness is not self-conscious. The animal consciousness is very much immersed in matter. The animal consciousness cannot distinguish between itself and the form, any more than the form can distinguish between itself and the elemental consciousness. Because none of these lives (consciousness) have the ability to distinguish anything.

But the animal (body) consciousness has much more of an independent nature than that of the form or that of the elemental. The animal consciousness is

related both to the consciousness of the form and elemental, and to the astral or desire nature at the next higher plane of consciousness. The animal consciousness is still immersed in matter, but it is subject much more to internal forces (desire) and external forces (astral sense impressions).

† Commentary No. 1202

Maya 2

The human being in incarnation experiences and expresses itself through the personality, and the personality is a composite of four vehicles in consciousness, a dense physical body, an etheric (energy) (vital) body (double), an astral or emotional body, and a concrete mind. Each of these vehicles in consciousness has a life and consciousness of its own. Each of these vehicles in consciousness is composed in turn of elemental substance. And the human (animal) personality is simply imposed upon the forms and immersed in their nature.

This is the real, underlying basis for maya, that the human being at the personality level is almost wholly immersed in form (vehicles of lower consciousness) which is (are) in turn immersed in elemental (material) substance. It is as if consciousness is imprisoned in matter to such an extent that there is no conscious awareness of being imprisoned or constrained. There is such a complete identification with lower consciousness (form) and such a complete immersion in material existence, that the waking-consciousness is almost completely and wholly conditioned and constrained by this (lower) experience. This is, of course, part of the plan. The "fall" of humanity into the material worlds does have purpose (evolution in consciousness) (from being wholly blind and unconscious to being self-aware and self-realized in some collective sense).

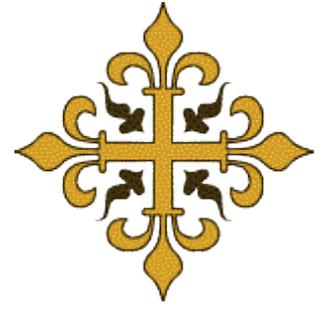
But humanity immersed in dense matter is involved (entangled) with other lives and not even aware that it is so. The various elemental lives (consciousness) have their own (unconscious) perspective, and the human being accepts and embraces that perspective, unconsciously. The form (lives) (consciousness) has its own (unconscious) perspective, and the human being accepts and embraces

that perspective, unconsciously. And the human animal (personality as a whole, and in its several parts, integrated or otherwise) has its own (unconscious) perspective(s), and the human being accepts and embraces that (them), unconsciously. In other words, the human being so (unconsciously) identifies with the lower nature that it unconsciously embraces all of that existence, believing (unconsciously) that that is what it (the human being) really is.

What this means is that even the (ordinary) thinking and feeling human being is wholly immersed in material existence and identified with the material nature, being almost wholly blind to the broader, deeper reality of human existence. Maya, then, is the cloak of material existence on physical and etheric levels, that blinds the human consciousness, that "causes" the human being to perceive itself as a separate, individual, self-determined entity (none of which is actually true), that "causes" a person to identify with the lower nature. Thus the materialism (egoism) (illusion of separateness, illusion of individuality) (separativeness) of the human personality directly results from the condition (maya) of the world.

While maya refers primarily to the physical (etheric) component of immersion in matter, glamour is analogous to maya at the astral or emotional level, and illusion is analogous to maya (and glamour) at the concrete mental level. Maya is relatively easy to overcome and transcend intellectually (yet somewhat more difficult in practice). It just requires knowledge and understanding (and then training and application) (re-conditioning). But overcoming and transcending glamour and illusion is much more difficult, as they are much more subtle than maya.

Section 5.42



Glamour

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

Glamour and Illusion

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

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

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

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

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

† Commentary No. 66

The Glamour of the Path

One of the more difficult problems of the spiritual path is the glamour of the path itself. Many students on the path (with some level of commitment) are afflicted with the glamour of the path who would otherwise be dependable and useful. Though a great many more aspirants are limited by earthly and phenomenal (psychic) glammers, there are those who are aware of the path but are quite absorbed by the glamour of the path.

The glamour of the path consists of the astral (emotional) and mental residual energies of personality-attachment to various aspects of the path. These include the glamour of the masters (of human evolution) and the hierarchy, and

of “personal” contact with the masters; the glamour of the special or chosen group or individual; the glamour of service; and the glamour of the various personalities. But these glammers are essentially ego-centered and distract the student from achieving illumination, soul-contact, and useful expression. The masters have no glamour and no personal attachments. Actual contact with the masters comes only through consistent soul-consciousness, and is quite impersonal and normally subjective and generalized. This subjective relationship comes when the student has proven himself to be relatively selfless, stable, dependable, and useful. Such a student has practically mastered his mind and emotions and is relatively immune from the ordinary glammers and the glamour of the path.

The chosen group does not exist. Likewise there is no one special path to enlightenment. No group or individual in incarnation is especially important, for all mature spiritual organizations, groups, and individuals are utilized impersonally according to their talents and capabilities for good. Each intelligent aspirant and disciple contributes in the one work. All paths to God and enlightenment are aspects of the one path. Those who feel themselves or their work (or their group) to be especially important are separating themselves from the (real) spiritual work to be performed. Such glamour breeds vanity and self-deception. Those students who have touched their own souls through the meditative life are those who can begin to lose themselves (lower selves) in the one soul and begin to see through the dark clouds of glamour. Every soul is important; yet no particular soul is especially important. The souls of men are one, and in that greater unity is so much greater relevance.

It is helpful to know of the existence of the masters and a greater plan for human evolution, as this offers encouragement for the aspirant to deepen himself spiritually and to cooperate with intelligent purpose. The useful worker is more concerned with the work to be done (living the spiritual life) and how to best do it than with useless personality reactions to the various glammers. The work comes first; personal aspects are subordinated and are ultimately eliminated. Service to humanity is performed naturally and consequently as a result of self-deepening. There are no rewards or recognitions sought by the disciple. The quiet joy that comes with doing that which is right to do is a sufficient reward for the discipline and dedication required.

It is not that particular and various glammers are dangerous in themselves (as stumbling blocks or impediments); it is, rather, that these glammers create and sustain an atmosphere that distracts and burdens the spiritual student (as inertia). The real problem of glamour is this absorbing atmosphere that can render the aspirant relatively (spiritually) impotent. The student on the path must be free from these limitations, ever concerning himself with the living of the spiritual path.

† Commentary No. 429

Glamour and the Path

The large majority of people who are attracted to the path in its public context are not attracted naturally but, rather, are attracted through glamour. The natural attraction is based upon progressed intelligence, quality of consciousness, and a natural affinity for the higher qualities of the soul. The attraction through glamour is based on purely personal considerations (ego, personalities, exclusivity, mystique, etc.), while the natural attraction is based upon generally impersonal considerations (the call of the soul, love of humanity, devotion to God, natural evolution of consciousness, etc.).

The publicity associated with the path is largely personality-oriented and therefore misleading and misrepresentative. Public information is generally provided by unqualified persons, for the qualified groups and their personnel tend mostly toward non-public activities. The public organizations do provide a service in the sense of interpreting the path in terms that more people can understand. The public domain may be attractive to the personality, but it is not at all attractive to the soul. Consequently, the real work of the path occurs not in the public domain but on more subtle levels and in more subtle ways. The public (personality-centered) context compounds the potential of glamour and makes it difficult for even a sincere personality to recognize truth. But it is just this difficulty that provides a means of distinction, for one who faces these glammers (the various personal glammers and the glamour of the path) and (eventually) overcomes them has achieved a great deal.

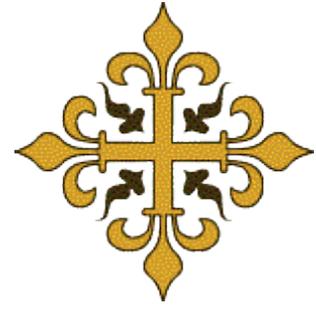
The path can be viewed as a continuous, progressive test (and resulting transformations) of the student's ability to perceive the truth in the face of

adversity (glamour) (personality distraction) (absorption). The student must recognize the basic principles of the path and distinguish them from a vast amount of misleading information. The student must recognize the self-deception potential of the mind (personality) (ego) and become more and more humble (which is necessary in order to overcome the more subtle glammers). The student must become relatively impersonal, in order to see through the vast miasma of personal energies, glammers, distractions, absorption, etc. And the student must become free to progress intelligently, without the imposition of mass consciousness (which means the student must learn to discriminate external pressures from the truth (reality) of higher (inner) consciousness).

The student must also recognize the relativity of things (even subtle glammers) and achieve the poise and confidence to face the greater (eternal) challenge. Thus the student must learn to discriminate fairly and objectively (eventually intuitively) and honestly appraise matters knowing that in progress comes greater truth and a letting go of that once held in truth (meaning that all truth is relative and tentative).

The problem of self-assessment is also compounded by glamour. The ego will naturally lead the gullible personality to believe he is much further evolved than is the case, providing superficial proofs to support the inflated assessment. Thus the majority of people who think they are on the path (who are not) also think of themselves as much farther along than they really are. The truly humble student (e.g., the accepted disciple or initiate) thinks of himself merely as a disciple (or generically, as a spiritual student). The place of a person relative to the path cannot be hidden from its guardians, but more importantly, the place of a person is not important; what is important is the overall quality of consciousness and the attitude of subordinating personality interests to the obligations (requirements) of the path.

Section 5.43



Illusion

- As one evolves in consciousness there is a progressive transcendence of illusions on various levels. On the mental level there is the possibility of overcoming maya and glamour, but this is very difficult and requires considerable refinement and habits of detachment. Ultimately, the human being overcomes much of the illusions in which he or she lives, but it is only as the student passes on to the intuitive levels that illusions on the mental plane are transcended. Of course, evolution beyond these levels is a matter of progressively replacing various illusions by relatively more subtle illusions.

Illusion 1

Maya is perhaps the most deeply ingrained aspect of conditioning that a human being must necessarily overcome in order to ascend beyond these material levels of consciousness. But in understanding maya, and through self-observation, there is a relatively clear process for transcending this lowest expression of maya-glamour-illusion.

Glamour on its level (astral) is inherently more difficult to deal with; it is more complex. While a person tends to be wholly unconscious of maya, a person tends to semi-consciously involve himself (herself) in glamour, knowing to some extent that there is something there, but not realizing that one is actually entangled, not realizing that one is actually absorbed in something or conditioning (compromising) oneself in the process. Thus while maya is a matter of simply being asleep, glamour is a matter of actually deluding oneself. One's beliefs (perception) (perspective) (unconscious values) then compound the difficulty of overcoming this middle form of maya-glamour-illusion. But the process is still relatively clear, as it is mainly a matter of cultivating honesty (particularly self-honesty), becoming more and more objective (becoming less entangled in sense perception), observing one's own behavior, feelings, and thoughts, becoming less and less self-absorbed (personality-centered), perceiving more clearly, etc.

But overcoming maya is possible by virtue of the human being being able to function on concrete mental levels. Likewise for glamour, as a person becomes mentally-polarized and more objective, a person gradually realizes that there is glamour and that one is (has been) enamoured, a person then perceives the glammers for what they are. In awareness and understanding there is a process for resolution. This is possible because the problem is being dealt with at a higher level (concrete mental). But in dealing with illusion (maya-glamour-illusion on the concrete mental plane), most people (and most spiritual students) are unable to function properly (or at all) on intuitive levels (misunderstanding the intuition, identifying with astral impressions (emotional insight) rather than intuitive insight (buddhi), is a very substantial impediment). So while maya is most insipid, and while glamour is more insidious, illusion is much more subtle.

Glamour is compounded by desire (attachments on astral or emotional levels), but desires can eventually be recognized by an objective and observing mind. Illusion is compounded by beliefs (opinions) (attachments on concrete mental levels). And few people are willing and able to question their own beliefs or to recognize that their beliefs and opinions are substantial limitations and impediments to realization. Even if they are so willing and able, it is generally a process of replacing more limiting (less true) beliefs with less limiting (more true) beliefs. To go beyond having beliefs (without reverting to passivity in the lower sense) is very, very difficult (and requires substantial buddhi).

So. In a sense the incarnation of the human being, the descent into and through material existence, is a matter of experience through delusion, leading to a gradual awakening, followed by eventual and gradual ascension through the various higher levels of consciousness. The “work” of the ordinary human being is simply to experience, to develop the personality, and learn how to effectively express the personality “energy” in the lower worlds. In which case it does not really matter if the person is wholly engulfed by maya (glamour) (illusion).

† Commentary No. 1204

Illusion 2

But for the spiritual student it is very different. One becomes a spiritual student toward the end of the developmental (experiential) (expressive) phase, and the “work” of the spiritual student is to overcome maya, to overcome glamour, and to overcome illusion, because it is in overcoming these limitations that a person is able to contribute more toward the evolution of the (human) race as a whole and it is in transcending these limitations that a person is able to become self-realized.

The first step is to understand that there is maya (glamour) (illusion) and that a person is asleep by virtue of these things. The second step is to understand the nature of illusion (glamour) (maya) on the various levels and begin to objectively observe one’s own behavior, feelings, and thinking in the context of entanglement in the senses (delusion). The third step is to actually wrestle with

these conditioning factors (forces) (tendencies), eventually transcending them. Somewhere along the way the student realizes that the ego is simply an artificial entity produced through illusion. Then, eventually, the student realizes that he (she) has identified with that ego and must learn to distinguish the ego (not-self) from the (real) self. And, finally, the student transcends illusion (ego) and becomes self-realized.

In the meantime, however, there are many illusions. There is the illusion of the external (physical) (material) world and the illusion that people are individual, separate, entities living in that external world (instead of realizing that what appears in the world is just the shadow or reflection of what is real). There is the illusion of self-consciousness and self-determination (being self-absorbed is the normal condition for humanity entangled in the material-sensual world) (instead of realizing that the soul is something far greater, much more noble than what the person (personality) (ego) appears to be, and that that soul is the only aspect of the human being that is truly self-realized (and even then, not in the sense of ordinary self-consciousness)). There is the illusion of life in the lower worlds (the worlds merely apparent to the senses) being all that there is, and the illusion that death is the end of existence. There is the illusion of an afterlife that is not consistent with the cyclic panorama of cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis.

There are the many illusions of identification, with one's lower self (body, feelings, thought) (sense impressions), with one's family, race, religion, culture, country, etc., with one's job (work) (calling). There is the illusion of being somewhere in time and space. There is the illusion of being someone. There is the illusion of being someone special. There is the illusion of being different. There is the illusion of separateness and all of the implicate illusions thereof. There is the illusion of intellectually understanding something. There is the illusion of knowledge (understanding) (wisdom). There is the illusion of knowing oneself. There is the illusion of feeling, and the illusion of thinking.

Of course all of these things (beliefs) (perceptions) have some basis and therefore some relative truth (value), but much of it is inertial and limiting and fosters further entanglement. Illusions are very convenient, whether they are the widespread illusions inherent in human incarnation, or the self-created illusions of sense perception or the illusions born of ego and its defense.

Illusions are quite natural, and arise from whatever need the artificial existence seeks to redress. People perceive according to their desire nature. People believe what they want to, because it is convenient.

† Commentary No. 1205

Illusion 3

One of the more subtle aspects of illusion is the illusion that one can actually ever (ever actually) know anything, that one can actually ever understand anything. Believing that one can know something (believing that one does know something) and believing that one can understand something (believing that one does understand something) are substantial illusions that undermine real progress.

The truth, relatively, is that all knowledge is necessarily partial and misleading, and that all perception of (and) understanding is likewise. Thus, for the spiritual student, the emphasis is upon becoming disentangled from the senses and the ego, embracing harmlessness and honesty and humility, all of which contribute to the student eventually facing up (out) (in) to the underlying reality, which is that everything is relative and there are no absolutes, that believing in something necessarily limits one's ability to recognize or appreciate some deeper, greater, more noble truth. Thus the spiritual student eventually cultivates tentativeness, of having beliefs (values) which help guide the student through the maze of life, but without being attached to those truths (beliefs) (values), so that the student is able to adapt to increasing and expanding light (depth). Such a student may yet have beliefs, but all the while knowing that they are merely (tentative) beliefs, and subject to change as the deepening progresses. Eventually, the greatest depths are achieved as the student transcends having beliefs altogether. One overcomes being deluded, ultimately, by transcending the existence of illusion.

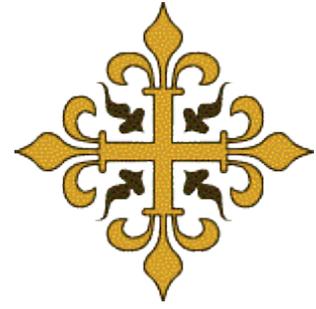
Another dimension of human nature immersed in the (delusion of the) material world is the sense of what life is all about and what can be accomplished and what can be taken along through death (transition). Some who do not recognize the afterlife might say that they enjoyed life, or that they accomplished something (fame, fortune), but in fact one cannot take "enjoyment" beyond this

life, and one cannot take either fame or fortune (or any other worldly achievement) beyond the veil. One cannot even take knowledge or understanding. But one can take character (conscience) (wisdom), for these are real accomplishments, which are assimilated by the soul and carried over to the next lifetime. Nothing else (save unresolved entanglements (karmas) that need to be worked through).

Another illusion is that of having a goal. This may be practical at the developmental (experiential) (expressive) level, but eventually the student transcends having goals. There are no ends. There is only process. Process is itself developmental, but it remains essentially a process. There is evolution in consciousness, and there is purpose implied in manifestation, but the spiritual student must ultimately focus on the process and become the process for evolution in consciousness, without regard for (attachment to) details (which are necessarily limiting). In short, one's goal is to be. Or, more properly, to not be (or to be not). Tao.

The vast majority of humanity are entangled in the senses and the ego, in fact everyone is so entangled to some extent. They are immersed in the process of entanglement. But the spiritual student is one who becomes more focused on (in) the process of detachment (disentanglement) (liberation). Through progressive and intelligent (constructive) detachment, the student overcomes maya, overcomes glamour, becomes disentangled from the sense, becomes disentangled from the ego and the realm of illusion, and embraces buddhi (the essence of the soul or higher Self).

Section 5.44



Detachment

The Process of Liberation

- The only orthodox definition of detachment that seems appropriate for the spiritual student is freedom from bias or prejudice. Certainly detachment in the spiritual aspirant or disciple should not suggest indifference or separation from worldly concerns; but rather, it should imply freedom from the limitations of physical, emotional, and mental attachments. Thus, detachment is actually the art of constructive freedom.

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For many in this world, attachment to physical things and emotional pleasures is a serious limitation in consciousness. To enjoy things and experiences is one thing; to be attached to them is quite another and more serious matter. The aspirant need not deny himself worldly possessions (in moderation), provided he is not enslaved by them. To live in luxury and to live in the world of emotional phenomena are indications of enslavement by that which is physical or emotional. Money, materials, and other things (energies) may pass through the hands of the disciple, but the disciple does not possess that which he is given custody of or responsibility for. He simply utilizes his resources as usefully and as effectively as he can. The process of denial is normally a process of overcoming the superficial needs and dependence upon illusionary or glamorous things. When these limitations are conquered, the student stands ready to apply his resources for constructive spiritual purposes, with reasonableness, moderation, and detachment. There is no excuse for the serious spiritual student to live in luxury or to appear to. Moderation implies a measure of detachment and selflessness, a concern for others rather than a concern for self-interests.

Detachment is a measure of freedom, but it is also an indication of strength and stability. The student who has properly developed the art of constructive detachment is the student who is relatively strong and stable, a student who can be depended upon to contribute unselfishly to the work that is before him to do. A student who is attached to earthly things and phenomena is a student who simply cannot be trusted with the work of discipleship. The student who has cultivated the proper quality of detachment is neither indifferent to the concerns of men nor is he cold toward others; he is interested in and concerned

about the welfare of humanity; he is warm and friendly, yet mature (unmoved by emotional or intellectual appeals). His actions and decisions are based on a set of spiritual values. He is strong and he is free to do that which is right, not necessarily that which the illusionary world expects.

The reasonably detached student remains steady through the struggles and the conflicts of life; he is not deterred by circumstances or overwhelmed by worldly events. Being relatively free from attachment (glamour and illusion), he can see somewhat clearly through the tides of life, through the misleading clouds of worldly existence. The truly detached aspirant or disciple is indeed free from bias and prejudice, in thinking and feeling and action. Such a spiritual student is not enslaved by opinions; he has achieved a freedom equivalent to usefulness. And yet, simultaneously, he is ever true to his exoteric (earthly) responsibilities as well as he is true to the soul that he is.

The art of detachment is a progressive art based upon self-analysis and awareness. The aspirant must progressively determine his attachments and free himself from them. He must find the proper balance between the personal and the impersonal. He must continue to improve the values by which he lives in this lower world. And as the aspirant grows and deepens himself, he becomes the disciple, detached and dependable and free to serve.



Identification

Identification means the orientation of consciousness in regard to some inner or outer object, value, or reality. The orientation or association (at some depth) may be super-conscious, conscious, or subconscious (or some combination). In fact, many such (various) associations may exist simultaneously. In the external sense, the identification might be with some particular impression, value, or principle (or some set), or it may be with some individual, family, racial, cultural, or national object. In the internal sense, the identification might be with some aspect of the individuality or its instruments, or even (further) (in a contemplative way) with the inner reality of an apparently external or objective existence (such as humanity).

Most forms of external identification come about unconsciously through the conditioning effects of life in the outer (objective) world, such as the influence of society, culture, and family which is sustained by the external glamour and illusion. The values that are unconsciously identified with (and accepted) must ultimately become conscious and progressive. The path of freedom requires the individual to attain self-knowledge, and with that self-knowledge the spiritual student can begin to consciously reprogram the lower consciousness. Thus, as the individual (and analogously, the group) grows, so should the values upon which the objective life is clarified be expanded and refined, progressively and without attachment, with increasing self-control.

Identification does not necessarily imply attachment. As the quality of that which is identified with increases, and as the quality of the process is improved, there is less and less attachment. The identification of the evolving individual with a family, racial, cultural, or national unit gives way eventually to an identification with humanity, life itself, and ultimately to that which is cosmic or universal. And yet, the universal identification is of greater reality (coexistence) and lesser attachment than anything of a more personal nature. Personal (external) identification binds. Impersonal (more universal) identification liberates.

The process of internal identification parallels that for external values. The identification of the waking-consciousness with the physical body gives way to identification with the emotions (feelings) and the mind (and its thought-forms). Identification with the personality is eventually replaced by the identification of (with) the soul. In each successive transition, a crisis and transformation of consciousness is implied. Inner identification carries with it a relative reality (unification) (experience) (inseparability) beyond the association of thought with objective; for inner identification is a realization on some level, conscious or unconscious (from the standpoint of the waking-consciousness) as the case may be. The very act of identification is a lifting up (sending forth) to that plane (or object) of consciousness.

Wisdom is identification with eternal being (reality), whereas ignorance is identification with phenomenal appearance (illusion). The act of identification carries with it considerable potency for change and improvement. To identify

with eternal being is to send forth (inwardly) one's life and consciousness toward that wisdom. To identify with phenomenal appearance is to sustain the enchantment of lower existence. The power of positive thinking and projection is allied with that of identification. Identification is essentially and inherently creative and evocative. If the best of spiritual values and qualities are identified with, then the group-identification can be creatively and progressively improved.

† Commentary No. 145

Absorption

In a practical, spiritual context, absorption refers to the entire occupation of the conscious mind, the process of being absorbed. In the practical mental life of the spiritual student there are two processes of absorption which are of special concern: absorption in the mundane world and absorption in the world of the soul.

Absorption in the mundane world is one of the most peculiar problems for the spiritual student. The vast majority of intelligent human beings are completely absorbed in the mundane world. And even the vast majority of spiritual students are absorbed in mundane affairs more often than not. It is through such absorption that much of the basic human experience is attained; thus it is both natural and necessary. But for the spiritual student (as well as the intelligent, but thinking human being), progress requires that the consciousness be lifted out from mundane preoccupation. Gradually, objective experience is placed into a higher perspective which requires a relative detachment from lesser forces. Personal values are gradually refined and improved, and the mental life begins to take precedence over the mundane or worldly life.

The transition between mundane preoccupation (absorption) and mental polarization is natural and ultimately inevitable. But during that (usually very lengthy) transition period the waking-consciousness will naturally oscillate back and forth between being absorbed and not being absorbed. There are many factors which tend to keep the waking-consciousness absorbed. Personal energies and interests are paramount in sustaining absorption. Glamour (mundane experience) in its many forms is perhaps the most serious of personal

(individual and group) energies. The great planetary momentum of sustained glamour makes the task of intelligent withdrawal from the mundane consciousness a most difficult one. To be absorbed by glamour is easily the path of least resistance. Spiritual inertia is a most formidable adversary.

But, there are a few factors which encourage the upliftment of the personal life into the realm of (impersonal) mental polarization (and the sustained alignment of soul and personality). The soul itself is the most potent factor, for it gradually draws the mind (and the waking-consciousness) away from mundane preoccupation, according to the rhythmic (subjective) outpourings of the soul. The conscious mind can deliberately withdraw from mundane habits. New mental habits can be programmed to trigger withdrawal upon entering the absorbed state. The problem of absorption is complicated by the fact that the mundane world is usually entered unconsciously (by circumstance, habit, and tendentiousness). It is further complicated by the prime characteristic of absorption: the inability of the conscious mind to recognize the absorbed state while being absorbed. Therefore it is helpful to achieve conscious and subconscious mental discipline, so that self-programming becomes an effective means of avoiding absorption. It is further helpful to dwell upon impersonal, abstract, and spiritual energies, to achieve soul consciousness, and to live in the lower (objective) world from the higher standpoint.

The avoidance of mundane absorption faces another test in the need for the spiritual student to consciously live and work (serve) in a relatively mundane environment, to identify with humanity without being absorbed by the glamour and illusion of everyday human experience. It is a most difficult assignment, living in both worlds so that the energy of the higher may be made manifest in the lower; but with dedication and persistence, and with the guidance of the inner life, it becomes possible and practical.

Emotional and Mental Attachment 1

The soul being humble has no emotional or concrete mental attachments. The soul is not absorbed in mundane or personal or objective matters, no matter how apparently worthy they may seem to be. Without attachments of any sort, the soul is free to be, one with all (souls).

The serious spiritual student, who necessarily seeks to approach the soul and be wholly qualified (energized) by the soul, must necessarily take leave of the various glammers and illusions of the outer (mundane) world, let go of the rather natural (personality) attachments in the form of feelings and thoughts (ideas), and approach the soul uncluttered by these lesser things. Lifetimes can be spent overcoming the various (emotional) glammers and (concrete mental) illusions (that were built up over lifetimes) and developing the habits (qualification) of personality endeavor that preclude emotional and concrete mental attachment. Lifetimes more can be spent overcoming the more subtle (ego) attachments and limiting habits of the personality.

Much of the work to be done in this regard (detachment) (continual qualification and refinement) is relatively obvious to the intelligent or reasonably well-trained seeker, but with the advent of a life of service, the sincere spiritual student may become or remain relatively blind to the more subtle or less obvious attachments. Two of the most significant problems in this regard are imposition and a sense of importance.

Generally, it is wrong for the spiritual student to impose upon others. Generally, it is wrong for one to preclude another from thinking for himself and reaching his own conclusions. A fine line may exist between unimposing encouragement (of presentation of ideas for consideration) and the imposition of ideas. Part of the problem has to do with the relative susceptibility (passiveness) of the audience, and part has to do with the relative attachment of the presenter to the ideas being presented (imposed). Another (major) part of the problem is the ego which masks its own relationship to the ideas and methods utilized and the relative self-deception that that implies. Beliefs strongly held naturally separate the student (mind) (personality) from the soul.

It is thus ever important to strive to be relatively free from opinions, strong beliefs, etc. and to be (actively not passively) (humbly) open to refinement of beliefs and relative understanding. On the latter stages of the spiritual path, the promotion (rather than mere presentation for consideration) of ideas is strictly forbidden (for such attachment precludes spiritual qualification, no matter how correct the ideas may be). No person in incarnation (or out for that matter) can speak with genuine authority. Every idea presented must be properly considered and weighed on its own merits.

The sense of importance is also rather preclusive of higher qualification. Recognizing (perceiving) (believing) a need and seeking to fulfill that need is a relatively worthy endeavor, but if one feels that such need or endeavor is important then (1) one is attached to it (which means that the ego is involved) and therefore (2) the endeavor (attachment) is preclusive and unwarranted. Spiritual qualification is vastly more important (significant) (worthwhile) than any particular idea, project, endeavor, etc. If a student thinks that something is urgent or important then the soul (the hierarchy) (esoteric group) is simply not interested, because that thinking implies attachment and attachment is preclusive. Besides, ideas come from above, not from below. It is only the perception (relative interpretation or misinterpretation) of ideas and what we do with them that occurs below (mentally and emotionally).



Commentary No. 640

Emotional and Mental Attachment 2

Detached and humble (incidental) service effectively precludes attachment (and concomitant ego involvement). Without a sense of self-importance or superiority and without a sense of "this idea or project is important" the spiritual student is relatively free to serve with some measure of alignment with and qualification by the higher self (soul).

How a spiritual student conducts himself is much more important than what he does (the properly qualified "how" generally determines the effectiveness and relative appropriateness of "what" is done). Or in other words, the manner of service (the motive, qualification, disposition, demeanor, methods, etc.) is more

important (significant) than the particular service activities or content thereof. This is because the proper means and methods permit proper (spiritual) qualification, while emotional and mental attachments to objects, objectives, ideas, opinions, needs, etc., are more preclusive and therefore less worthy.

If a sincere spiritual student (personality) approaches the soul (esoteric group) (service) in the wrong manner (with respect to the standards appropriate to or expected of that person), he is generally, dismissed or ignored, even if the ideas brought forward by the student are very worthwhile and appropriate. Depending on the circumstances (relative consciousness), the reasons for such may or may not be revealed (self-reliance (i.e., reliance upon the soul rather than the mind (ego) (personality)) is ever necessary). Generally, ideas are considered only after the manner of presentation or approach is considered. The important aspect of this is that the spiritual student should let go of his own ideas, and being detached, approach the soul (in life and meditation) for qualification. Thereby shall the ideas worked with (and manners) be properly qualified and the involvement (distraction) of the ego minimized or eliminated.

Sometimes a student receives (perceives) (recognizes) an idea by virtue of higher impression and becomes attached to same, such attachment then precluding subsequent (proper) impression and responsiveness. The spiritual student should not be attached to ideas, should not be attached to the source of ideas (real or presumed), and should not be attached to the perceived relative significance of same. For all these emotional and concrete mental attachments impair the effectiveness of the spiritual student and disrupt the natural flow of spiritual qualification (energy) from the soul (esoteric group), through the student (mind) (heart) (personality), and to the world (environment) (service endeavor).

Sometimes a student thinks some idea is important and the need for revelation (clarification) is great, only to subsequently realize that the depth and breadth of the problem or issue is greater than perceived and therefore subject to considerable qualification and particular methods (and broader timescales); the lesson to be learned is that the mind is relatively narrow-minded, limited in understanding, and not aware (or even capable of being aware) of all the implications associated with a given idea or project. The student who presumes understanding or significance may be sincere but is nonetheless wrong in the

sense of being biased by ego and attachment. With proper humility (and dismissal of urgency or importance), the spiritual student can remain relatively free to serve effectively and appropriately, by spiritual (soul) qualification. On the other hand, in relative ignorance, the student should proceed with sincerity and open-mindedness (i.e., subject to further realization and clarification). One must proceed as best as one can, hopefully without significant distraction, without being absorbed in mundane or personal matters, and without significant emotional and mental attachments.

† Commentary No. 843

Dissociation 1

For a good cause (experience leading to evolution in consciousness), many things in the lower world have been allowed to control or influence us at the expense of (conscious awareness of) higher consciousness. In the great illusion we are led to believe that what we see before us is all that there is to life, and we compound that illusion by identifying with the most superficial aspects of our being, not realizing the true nature of things.

Thus we naturally identify with the physical body, with the emotions, and with the mind, individually or collectively, depending on the stage in consciousness. That identification leads to attachment and the exclusion of higher impressions and awareness of our true nature. And when we finally begin to realize what we are, we find that our habits in identification and attachment are so strong that it is most difficult to rise above them. At this point our evolutionary momentum is quite weak and our inertia or resistance to progress is quite strong. But whatever insight we glean, ever so vaguely at first, eventually evokes qualification and consequentially brings about some flexibility through contrast (realization of the contradiction of our true (higher) nature with that of our identification with the lower).

At this stage, the first step onward is (conscious and deliberate) dissociation. Dissociation (differentiation) is a necessary precursor to integration. We must first dissociate ourselves from, and overcome our natural identification with, the various aspects of the lower self. That dissociation brings to the focus of consciousness power and a measure of control over the dissociated elements. It

begins rather slowly and intermittently, but grows in strength and momentum, until we stand forth from that (lower) aspect and it no longer has any power to affect us as we reside in (at) the waking-consciousness. Then we are much more able to (purify) qualify (refine) that (separate) lower aspect and in that qualification draw it back into our sphere of active consciousness, as a qualified and willing instrument, rather than as an independent and often counter-productive (resistive) element of oneself. Qualification is the second step onward while integration is the third step. Thus, integration must necessarily follow dissociation and qualification.

This process (cycle) is repeated for each element of the personality, progressively, beginning with the physical body, then the emotions or astral body, and eventually the (concrete) mind as well. And then the entire personality must be dealt with similarly. Ultimately, it is the (subtle) ego that must be dissociated, qualified, and integrated. In principle, two or more aspects of the lower self (or its entirety) can be dealt with simultaneously, particularly in the recapitulatory sense, but it is generally "easier" to work sequentially progressively.

Of course, applying this entire process of dissociation, qualification, and integration is merely a technique and method of bringing about the intended results. In fact, one is all of the lower self and can never not be all of the lower self, for as long as that lower self is being manifested, but that lower self is such a small and superficial part of the whole (person), one must learn to identify with the higher self (primarily) and the whole self (eventually). But to identify with the lower self (or some aspect of life in the lower worlds) is patently misleading and self-deceptive. The spiritual student (who leads), and eventually the bulk of humanity (which must necessarily follow), must ever seek to overcome the lesser associations (deception) in pursuit of the greater truth (and the greater good).

Dissociation 2

But how do we bring about this dissociation, that we might be able to effect the needed qualification and eventual integration? Firstly, through observation, reflection (consideration), and determination. Secondly, through self-remembering and recollectedness, that we might not be distracted by or absorbed in the very activities and attachments we are seeking to dissociate from ourselves. And thirdly, through self-qualification in the sense of consciously aligning oneself with the higher and enabling that higher self to qualify the whole process.

Observation is crucial to this process. We cannot dissociate ourselves from that which we cannot see or from that of which we are unaware. If we are absorbed in some emotional attachment, for example, we are wholly unaware of the fact of that absorption. If we are merely involved in some emotional attachment, then it is possible, through the habit of self-observation, to become increasingly aware of that involvement, and that awareness will contain the power of eventual dissociation. Reflection is also crucial to this process. We must continually (if not continuously) remind ourselves of our state (in consciousness), the problem(s) at hand, and the methods we are attempting to employ. Otherwise there will be no “power” or energy conveyed to the process and our absorption will continue indefinitely. But in reflection and consideration are the seeds of increasing awareness, and a substantiation of the process of self-observation. Thus we must continually observe ourselves and all aspects of our (lower) manifestations and involvements and carefully consider the nature observed from the point of view of what we are and what we are not.

Determination is another crucial ingredient, which helps to apply (focus) the will (of the higher mind) (and its consequential energies) to the problems and processes at hand. Dedication to seeking the truth about ourselves, that we might see things (us) as they (we) really are, is a very important part of that determination, effectively characterizing the determination in our favor (constructively, in support of the higher goals). Of course understanding is also implied in all of this, that we should have a knowledge of what we are doing (or attempting to do), our purposes, methods, results, etc. The greater our

understanding and the more focused our determination, the more effective will be the methods employed.

Self-remembering and recollectedness go much further than incidental consideration. We must strive to remember ourselves at all times, identifying more and more with the higher self, and less and less with the lower self. We must know, that we are not the physical body, nor the emotions, nor even the mind. We must know, that we are not the personality nor the ego, no matter how useful these things may be. We must know, that we are the higher self, and that although that higher self embraces the lower, we must know that the self-will and independence of the lower self (and its many "I's") are not the true self. And we must know, as often as we can remember, and as honestly as we can, what we are, and how we are, both in the lower sense and in the higher sense.

Self-qualification alone will not bring about the needed results in a timely manner, but then neither will observation, reflection, and determination, nor self-remembering and recollectedness, alone. Self-qualification is the overall conditioning (more properly, un-conditioning) that overshadows all of the other aspects of this process within process. Self-qualification implicitly and unconsciously includes all of the other factors, but when self-qualification is combined with all the other factors, results are more readily achieved.

† Commentary No. 891

Dispersion

Dispersion is defined as the absence of passion, the state in which one is not influenced to distraction by strong feelings, being not affected by personal or emotional involvement. Dispersion certainly does not preclude having or expressing feelings. But it does imply and convey a sense of poise resulting from the ability to "feel" more or less objectively, remaining calm in the face of what might otherwise be considered stressing circumstances. Likewise, dispersion in no way precludes or limits any sense or expression of compassion. Indeed, it raises the sense of compassion to its own level, which is non-reactive,

yet benevolent. And dispassion does not in itself convey coldness. Indeed, spiritual dispassion and coldness are mutually exclusive.

According to Sri Samkaracarya, "External attachment is to objects of sense, internal is to egoism and the rest. It is only the dispassionate man ... who is able to renounce them." Thus dispassion is essential to spiritual progress, to overcoming the distractions of (and absorption of consciousness in) the sensual, materialistic, egoistic life. Dispassion is the means by which one reaches detachment, in overcoming the various external and internal attachments, entanglements, and involvements which limit the higher expression (quality) and prevent the student from seeing clearly and embracing the higher reality. In short, one can serve (and grow) much more effectively within humanity where one is not distracted by attachments, entanglements, and involvements. The spiritual student needs to be free of these "things" in order to participate in the (higher) flow of life and consciousness, which incidentally serves humanity much more effectively because such a student participates in humanity on a higher level and in higher ways.

Dispassion is "an attitude which imparts complete control of reactions to life, events, and circumstances. Dispassion is acceptance of God's will, and the ability to accept, with understanding, the circumstances of life." Having a higher perception or vision, or at least having faith and understanding of higher things, one is not so easily deceived or distracted by matters of a personal, spatial, or temporal (transient) nature. In learning to accept the flow of life, one is thereby more able and more free to work effectively (constructively). With dispassion one is not discouraged by apparent inner or outer circumstances, for circumstances are seen in a higher context (as transient and consequential), being only part of the flow and not the whole. One may not understand everything that "happens" but with dispassion one has the correct "attitude" toward life, which is accepting of things as they are while working progressively to improve the overall (collective) consciousness. With dispassion, one perceives things (relatively) both positively and realistically, to the extent of the quality of consciousness achieved.

According to Sri Samkaracarya, "The result of dispassion is right perception; of right perception, abstention from the pleasures of sense and ceremonial acts. The peace that comes from the realization of the true is the fruit of abstention

from ceremonial acts, from the pleasures of sense.” In renunciation of sensual things one achieves a great freedom in consciousness and for service. In the resulting right perception, progress is assured.

Dispassion implies or conveys a relative lack of prejudice, a relative impartiality, a relative lack of excitability, and a relative indifference to inconsequential things (mundane or personal matters) [i.e., having rather a focus on consequential matters]. Dispassion is thus consistent with having a higher value system.

† Commentary No. 913

Disentanglement

While many of the developed capabilities and talents of the personality, such as curiosity, a keen intellect, etc., directly serve the purpose of evolution in consciousness, having served their purpose they then become impediments to further progress because of their absorbing, distracting nature. Most people, for example, function at the instinctive level, relying on physical and emotional sense-impression. As long as a person is entangled or absorbed or englamoured at that level, he cannot move on to intellect. And as long as a person is entangled or absorbed or englamoured in the intellect (and ego), no matter how noble the life may be, he cannot therefore move on to intuition.

The mind by its very nature seeks entanglement. It naturally looks out toward the world, identifies with its worldly or at least personality-centered experience, on whatever level it is polarized. It seeks and achieves attachments and entanglements, by way of personal relationships, by way of sensation-seeking, by way of having beliefs and opinions, by way of dominating the waking-consciousness such that the higher impressions, from the soul, are ignored. Instead of listening, the bulk of humanity are too busy noise-making, through idle or absorbing (petty or egoic) conversation, and through incessant thinking and feeling, being distracted by memory or anticipation (the past (present) (future)), being distracted by interests of various kinds. Even in a life of practical service, the bulk rely on personality-involvement.

But the disciple must pass beyond all of this in order to become responsive to the soul, in order to serve much more effectively, in order to focus on what really matters rather than what the personality thinks or feels matters. The disciple must work toward that state in which he or she does not identify with the body or mind in any way. That lower self must be viewed as an instrument and not as oneself. The focus of attention must be raised to the soul and one must let go of all things associated (identified) with the personality. This does not mean that one must give up all of one's possessions, but that one must no longer be attached to any possessions. Likewise beliefs and opinions.

The disciple must loosen the hold of the personality (mind) (ego) (feelings) (intellect) and its various attachments however noble they may appear to be. And the disciple must learn to listen and observe rather than persist in talking and thinking. The disciple is properly reticent in speaking and thinking. So that speaking and thinking are evoked by the higher energy (of the soul) rather than the lower, absorbing energy of the personality life and its conditioning, habits, and patterns. Of course the disciple must also learn discrimination, to be able to discern the difference between the soul and the masquerading mind, between reality and illusion. The disciple must pass from the unity of the integrated (dominating) (string) (independent) (self-absorbed) personality through the field of duality (personality and soul) and discrimination to the unity of the soul.

Anything that empowers the personality to function independently of the higher self must be disentangled. Anything that interests the personality must ultimately be disentangled. Eventually, the soul can shine through the disentangled (purified, detached, responsive) personality without impediment. That soul functions intuitively, without thinking about what is happening or what needs to be done. Such a person works appropriately, without recourse to conventions, traditions, personality interests, intellect, ego, or any other inhibiting factor. In humility, there is no self-will, there is only the will of the higher self, in the context of the whole of life.

Detachment 2

In a sense, the first stage of the spiritual path is a matter of approach, learning, and preparation for spiritual work, e.g., studying the basic philosophy of the path, embracing the preliminary discipline, refining the personality, etc. In this sense, the second stage of the spiritual path is a matter of deepening, of upliftment, of actual spiritual work. Likewise, the third stage is a matter of ascension (completion) (fulfillment). While much progress can be made in the first stage without necessarily becoming impersonal and achieving detachment, both are necessary to the second stage. For the third stage a certain freedom from detachment is also required.

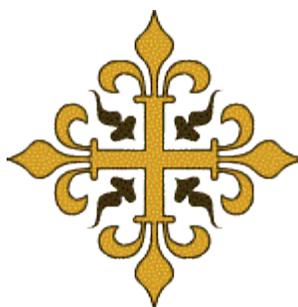
According to Sri Samkaracarya, "External attachment is to objects of sense, internal is to egoism and the rest. It is only the dispassionate man ... who is able to renounce them." Both kinds of detachment are necessary for the spiritual student to work effectively. Without detachment there are just too many conditions for the consciousness to function effectively or freely. With detachment comes increasing freedom from all of the conditioning that so inhibits spiritual growth, deepening, awareness, etc. The properly detached and dispassionate spiritual student is in no way separated from humanity or cold and insensitive to the condition of humanity. But the properly detached and dispassionate spiritual student is able to see (relatively) quite clearly and express the greater, impersonal love (of the higher self) much more effectively by virtue of freedom from encumbrance (i.e., the delusion of the senses and the delusion of ego).

Detachment is "a state of impersonal observation. Through detachment one learns to withdraw one's interest and consciousness from the things of the senses and the calls of the lower nature. More and more one assumes the consciousness of the soul." Detachment affords awareness, seeing things as they are, not as we expect them to be due to our conditioning (desires, beliefs, opinions, bias, prejudice, etc.). Detachment affords freedom and that freedom in the personality (lower) nature allows the soul (higher) nature unimpeded access for expression of the higher qualification. The process of detachment, of

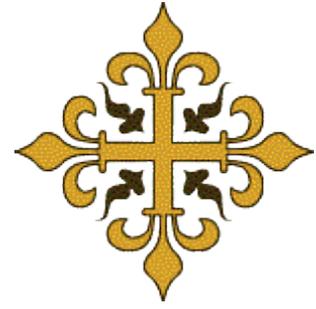
becoming unentangled from the senses (and their objects) is a relatively long and difficult undertaking.

The key to proper detachment is balance. Without balance, detachment becomes a negative or separative condition in consciousness. With balance, detachment becomes a positive and non-separative condition in consciousness. In this sense, balance is implied between the head (mind) and the heart (soul), with reliance on the heart. It is the mind (intellect) and the emotional nature that get entangled in maya (glamour) (illusion) [sense impressions and ego]. Detachment implies a letting go of all attachments (to objects, impressions, peoples, and ideas (beliefs and opinions)) and entanglements (etheric, emotional, and intellectual) without passing judgment (which is just another form of attachment). Mature relationships, founded upon respect and consideration (but not attachment) are simply not (negatively) affected by detachment.

When the mind and heart are free from attachments and entanglements, the spiritual student is free to observe all things in an unbiased and unprejudiced (unconditioned) manner. This is sometimes called "higher qualification" but really means unconditioned experience and expression. For the properly detached and dispassionate student, it is simply not possible to "have" opinions, make judgments, or in any other way separate oneself from the soul and humanity.



Section 5.45



Spiritual Absorption

The Union of Mind and Soul

- Spiritual absorption means the absorption of the conscious mind in the world of the soul. Spiritual absorption is the absence of maya, glamour, and illusion. Spiritual absorption is the eventual consequence of detachment, i.e., true freedom. Spiritual absorption implies balance between the head and heart and not inconsiderable refinement leading to proper integration and alignment.

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Spiritual absorption means the absorption of the conscious mind (the waking-consciousness) (and the entire personality) in the world of the soul, in direct contrast to the phenomenon of mundane absorption. Spiritual absorption requires the direct cooperation and complete alignment of soul and personality.

In the spiritually absorbed state, the waking-consciousness may not have any conscious awareness on personality levels (physical, emotional, and concrete mental) or there may be a form of (indirect) perimeter awareness in which the waking-consciousness is aware of internal (personality) conditions or conditions at the periphery of the aura, but in either case being detached from any conditions in the lower worlds. There may be a partially absorbed state in which the waking-consciousness has a (self-imposed) limited ability to interact with the lower state of consciousness and the immediate environment.

Among the goals of the spiritual student are the elimination of the susceptibility (tendency) toward mundane absorption, and the cultivation of the ability to enter and withdraw from the spiritually absorbed state at will. The spiritual student needs to be continuously aligned with the soul and should be able to pass between the spiritually absorbed state and a state of intelligent (and fully conscious) interaction with the lower worlds, at will. Serious spiritual meditation and continued personality refinement are the means of achieving that ability. From the spiritually absorbed state, the energies of the soul (and its group) may flow unimpeded, and even more so than while (simply) in a state of alignment; but there can be little conscious control or direction of those energies in the lower worlds. That is as it should be, for the student who can easily achieve the spiritually absorbed state has a personality that is so purified and disciplined that it functions instinctually as a consequence of personality conditioning and training. The properly prepared personality is an effective extension of the soul itself.

There is, however, a phenomenon of the deception (glamour) of spiritual withdrawal. An individual may (without spiritual achievement) attempt to withdraw from the lower worlds, either temporarily or permanently, while still

in incarnation. The appearance (deception) of spiritual absorption may be achieved, when actually the individual is simply absorbed on astral or concrete mental (personality) levels. Those who are especially susceptible to the glammers of the spiritual path might do well to guard against such distraction. The purpose of the spiritual student is not to withdraw from the lower life (world), but to so conquer the lower life (personality) that the interaction (expression) of the individuality (the soul) and its personality with the outer (objective) world becomes spiritually meaningful.

Directly or indirectly, the spiritual student has work to do in the lower worlds; otherwise there would be no incarnation. The student (who can) may find the need for occasional or even frequent periods of spiritual absorption throughout the incarnation, but the purpose of such is to assist in the expression of the (higher) spiritual energies in the lower worlds, for regeneration and the elimination (through spiritual strength) of periods of mundane absorption. The need for balance is (almost) paramount, if the spiritual student is to effectively express the needed energies and serve as a meaningful observer in the human world. Through daily spiritual meditation and continued reference to the aligned state of heart and mind, the spiritual student can remain (reasonably) balanced between the world of activity and the world of the overshadowing (indwelling) soul.

† Commentary No. 1045

Spiritual Absorption 1

The notion of spiritual absorption, like many aspects of metaphysics and theosophy, means different things to different people. But there are generally two meanings, one that prevails primarily in the “new age” or “new thought” arena and one that prevails more in the realm of personality-transcendence.

In either case, spiritual absorption is a phenomenon or experience that is meaningful to spiritually-minded people.

In the first case of “new age” or experiential spiritual absorption, it implies an uninhibited state in which a person simply lets go of most (all) constraints and participates in external life. For the good-natured, spiritually-minded person,

this means feeling connected to all of life in its external sense, of “going-with-the-flow” of personality interests. In this sense there is a very real potential for feeling connected with (all) (most) other people, with life as a whole, with nature, etc. For the spiritually-minded (or anyone), this is not “bad” in any sense, as it can facilitate good-natured expression of various heart qualities, e.g., compassion, goodwill, cheerfulness, etc. It is generally quite encouraging to such a person, spiritually, in the sense that it can be experienced without forgoing a sense of spiritual values and spiritual-connectedness. It is, after all, a very satisfying experience or condition, one that does not threaten or challenge the ego in any manner. In fact, it encourages and is encouraged by ego. But it is, in the final analysis, a matter of personality absorption.

The only danger apparent in this basic sense of spiritual absorption is that it tends to encourage personality-indulgence (kindly egoism) and is therefore inhibitive of spiritual absorption in the deeper sense. For most people, and even for most spiritually-minded people, this is not a problem. But for the esoteric student, in order to realize spiritual absorption in that deeper sense, one must make a distinction between the Self and the not-self, overcome one’s natural identification with the not-self, and achieve union in consciousness with the (higher) Self, at which point one truly embraces the whole of life, but in the inner, deeper sense. The “experiential” absorption, however meaningful, greatly inhibits this higher realization, because it strengthens the role of the personality (mind) (ego) and tends to refuse to accept that the Self is anything other than that (lower) personality or waking-consciousness.

One can argue of course that the uninhibited “wholeness” of experiential absorption is all there is, and that it is or can be profoundly spiritual. One can further argue that there is no distinction between higher Self and lower self, that all is one. And of course this is true. But in this experiential state, the higher Self does not participate, at least not directly. There is no “sense” of the higher Self, although those who live in the experientially absorbed state may feel that they have that sense. But in fact, until one has that profoundly mystical experience in which the spark of the soul (higher Self) makes its presence felt, no one at the experiential level can even imagine what that soul really means or feels like. And the very act of one presuming (believing) that the soul is present directly in self-absorbed (personality-centered) experience undermines the possibility of the higher state. That “soul” means something very different to

the experientially-absorbed than to the esotericist, notwithstanding, the only known means or path to the higher state requires that one undergo the process of making a distinction between the Self and the not-self, at first intellectually, then in full realization, and finally in fulfillment.

† Commentary No. 1046

Spiritual Absorption 2

The distinction between Self and not-self is not something that a personality-centered person is likely to make, at first, without considerable stress. Making this distinction is inherently threatening to the ego and the ego will naturally respond with whatever means it can to maintain the personality-centered experientially-absorbed state.

Of course there is much to experience and much to learn, for most people, at the experientially-absorbed level (i.e., doing and feeling rather than being and feeling). But as one progresses further, as one gradually refines and tempers the personality nature on physical, emotional, and mental levels, then one begins to realize that there is something greater than has been heretofore apparent, deep within the human being. As that recognition grows, as the student embraces the humility of the spiritual path, and as the ego is gradually transcended, true identification with that higher Self is achieved. At that point oneness is embraced in a broader, deeper sense than was (intellectually or experientially) felt before. The personality (intellect) (mind) (ego) is then seen as part of the whole, however valuable and useful, but in the sense of being an instrument of life and consciousness rather than the life itself.

Distinctions are simply a means toward an end. To become spiritually absorbed in the higher, deeper sense, one must pass from the lower (integrated) state, through the artificial embrace of the Self-not-self duality, to the higher integrated (aligned) state. Without this process, one simply never knows the higher Self. One simply remains deluded, however nicely, in the personality-centered focus of spiritual-mindedness. The problem remains, of course, that one who lives at the personality (ego) level and who has never “touched” the soul (atma-buddhi-manas), and who is satisfied at that level, cannot know this distinction and cannot make this transition or transformation.

There are various means to this end, all including making the distinction between Self and not-self and all including personality-and-ego-transcendence. But some means are relatively more heart-centered, and some are relatively more head-centered, depending on the individual temperament and the context (group character). Head-centered approaches tend to be more direct and less time-consuming, but generally suffer a lack of balanced progress, while heart-centered approaches tend to be more gradual and less demanding per unit time. Head-centered approaches generally take on the struggle with ego forthwith, and if the heart is not in the struggle, if the student lacks commitment and determination, then it is doomed to failure as the ego builds resentment and eventually undermines the process. Heart-centered approaches generally deal with the ego indirectly, in a less-challenging manner, and eventually seduce the ego into cooperation (rather than forcing it), but without some (sufficient) head-nature, the heart-centered approach is ineffectual.

In either approach there is some not inconsiderable discipline required, but in the head-centered approach there is more prescription and proscription, while in the heart-centered approach there is more (apparent) relative freedom, as the required discipline is eventually achieved without it being prescribed. There are no short-cuts. The same (overall) work must be accomplished regardless of particular path or process (means). And as that work is accomplished, Self-realization is achieved, bringing with it the spiritual absorption in the higher, deeper, greater sense. And in that higher state, there is an even greater connectedness with humanity and all of life, but without the distraction of personality-centeredness (self-centeredness) (egoism).