



The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 6.4

Personal Transformation

The Object of Religion



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Personal Transformation

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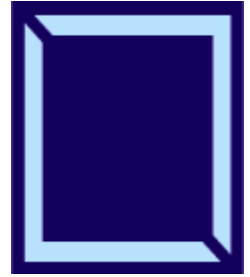
Contents

		Page
Chapter 6.4	<u>Personal Transformation</u>	1
Personality Transformation 1	C 390	2
Personality Transformation 2	C 391	3
Personality Transformation 3	C 392	5
Section 6.41	<u>Personality Cultivation</u>	7
The Cultivation of Personality	C 2	8
Self-Esteem	C 532	9
Self-Mastery	C 1193	11
Section 6.411	<u>Refinement</u>	13
The Elevation of the Lower Self	C 94	14
Physical Sublimation	C 99	15
Emotional Refinement	C 104	17
Mental Discipline	C 109	19
Sexual Sublimation	C 114	20
Refinement	C 734	22
Tempering the Emotions	C 1065	24
Profanity and Vulgarity	C 1289	25
Refinement and Development	C 1499	27

		Page
Section 6.412	<u>Integration and Alignment</u>	29
Personality Integration	C 125	30
Personality Alignment	C 131	31
Rapid Alignment	C 905	33
Section 6.42	<u>Personality Transcendence</u>	35
Four Points of Conduct	C 161	36
The Death of Self	C 179	37
The Personality Presence 1	C 399	39
The Personality Presence 2	C 400	41
Beyond Discipline 1	C 872	42
Beyond Discipline 2	C 873	44
Personality Transcendence	C 1194	46
Catharsis	C 1222	47
Section 6.43	<u>Personality Awareness</u>	50
Awareness of Personality 1	C 813	51
Awareness of Personality 2	C 814	52
Awareness of Personality 3	C 815	54
Awareness of Personality 4	C 819	56

Chapter 6.4

Personal Transformation



The Object of Religion

Personal transformation refers to the process of cultivation and refinement of the human personality followed by the integration of the personality and its alignment with the soul. All of this leads eventually to transcending the personality.

The real transformation of the personality (from the highly reactive (personal) or self-centered state to the fully integrated (refined) (qualified) and aligned state) is relatively gradual, even for the spiritual student (albeit rapid relative to the casual student), being a series of accomplishments and increasing achievements with a framework of continuous experience and/or constructive expression.

Personality Transformation 1

The early years of each incarnation are generally spent developing the three aspects (vehicles) of the personality: the physical body and its etheric double, the emotional or astral body, and the mind. Roughly seven to ten years are spent developing (forming) each vehicle, though no fixed rule applies. This development is actually a redevelopment or recapitulation, at least for the physical and emotional vehicles, while the development (redevelopment) (formulation) of the mind may take a few years in the case of advanced recapitulation, or many years (or several lifetimes) in the case of the relatively unevolved who have (relatively) little mental focus (development).

Advanced development (rapid recapitulation), followed by considerable enhancement as the mind consolidates or integrates the personality allows simultaneous redevelopment and refinement of the physical, emotional, and mental abilities. While the relatively unevolved spend lifetimes gradually developing and refining the personality aspects, the spiritual student is expected to achieve some considerable control (integration) of the personality, relatively early in the incarnation, so that effort may then be concentrated on alignment (refinement and subordination of the personality) with the soul and on the application of the higher (deeper) temperament (service).

An integrated personality is required for alignment, but the mere achievement of an integrated personality does not indicate the ability or suitability for alignment, for considerable refinement (qualification) of the personality is necessary before alignment is even possible. But where such integration and alignment is a recapitulation, the achievement may follow (relatively) quickly, depending on ability, circumstances (opportunity), and current qualification. Thus alignment (relatively conscious awareness of the soul via a responsive, wholly subordinated personality) may or may not follow effective integration, but that integration (and subsequent refinement) is nonetheless a necessary prelude to the next major, evolutionary step (the transition from personality consciousness to soul consciousness).

Those who are not yet on the spiritual path generally spend many lifetimes of experience leading to integration, followed by many lifetimes of further (more effective) experience via integrated personalities. Those who are on the path simply experience an accelerated, more conscious development and expression. Each major stage of development (experience) consists of phases or cycles, with an effective transition between each phase (cycle) (major stage) to provide continuity (assimilation) (reconfiguration) and to provide for adaptation to new (greater) challenges (further experience). Once any level or sub-level of consciousness (or aspect of experience) is effectively incorporated, it is time to go forward, to the next phase (cycle).

For the personality, generally, each transition or transformation is an unappreciated change, for the personality is quite naturally reactive (defensive), and generally seeks to retain the status quo (i.e., the personality has inertia). Thus the personality is normally easily attached to circumstances which afford apparent security, particularly where those circumstances are also entertaining (enchancing) or stimulating or inflationary (ego-centered), even though such experience (distraction) may not be productive as far as progress in consciousness is concerned. One of the problems for the spiritual student during the process of effectively integrating the personality and again during the process of soul alignment is to guide the personality onward, remaining adaptable and flexible (and coherent (stable)).

« Commentary No. 391

Personality Transformation 2

The resistance of the elements of the personality and of the personality itself (when integrated) to change are particularly evident during the effort to integrate those elements and during the subsequent refinement and elevation leading to soul alignment. This resistance (inertia) is an inherent property of matter (coarse vibration) and can be effectively overcome only by transformation (qualification). The personality resistance is a reflection of the natural independence (separativeness) of matter. The integration of the personality means the effective subordination of the ((apparently) relatively independent) elements of the personality to a central personality energy (the concrete mind). For the subordinated elements, this implies loss of self-control and acceptance

of a secondary, albeit qualified position. The same is true for the integrated personality relative to the soul during the effort toward alignment, i.e., natural resistance, ultimately overcome and qualified, as the personality is transformed. For the soul, of course, these major changes are the culmination of lifetimes of patient qualification and guidance.

Transformation (leading to alignment) can create a real dilemma for the personality of the spiritual student. On one hand it is the time of life where everything is going reasonably well for the personality; the personality is effectively integrated and the potential experience is considerable. On the other hand, the inner nature is gradually making its presence and character felt, so that the outer (mundane) affairs of the personality seem to lack any "real" meaning or long-term goals. The integrated personality may be self-indulgent (or at least so accustomed) or dissatisfied with the inertial plateau (the oversimplification that much has already been achieved, leaving little more to do (superficially)). This dissatisfaction is enhanced by any conscious or unconscious insights into the possibilities of the soul-world (the world or domain of soul consciousness), which suggest a great deal more yet to achieve (albeit difficult and threatening to the personality nature).

In attempting this transformation from personality to soul-control, the spiritual student is faced with a major hurdle that can result in considerable psychological tension. The personality is pulling one way, but has nothing to offer save self-indulgence (which is increasingly unsatisfying), its direction being counter to the forward (progressive) intent of the plan, while the soul is gently and patiently guiding the student forward toward that which is intended (destined) (the Light of the Soul), in concert with the plan.

Yet the psychological implications of the dilemma have considerable (meaningful) (beneficial) implications. When science (orthodox psychology) accepts the soul and its relationship to the personality as valid, necessary topics of consideration, then it (science) will be more meaningfully able to help individuals prepare for the crisis. In the meantime, much of the esoteric psychology is devoted to these problems of transition and continued progression (continuous transformation).

Until the soul's presence is consciously felt by the personality and accepted as a superior, beneficent influence, the integrated personality is likely to continue its self-created difficulties, whether those difficulties are inertial in the sense of being absorbed or distracted in a rather confining fashion (as far as the soul is concerned) or whether those difficulties are more active (dynamically psychological). Those difficulties involving stress (personality tension or pressure) are actually potent lessons leading (ultimately) to new and greater awareness.

« Commentary No. 392

Personality Transformation 3

Often during the process of evolution (transformation) great (apparent) difficulties and/or subtle stresses must be faced in order to free the personality from its self-centeredness (inertia) (absorption) (enchantment). Interludes may be challenging or apparently uneventful, yet the evolutionary pressure remains, on some level, to stimulate progress.

Progress is implied not so much by uneventful experience, as by changing difficulties, for lessons are learned (however consciously or unconsciously) and new challenges are evoked. The personality tends to take these difficulties personally, exaggerating the experience and the implications; but in fact, an impersonal approach, taking matters conscientiously and sensibly but not too seriously, leads to more meaningful conclusions. Each experience (interlude) (transition) leads to new (increased) awareness (on some level). A major transition (like integration, alignment or repolarization (transformation) from one level of consciousness to the next higher) leads to a reorientation in consciousness that further stimulates the progress and effectiveness of the student.

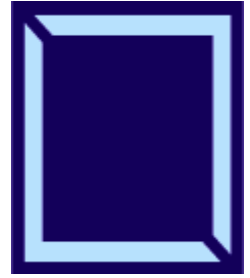
From the soul's point of view, life begins when the integrated personality becomes aware of the soul and begins to respond to that soul influence. A proper response to the soul's calling will lead the personality away from the mundane distractions and the psychological complexities of personality-centered consciousness to a more meaningful round of difficulties and progress, with increased (constructive) effectiveness as far as the environment (humanity)

is concerned. In this way the lesser energies of the personality are gradually refined and transformed to serve more meaningful, (collectively) purposive ends.

The practical distinction between those who are not upon the path and those who are upon the path, is the way that experience (difficulties) (work) is approached. The spiritual student, to the extent that he is responsive to the inner, higher nature, responds to experience more intelligently (patiently, effectively, without reaction or personality-indulgence). Difficulties are viewed as transient, specialized experience for some realized or unrealized purpose. Thus the attitude toward experience is distinctly different (more effective) and therefore the student is more likely to succeed (realize the needed lesson) while remaining spiritually poised and with proper perspective. Furthermore, the spiritually intelligent student (of at least some preliminary occult training) is likely to be aware of the existence and purpose of occult tension, and therefore be able to draw upon the higher forces for appropriate application (e.g., conscious transformation). But perhaps more significantly, the intelligent spiritual student is not so easily deceived by the ego (personal glamour) or by the external illusions and deceptions (world glamour) and is therefore able to work much more effectively.

The real transformation of the personality (from the highly reactive (personal) or self-centered state to the fully integrated (refined) (qualified) and aligned state) is relatively gradual, even for the spiritual student (albeit rapid relative to the casual student), being a series of accomplishments and increasing achievements with a framework of continuous experience and/or constructive expression. Everything in the universe, regardless of any appearance to the contrary, is in a state of flux (on some level). The spiritual student remains in dynamic (intelligently interactive) and progressive equilibrium (dynamic stability and coherence), as the God within shines ever brighter and brighter.

Section 6.41



Personality Cultivation

Before the personality can be embraced by the soul, it must be cultivated or developed through many lifetimes of experience and expression. Once a personality is developed sufficiently, it must then be tempered and prepared for the next phase of evolution. The challenge is to develop the personality in all the right ways without the personality becoming so strong that alignment with the soul is precluded.

The Cultivation of Personality

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

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

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

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

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

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

« Commentary No. 532

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a measure of one's self-respect or self-conceit. Self-respect is the proper (moderate) esteem or regard for the dignity of one's character and temperament (qualities and abilities), while self-conceit (vanity) is the exaggerated opinion of one's qualities and abilities (character and temperament). Self-righteousness is an aspect of self-conceit (pride) and implies (unfortunate) righteousness or hypocrisy in one's own esteem.

Proper (moderate) self-esteem is a necessary ingredient for a healthy personality, both in terms of orthodox psychology and in terms of metaphysical philosophy. The basis and extent (and quality) of an individual's self-esteem is significant. Many within humanity are lacking (proper) self-esteem (self-

respect) (and are therefore relatively ineffective or ineffectual in some basic sense), due to coarseness, lack of integration, emotional vulnerability (lack of self-control), etc. Others within humanity have the exaggerated form of self-esteem (which is conceit) (and are therefore relatively ineffective or ineffectual in more subtle ways), due to an overdeveloped or exaggerated personality (ego) and/or coarseness on concrete mental or astral levels.

For much of humanity self-esteem is based upon various (personal) glammers which are fabricated by the ego or the egoic response to the personal (self-centered) environment. An attractive physical appearance, a successful career or personal achievements, wealth, power, position, credentials (formal education), popularity, etc. are just a few of the more common glammers upon which many people base their positive view of themselves (self-esteem). Of course all of these (worldly) things are superficial and carry no real weight as far as the spiritual path is concerned (although persons of spiritual quality and character may also possess some or all of these superficial indicators, they do not necessarily possess them and if they do they do so incidentally to the (more valued) spiritual quality, character, and temperament).

For the spiritual student (aspirant) there is often the glamour of perceiving oneself as being (somehow) superior to the bulk of humanity because of one's (self-perceived) metaphysical or theosophical knowledge and understanding and/or because of one's self-perceived position upon the path. Of course any sense of superiority is a false self-perception and progenitor of interesting impedimental consequences. No one of any (real) spiritual quality (alignment) can suffer such delusion of superiority. In any event, self-esteem based upon any of the superficial indicators, albeit strong (life-long) and well-established in the personality (ego), is nonetheless based upon the ego and is therefore temporary (in the longer view of the soul) and unreal (improper), necessitating the (eventual) development of proper humility.

The proper self-esteem of the spiritual student however has an entirely different basis and quality. Proper self-esteem is based upon an understanding of the relationship of the soul to the personality and the relationship of that soul to the soul of humanity. Such an understanding conveys self-respect regardless of whatever outer appearances or achievements (or apparent failures) there may be. As the spiritual student becomes increasingly more honest with himself, and

begins to really know himself (strengths and weaknesses, relative character and quality), he (she) finds the previous glammers (upon which the self-esteem may have been based) dissipating, being replaced by a deeper, fuller understanding (humility) of the soul and personality. It is this understanding (self-realization) and confidence in the soul and the spiritual life (path) that are then the (proper) basis of self-esteem.

« Commentary No. 1193

Self-Mastery

The evolution of consciousness involves preparatory work in cultivating the personality, building personality strength, developing self-esteem, integrating the personality, etc., but once a person has accomplished this, then either a person is absorbed at the personality level (through personality-centeredness (ego) (over-development of the intellect)) and/or the attention is naturally drawn to the spiritual path.

When one embarks upon the spiritual path a major focus is refinement of the personality, integration, and subsequent alignment of personality and soul, but the real work involves self-mastery, actually conquering the entirety of the lower, personality nature, and cultivating the personality as an effective and responsive instrument for higher consciousness. Without embarking on the process leading to self-mastery, the personality itself dominates and thereby precludes any serious spiritual work. When one embarks upon the way, there is a continual evoking of the lower nature, so that the darkness of that lower nature is progressively revealed (brought to the surface (conscious awareness)) and gradually conquered. Until such time as the spiritual student has conquered the desire (lower) (independent) nature (at physical, emotional, and mental levels), the student cannot be very effective or responsive to higher impression, because the "noise" of personality-centeredness (ego) precludes realization.

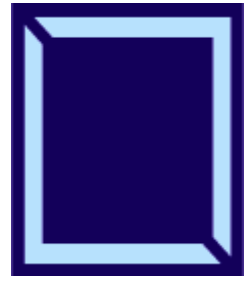
Development (personality cultivation) is the preliminary process and goal. Self-mastery is the intermediate process and the goal of spiritual development. And beyond self-mastery is transcendence. But many lives can be consumed and dedicated to the process of self-mastery. The personality (the form) (matter)

(ego) is potentially very strong, and is inherently separative, independent, and defensive of its assumed central role. Even when the student understands intellectually that the personality must be conquered, the ego invariably deceives the waking-consciousness into thinking that it (ego) is the soul and consequently much of the process is wasted in ego-generated activity. But eventually there begins a sense of distinction between the personal energy (character) (flavor) (tone) of the personality (ego) and the impersonal (transpersonal) energy (character) (flavor) (tone) of the higher Self.

Virtually everything in metaphysics and theosophy and the esoteric philosophy is devoted or related in some way to the process of tempering the lower self and achieving self-mastery (and subsequently with yoga or union). Yet the vast preponderance of metaphysical students and spiritually-minded people, sincerely devoted to the path as they understand it, remain largely asleep and absorbed at the personality level (they are simply absorbed in a spiritually-minded way). Thus the process of self-mastery is fundamentally a matter of tempering the personality and awakening to the higher Self, in practice (actuality) and not merely intellectually. The role of the ego is to prevent this from happening, and it will accomplish its goals in whatever ways it can. The ego is very subtle. It will appear to be facilitating spiritual growth and progress all the while undermining any threat to its own (artificial) existence. It will maintain control of the waking-consciousness through any means it has, and is remarkably successful.

The struggle toward self-mastery, then, is the struggle toward tempering the personality and transcending the ego. It is generally long and arduous. It is so hard to wake up. It is so easy to go back to sleep. The levels of deception are many and varied, but eventually there is appreciable progress and the ego and lower self are eventually mastered.

Section 6.411



Refinement

Once the personality has been developed through the normal process of lifetimes of experience and expression, the personality must then be refined on each of its levels of consciousness and prepared for integration and alignment with the soul.

The Elevation of the Lower Self

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

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

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

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

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

« Commentary No. 99

Physical Sublimation

Physical sublimation begins with the cultivation of good health and self-control (discipline) of the physical body. There is much that can be adjusted on physical levels to encourage the vitality and fitness (for spiritual work) of the physical body and its etheric counterpart. Reasonable cleanliness helps to loosen the hold of earthy matter which dulls the physical vibrations. Moderate physical exercise encourages flexibility and physical capability.

Of considerable relevance (in physical refinement) is diet. There is nothing really wrong with the popular standards for diet; it is simply that the spiritual aspirant must determine (and achieve) for himself a diet that is practical for the

spiritual task. The diet may be gradually adjusted and transformed (improved) over a number of years according to the needs of the student. Occasional (moderate) fasting may be helpful in this effort. The spiritual student cannot really afford to be much overweight (or underweight) as that would be an unnecessary burden. Through mental and physical discipline an optimum weight should be found. Many guidelines for the improvement of diet are available to the aspirant. Water, milk, most fruit juices, and most vegetable juices; and most cereals, fruits, vegetables, cheeses, and nuts are considered to be beneficial. Alcoholic beverages (including beer and wine), carbonated drinks, and coffee are considered (by degrees) to be detrimental. Flesh foods (meat, poultry, and fish) are also considered to be detrimental.

In withdrawing from the animal-food (flesh) diet, the student might first substitute successively smaller quantities of meat or substitute fish for meat as an intermediate step. Fish (cold-blooded) is preferable to meat (warm-blooded) as fish are lower on the evolutionary scale and therefore less harmful (distracting). But even fish sustains limitation. The objection (for oneself) to flesh foods may also be a moral or karmic one (karmically, the plant kingdom provides food to sustain the animal and human kingdoms; such is not the case for the animal kingdom to provide food, except in the case of products of animal processes, such as milk), but the practical objection is that the animal food inhibits spiritual consciousness and self-mastery. There is a practical limit to the spiritual progress that can be made on a meat diet.

It is, of course, better to eat meat and be spiritually minded than to be a vegetarian lacking in spiritual concern. The vegetarian is not necessarily spiritually responsive; but the spiritual student (at some point) becomes vegetarian as that encourages spiritual progress (providing other necessary qualities are present). The spiritual aspirant must rise above the animal distractions which are otherwise well-established in the lower self, if the personality is to become centered in the soul.

The spiritual student is also discouraged from taking drugs (unless prescribed for health). Meat, alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and aspirin are examples of nonessential drugs (or items containing such), which unnecessarily dull or burden the physical system and interfere with communication between soul, mind, and brain. The "mystical" drug experience is artificial (astral) in nature

and only serves to weaken the capacity for higher consciousness. Smoking is similarly a burden on physical vitality (with undesirable side-effects on subtle levels). In fact, anything which distracts the personality instrument from its evolutionary task is usually discouraged. Moderation is simply the first step in the transformation process. Though the student may be slow in recognizing (in himself) the effects of conscientious physical sublimation, the subsequent (gradual) deepening of the spiritual life is reward soon enough.

« Commentary No. 104

Emotional Refinement

Emotional refinement may proceed concurrently with physical sublimation, though the effectiveness of the emotional purification effort is somewhat dependent upon progress or achievement in physical purification. As the foundation of physical refinement is developed, increasing attention can be directed to emotional control and the transformation of the desire nature. The physical concern should then begin to fall below the threshold of consciousness; for the mind that is fixed upon lesser things unnecessarily is distracted from that which is of greater importance.

The real problem of the emotional (astral) (desire) body in many aspirants is lack of self-control. Emotions tend to be unrestrained by the mind and tend to function rather independently. Emotions (feelings) (desires) that remain undisciplined are subject to external influences (such as the emotions of other persons and other factors in the emotional atmosphere). Negatively polarized (passive) emotions must be controlled and uplifted if they are to be useful in any positive (constructive) (active) sense. Emotional extremes definitely distract the waking-consciousness from its task, and emotional stability must be achieved before the quality of emotion can be increased. Unrefined emotions also contribute to the (serious) problem of glamour (illusion on astral levels).

The mind is the instrument of discipline for the lower faculties, and it is through deliberate (and intelligent) mental effort that the emotions can be calmed, controlled, and purified. The aspirant should be aware of the emotional nature, so that emotional weaknesses (instability, lack of control, lack of purity) can be

recognized and dealt with. It is in this respect that the exercise of retrospection is especially helpful (in training the mind to recognize and transform weaknesses into strengths). Emotional control should be neither rigid nor uncomfortable, for the spiritual student needs to maintain flexibility if further tasks are to be faced. With increasing self-control, the conscious mind can uplift and transform the coarse, selfish, and mostly personal emotions into refined, purified, unselfish, and relatively impersonal emotions. The highest form of emotion is the quiet spiritual aspiration and its concomitant manifestation of humanitarian (impersonal) love. Undisturbed by emotional conflict or the glammers of the personal life (selfishness), the controlled (calmed and disciplined) and purified emotional body is then an effective instrument for the higher self.

Many of the lesser emotions to be transformed into the higher emotions are relatively easy to recognize; fear, anger, hatred, selfishness, and desire (in its many forms) must each be elevated into higher and controlled qualities. But there are also many glammers and emotional deficiencies that are subtle and not so easy to realize. That which appears to be sensational or phenomenal (anything that is based upon emotional appeal rather than merit) is of no real interest to the spiritual student. Excitement and emotional enthusiasm are indications of the lack of emotional discipline and mask more subtle problems.

But the time comes when the emotions are reasonably well-controlled and purified, so that the student can turn the attention toward mental purification. The aspirant can then become the disciple. The disciple is not one who is above standards of physical or emotional refinement; the disciple is one who has achieved such refinement and need no longer be consciously concerned, for the required standards are maintained automatically. The desires of the emotional self have been (mostly) transformed (eliminated) in the disciple, who is then free to focus outwardly toward humanity and inwardly toward the one soul.

Mental Discipline

The real key to the successful purification of the lower self (the personality) is mental discipline; it is the impression of the mental activity upon the physical and emotional nature that evokes sublimation and integration. Without a strong and disciplined mind it would be difficult to encourage and achieve the cooperation and alignment of the physical and emotional nature with the mental nature. Without the will, determination, purpose, and reasonableness of the mind, the resistance of the lower self would preclude integration.

So it is in the early going of probationary effort that the mind is used to guide the emotions and the physical instrument and to impress upon them the goal or purpose intended. But as the physical body and the emotions become more and more responsive to the mental influence, the more important it is to have the mind self-disciplined. When the mind becomes strong and influential (with respect to the personality), the mental deficiencies become amplified in their effects upon the lower nature. A careless thought, for example, can encourage emotional distraction or even physical vulnerability, so long as the lower self is responsive to the mental activity (as it must be if integration and alignment are to be achieved). So mental discipline must be maintained if the soul is to properly express itself through an integrated personality.

The concrete mind must be purified and disciplined, or else the mind will become too strong and independent (as is its nature) and unresponsive to the soul. The mind is potentially one of the greatest (internal) aids and at the same time is potentially quite a hindrance to the spiritual path. The disciplined and elevated mind is a great asset to an incarnating soul; the independent and unresponsive mind is one of the most difficult obstacles to be faced by the soul. Where the mind is relatively weak, the emotions are usually quite a problem. But in the later stages of probationary effort, it is the mind that must be dealt with, that its separative and critical tendencies might be transformed into a unified (coherent) and spiritually responsive mechanism. The mind is presently the primary instrument of experience intended for humanity, but the mind must be tamed and harnessed to be useful.

It is the critical nature of the mind that presents difficulties well into the path; but even opinions must ultimately be dissolved as the lower mind is uplifted into the higher, and as mental attachments are transformed into freedom and realization. The observational and analytical capability of the mind can be turned inward, so that the mind is aware of the state (quality) of mind. Through that awareness the mind can be trained and programmed for self-discipline. The disciplined mind that is free from attachment is a mind that can respond easily to the higher, internal guidance and express the soul energies through the personality quite effectively. The outward (objective) mental capabilities are then magnified in usefulness.

A key to proper mental discipline is the balance of the head (mind) and the heart (the higher emotions and the intuition). Neither unrestrained emotion nor an undisciplined mind is of much use to the soul. But where the head and the heart work together, being mutually and coherently responsive to the soul, then there is achievement leading to effective discipleship. It is the purified heart (the mystical nature) that can temper the mind and keep the mental nature from the distractions and illusions of independence. As unnecessary illusion and independence are overcome, the reality of interdependence and true freedom is made manifest. With continued mental discipline and an integrated personality, the work of the soul can proceed without hindrance.

« Commentary No. 114

Sexual Sublimation

Sexual sublimation is the effort to refine and uplift the lower creative forces into their higher correspondences. The goal is the attainment of certain freedoms: freedom from sexual need, freedom from distracting physical and emotional sensation, freedom from the waste of propagative (creative) energy, and freedom to use such energy constructively according to spiritual purpose. The attainment of sexual freedom is one of the most difficult, for the way to success is a delicate and gradual balancing of internal forces.

The way of sexual frustration or suppression is definitely to be avoided, as that tends to create serious psychological problems. The proper way is based upon

common sense and the alignment of the lower self with natural and higher forces. Sexual sublimation is actually more natural (though difficult) than the sexual activity of most of humanity. But the way of sexual sublimation requires understanding as well as preparation and complementary spiritual efforts.

Sexual force is essentially spiritual (creative) force that has been passed through the sacral center (chakra) (one of the seven primary psychic or energy centers within the human form) and released through physical (sexual) activity. The proper and natural intention of such activity is procreation (not sense gratification), to provide opportunities for incarnation to souls who are magnetically attracted to the union. But many have been misled by sensation (entanglement), so that sexual activity is applied to personal and temporary ends. Many have become absorbed (mentally and otherwise) by such activity and have acquired (artificial) sexual dependence. But it is that same spiritual force that is the true creative force, required by the higher self for greater purposes. The spiritual student cannot properly develop and apply the creative mind when so much of the spiritual force is indiscriminately released.

The way of sexual sublimation is one with expansion of the human creative potential. Beginning with moderation and with the placing of greater emphasis upon spiritual matters, the spiritual student can gradually and quite naturally withdraw the spiritual force from nonessential or wasteful purposes and apply that force creatively and constructively. The key to success in this endeavor is mental discipline (balance) and the proper release of accumulated energies. Instead of lacking control of the creative force, the soul can then control and safely intensify the creative potential. This does not mean that the spiritual student must become and remain celibate, for the activity of controlled procreation even for highly evolved (and married) disciples can be appropriate. But it does mean that the student must eventually free himself from sexual need and personal sensation (distraction).

The student who is naturally and comfortably celibate may have attained sexual freedom in an earlier incarnation. The way of sexual sublimation is relatively easy where two (married) spiritual students, expressing themselves through opposite sexes, are able to uplift their love for each other, gradually from physical and emotional (personal) levels to mental and intuitive (impersonal) levels, ever concerning themselves with constructive and creative

humanitarian and spiritual work. It is more difficult, but not impossible, for the single student to attain sexual freedom. The results of sexual sublimation include an expanded spiritual potential (and consciousness) as well as opportunities to attract highly evolved souls into incarnation through the marriage relationship. The student who has been able to properly devitalize (control) the lower psychic centers should have far greater control of the higher centers, resulting in greater opportunities and spiritual responsibility.

« Commentary No. 734

Refinement

Refinement is the effort (process) (activity) of purifying the personality to permit its more effective response to higher impression (i.e., the elimination of coarse vibrations from the personality and its atmosphere (aura) makes a significant difference in the ability of a student to respond to the energy and qualification of the soul (and the path)). The process of refinement is relatively complex and varies considerably depending on the type of individual and his or her relationship to the path. For those who are not really working within the context of the spiritual path, the process of refinement is essentially passive or incidental. The individual becomes more and more refined as a (very gradual) consequence of experience and (very) gradual personality adjustments that are more or less incidental to conscious experience. Thus, one becomes (very gradually) more and more refined as one evolves in consciousness.

For the spiritual student, however, refinement should be a rather more conscious or deliberate process, at least in the early stages of the path (in the later stages, refinement continues largely unconsciously and effortlessly as a matter (consequence) of value incorporation (i.e., the advanced student values refinement and has consciously developed the habits of refinement such that the process can proceed largely unconsciously yet effectively (while the student focuses on other issues))).

In the early stages of the path, the installation of discipline is relatively important (as a fundamental building block for (to facilitate) more advanced work) and so refinement is as well a matter of discipline as the diet is

regimented (and other habits established) (later on, when one is capable of self-discipline without serious impediment from the ego or personality, that self-discipline is a reflection of incorporated values and rather easy to implement constructively) (i.e., later on, the dietary discipline (as well as other fundamental habits) is maintained nonetheless (albeit less consciously), not as a matter of discipline but as a matter of values). In the middle stages of the path (as some measure of self-discipline has been achieved), refinement per se is even more important or central to progress.

However, refinement per se in any particular sense will not in itself result in inspiration, realization, responsiveness to higher impression, etc. It is the overall refinement in consciousness that so results in (allows) the student to be spiritually responsive. Thus, becoming a vegetarian or giving up smoking or abstention from alcohol will not directly result in responsiveness (or result in integration or alignment). But these improvements will certainly make it easier (and are ultimately necessary) for the student to make the more overall changes (refinement) that are needed (in fact, not making (and maintaining) these improvements will necessarily preclude any real responsiveness).

Coarseness, natural to the relatively unevolved and materialistic or phenomenalist (sensationalist), is spiritual preclusion. It effectively prevents the integration of the personality and subsequent alignment of the personality with the soul (both of which are necessary objectives of the spiritual student). Thus refinement is crucial to advanced or serious spiritual work (activity). The personality naturally resists this process and will look for excuses to maintain the coarse (e.g., flesh-eating) habits which allow the personality to remain more or less independent. Thus, for serious spiritual work, the relatively refined state is necessary, and any failure of the student to maintain the needed (at least minimum) quality of consciousness will preclude any real (substantial) responsibility or opportunity.

Tempering the Emotions

There are at least three good reasons for the spiritual student to undertake a tempering of the emotions. (1) In order to achieve mental polarization, in order to integrate the personality, the emotions must be tempered. (2) In order to achieve alignment of soul and personality, i.e., in order to be responsive to higher impression, the emotions must be substantially refined. And (3) emotions are forces that affect one's atmosphere and anyone to whom one is related, casually or otherwise.

The evolution of human consciousness proceeds from physical polarization to emotional polarization to mental polarization to personality integration to alignment of soul and personality. Thus mental polarization and personality integration are necessary prerequisites to alignment. As long as the emotions remain coarse and/or untempered, mental polarization and personality integration are not possible. Thus the emotionally-polarized spiritual student is encouraged to refine and temper the emotions through meditation and broadening spiritual discipline and practice (while similarly the mentally-polarized spiritual student is encouraged to temper the mind and personality as a whole).

The preliminary discipline is particularly focused on facilitating continuing refinement and tempering of the lower self. The no-smoking rule facilitates refinement (and health) by eliminating the coarseness engendered by smoke particulates in the aura. The no-alcohol (and no other drugs) rule facilitates stabilization of the emotions and increasing self-control of the lower nature. The vegetarian diet facilitates both (refinement and self-control), by minimizing the effects of diet on the animal nature (e.g., consumption of flesh in any form (meat, fish, fowl) contributes both coarseness and susceptibility to "animal" urges (those urges are not contained in flesh food, but flesh food serves as a catalyst for stimulating or evoking the lower, animal nature within the human form)). The student cannot effectively deny that lower nature, but the student can transcend that lower nature, without repression or suppression, through moderation and increasing spiritualization of the human nature.

One cannot effectively artificially temper the emotions. Unless one truly believes and understands the need for temperance, then the result will be resentful repression or suppression, which ultimately will need to be undone. If the student is entangled in the senses, if the student is enjoying full (lower) emotional experience and expression (and the lessons that are conveyed thereby), then any attempts at tempering the emotions will be half-hearted and will therefore generally not be effective. But where temperance is fully appreciated, then the student can proceed with the preliminary discipline with some confidence.

Another factor regarding tempering the emotions is more pragmatic. Emotions (feelings) are forces that engage other emotions (feelings) on the astral plane and directly affect other people (and oneself) according to their nature. Intense emotions of any kind are necessarily separative and (psychically) violent. Both coarse emotions and intense emotions greatly inhibit the clarity of thinking and greatly inhibit (true) intuition (coarse intense emotions are particularly separative and violent). Lower emotional experience and expression is egoistic, self-indulgent, etc., and facilitates continuing entanglement in the senses. Once the emotions are properly tempered, the student is able to experience and express himself (herself) in much more potent (beautiful) ways, as the higher and more subtle emotions come into play, gently and quietly.

« Commentary No. 1289

Profanity and Vulgarity

The use of profanity and/or vulgarity is necessarily a reflection of coarseness in consciousness, compounded or not by the momentum of it being a matter of personal habits. Those who resort (consciously or more generally unconsciously) to profanity or vulgarity are generally not aware that it is a matter of coarseness and are not generally aware of the consequences of their profanity or vulgarity.

The problem of materiality is endemic to life in this (lower, objective) world. Being immersed in the material world, without conscious appreciation of the fact that one is so immersed, means that it is only natural to embrace worldly

and material conditions. Thus almost everything in the lower worlds (of physical, emotional, and intellectual experience) tends to engage a person as if this (lower, outer) world was real and substantial, when indeed this (lower) world is not real and is merely transient. Material energy tends to be quite "low" or coarse in vibration. Thus those who identify with their bodies or with bodily experience tend to be at a lower (more coarse) vibration in consciousness than those whose experience is more emotionally-based (and similarly, those who identify with their emotional state tend to be at a lower vibration in consciousness than those who identify more with the intellect (and similarly, those who identify with the intellect or with "thinking" tend to be at a lower vibration than those who (actually) identify with the higher self (soul) and the intuitional being)).

In this sense, it is how a person actually identifies that matters more, not so much what a person "thinks" or believes he or she is identified with (e.g., most spiritual students are emotionally-polarized and head-centered but perceive themselves (wrongly) to be mentally-polarized or intuitively polarized and heart-centered, and it is how they are that primarily affects consciousness, not so much where they "think" they are). Although one can creatively affect the balance in consciousness through identification with higher consciousness.

In any event, there are various practices in "life" that detract from or inhibit spiritual growth or deepening, and various practices that enhance or encourage spiritual growth. The most basic of these practices is the extent to which one is actively engaged in refining one's consciousness. A person engaged in profanity and/or vulgarity is necessarily lowering one's natural vibration, engaging coarseness and inviting that coarseness to dominate the aura (etheric and astral and mental bodies). Being coarse inhibits refinement. Engaging in coarse practices likewise. Conversely, avoiding coarse practices facilitates refinement. There are very valuable "refinement" exercises in meditation. Avoiding profanity and vulgarity is helpful (and (gently, non-separatively) insulating oneself from (the effects of) profane and vulgar people, likewise).

But it is not simply a matter of how profanity and vulgarity affect oneself, it is also a matter of how these practices affect others. Coarseness tends to attract and encourage coarseness (as refined consciousness tends to attract and encourage refinement in consciousness (in oneself and others)). Thus in

avoiding the practices (habits) (coarseness) of profanity and vulgarity, one is “acting” in a more evolutionary manner and allowing the higher (more refined) consciousness to more effectively emerge and be expressed in the lower self. The spiritual student should take care to be aware of one’s tendencies toward materiality (profanity, vulgarity) and through proper meditative exercise and focus, gradually refine the consciousness so that these tendencies no longer apply.

« Commentary No. 1499

Refinement and Development

There are of course many ways to formulate or express what is necessary in order to properly and fully embrace the spiritual path, but the basics are relatively straight-forward and involve primarily various practices of refinement and development. These practices are both necessary and common to all (truly) spiritual paths at some point.

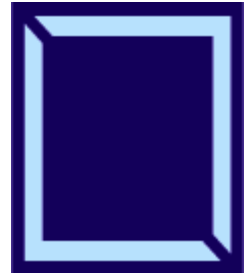
Refinement involves preliminary practices that prepare the body, the emotions and the mind for enlightenment. Since evolution in consciousness is continuous, so is refinement. The spiritual student, one who is evolving consciously and deliberately, never actually takes leave of the process of refinement. So the various practices continue, indefinitely. And because (commitment to) refinement becomes part of one's nature, there is no implied burden. Refinement at the physical level means taking care of the physical body. Not smoking. Not drinking alcohol. Not taking recreational drugs. Not eating flesh foods, i.e., meat, fish, and fowl. Not over-eating or placing any substantive burden on the physical body. And it means maintaining some reasonable level of physical fitness. In short, it means cultivating a healthy physical body and refining that body so that it serves as an effective instrument for experience and expression. And all of these practices are necessary to serve as a basis for refinement on emotional and mental levels. Without embracing these practices the student cannot progress beyond simply being spiritually-minded, which is not at all being spiritually-realized. So there is no basis for compromise.

Refinement also means tempering and refining the emotional nature. Not being entangled in the senses. Calming the emotional nature. Allowing the emotional body to simply reflect higher impressions rather than being entangled in various astral phenomena. And it means tempering and refining the mental nature. Of becoming more open-minded, less biased, less conditioned, less materialistic, less entangled in beliefs and opinions. More open to truth. Indeed, it means embracing truth, being dedicated to being truthful in all regards, and to seeking truth, through meditation and through studying philosophy, psychology, religion, and theosophy. Seeking to learn and grow and serve. It also means embracing progressively higher standards of ethics. Including harmlessness. Being considerate toward all lives, human, animal, plant, and mineral.

Development involves various intermediate practices. In a sense refinement is a matter of refining the pieces of the human personality, while development is refining and integrating the whole of the personality. In a sense, refinement leads to development and development requires continual refinement. Continuing and building upon the framework of the preliminary practices, the spiritual student must then temper the personality as a whole, becoming much less self-centered, becoming much less personality-centered, becoming much less head-centered. Many people "think" they are heart-centered when in fact they are head-centered but emotionally-polarized. The spiritual student must become mentally-polarized and truly heart-centered, before the student can truly become intuitively aware.

Thus development involves the cultivation of gentleness and humility, conquering and transcending the ego and the intellect, in the process becoming truly heart-centered and selfless. Cultivating awareness, embracing God in every sense. Embracing love, light, and healing energy. Sharing that love, light, and healing energy. Without imposing in any way.

Section 6.412



Integration and Alignment

The integration of the various aspects and dimensions of personality is essential to the spiritual student. Without integration it is not possible for the student to become mentally polarized or for the student to go beyond merely intellectual experience and expression. An unrefined and non-integrated personality cannot respond directly or properly to the energy or quality of the soul. Even an integrated personality is not necessarily responsive. It must also be substantially tempered as a personality.

Personality Integration

The process of integration and alignment is the culmination of the probationary effort. The probationary path is primarily a path of purification and preparation for discipleship. As the personality is purified it becomes easier to integrate the elements of the personality into a more unified, synthesized instrument. That unified personality can then be aligned with the overshadowing soul. There are basically two methods for the integration of a personality. One is a rather forceful method resulting in a temporary but functional form of integration which may even hold together for an entire incarnation. The other is a more natural method which involves refinement and adjustment, resulting in a more permanent and spiritually responsive form of integration, one that may hold together for a number of incarnations.

The method of integration by force involves considerable stress upon the elements of the personality, in order to hold them in check. Forceful integration calls for a strong, dominating mind, a relatively weak but homogenous emotional body, and a responsive physical body. It does not really call for purification or refinement. In fact, forceful integration actually discourages purification and practically disallows subsequent alignment. The dominating mind is generally not responsive to spiritual impression.

The method of forceful integration is normally used (unconsciously) by the intelligent, evolving individual who has not yet entered upon the spiritual path. The advantage of integration by force is the (temporary) lack of the need for purification. Such integration allows for considerable and meaningful (but not really spiritual) experience. The main disadvantage is its difficult and temporary nature which requires eventual integration through purification.

The natural method of integration involves the cultivation of a purified and disciplined personality. Force may be applied as a form of encouragement and guidance, but it is not really a forceful application. The idea is to win the cooperation of the various elements of the personality through purification and refinement. Natural cooperation is quite superior to forceful and strained obedience. Purified elements tend to fit together (integrate) easily, resulting in

an effective and spiritually responsive personality mechanism. The mind acts as the agent of integration, but as natural integration is achieved the personality acts as a coherent instrument rather than an amalgamation of competing elements. Only a personality that is naturally integrated can be effectively aligned with the soul. Then, in subsequent incarnations it is a relatively easy matter to reintegrate the personality.

The concept of integration can be used to illustrate various degrees of human evolution. The relatively unevolved individual has a homogenous physical body, a strong but incoherent emotional body, and a weak and somewhat scattered mind. In the unevolved individual there is no real cooperation between the three major elements (mind, emotions, and physical form). There are many minor centers of scattered and competing consciousness, resulting in a very complicated and difficult personality. On the other hand, in the relatively evolved individual the three major elements are reasonably well-developed (each integrated on its own level) and the entire personality may even be forcefully integrated. Such a personality is less complicated and easier to work with, but there still exist a number of competing elements, subdued somewhat as they may be. But in the fully and naturally integrated personality of the evolving spiritual student, there is only one center of lower consciousness, resulting in a simple (coherent) and efficient instrument for experience and expression.

« Commentary No. 131

Personality Alignment

Once the personality has been properly qualified and naturally integrated it becomes possible to achieve and maintain the alignment of that personality with its higher self. Proper alignment requires the adjustment and upliftment of the purified personality into direct and immediate correlation (resonance) (harmony) with the overshadowing soul. This process is simple in concept, but normally quite difficult to achieve due to the many distractions of living simultaneously in both the objective and subjective worlds.

There are two basic methods for alignment: one method is head-centered and involves concentration and the element of will; the other method is heart-

centered and involves aspiration. The best all-around method is a combination where the will is tempered by aspiration. Neither method will really work unless the personality is prepared and the soul is ready to permit alignment.

The preparation of the personality is quite important. Alignment involves the bringing together (mixing) of two fundamental energies: the personality and the soul. Both must be vibrating according to the same pattern if union is to be achieved. The probationary disciple is powerless to modify the character or vibration (quality) of the soul, so he must adjust the personality in order to achieve harmony (synthesis). It is the character of the personality that must be brought into higher rhythm. Once the soul and personality are vibrating together, the will or aspiration can be used to uplift the lower self into alignment. But the soul must be ready to permit alignment. If the personality proceeds prematurely, the gate between the soul and its personality will be closed and the effort will not succeed. Thus is it cautioned that development (alignment) should not be forced. It should be naturally encouraged from within. It is really the soul that sends forth the note or call for alignment and a willing and responsive personality that then enters upon the task.

The intensity of the soul should not be taken lightly. The soul is a powerful, yet subjective entity that does not relate very well to objective existence. The consciousness of the soul is far different from that imagined or conceived by the inexperienced student. But through right (spiritual) meditation and the method of aspiration the gap between the soul and its reflection is more easily bridged. The gentle approach of aspiration and wisdom involves gradual adjustments based upon the experience (observations and intuitional guidance) of the projector (the mind of the personality). The less gentle approach, utilizing the will aspect, may be quicker, but will probably involve a somewhat forceful response on the part of the soul, as the soul demands (and enforces) the immediate adjustment of the personality.

Once alignment has been achieved (by degrees), the task is to maintain or regain that alignment. With experience and perseverance, the task becomes more and more reasonable. If the alignment is achieved in a strictly spiritual environment, it should be easy to maintain while in that environment. But alignment so gained may not be strong enough or of sufficient quality to be maintained outside of that environment. An alignment gained while living

balanced between the two worlds is more difficult to achieve initially, but may be maintained far better in mundane or worldly surroundings. This is one of the greatest of spiritual tasks, and one expected of the disciple, to achieve and to maintain the spiritual alignment, refusing to be absorbed by the lower world while working and living effectively within the delicate balance. Great is the human tendency toward absorption (in the mundane or lower sense), but greater still, for those who strive (allow), is the power of the soul.

« Commentary No. 905

Rapid Alignment

Rapid alignment is a meditative technique for bringing about a presumed alignment of the integrated personality with the overshadowing (underlying) soul (atma-buddhi-manas) rather quickly, enabling the student to proceed with the work of the meditation and/or to quickly evoke an aligned state preventative of mundane absorption, without much effort (time) (distraction) with the preliminaries of meditation. Students who subscribe to the concept of rapid alignment tend toward relatively short meditation periods of intensive activity rather than longer periods of sustained but less intensive effort. There are advantages and disadvantages to rapid alignment, depending on the student and his or her measure of understanding and ability.

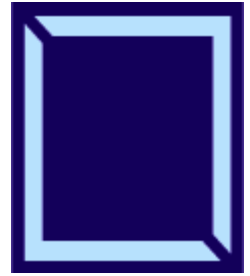
One problem is that rapid alignment tends to ignore the purification (self-qualification) (refinement) element that is preliminary to more conventional meditation. That is okay if the (presumed) alignment is real, for in that case the soul energy evoked effectively accomplishes the purification activity, more or less incidentally to the meditation proper. And that is quite attractive, as the purification activity is precluded as a distraction in consciousness (the disciple should not ignore continual self-qualification and further refinement, but should be relatively more focused on the work (service)). The problem is that if the alignment is not real, but merely presumed, then the purification activity tends to be ignored entirely, and for those who are not aligned or who cannot achieve alignment that purification activity is (or should be) important.

This problem is potentially compounded in that most people seeking rapid alignment (a) do so because they are “lazy” and/or presume (falsely) that they are “beyond” need of the preliminaries and (b) have no way of really knowing whether or not they have achieved alignment (and, in fact, most of them are not aligned but believe (falsely) that they are aligned). If one is truly aligned, then one knows it. But if a student is not aligned, the student tends to believe (falsely) that he or she is aligned and (believe that he or she) knows so (falsely). On the other hand, for one who truly knows alignment, the techniques of rapid alignment are quite potent. But to act as if something is so, believing that it is so, without it really being so, is self-deceptive (albeit creatively so).

Yet (proper) alignment is simply not (effectively) possible for one who is not both integrated as a personality (being necessarily mentally polarized) and purified (qualified) (refined) to the point where the personality is responsive and receptive to the soul energy. Since most people (aspirants) (spiritual students) have no real grasp (intellectually or otherwise) of what the soul is, and since the mind tends to masquerade as the soul, many believe rather falsely in their own alignment. All the more reason for cultivating honesty and self-honesty. As the student matures in this sense, the honest and accurate perception of one’s alignment (or lack thereof) is realized and progress can then be made toward effectively achieving (or maintaining) that alignment.

What is alignment is perceived rather differently by different people (and their respective schools). In a rather superficial sense, the spiritual student has some measure of soul contact or qualification, simply by virtue of being a spiritual student (having become responsive enough to make some sort of commitment to the way). But “real” alignment is a matter of much more obvious infusion of the soul’s energy (potency) and tends to persist based upon the student’s overall quality of consciousness. Rapid alignment then refers simply to the exercise of renewing or strengthening the alignment.

Section 6.42



Personality Transcendence

Personality transcendence follows from a number of lifetimes on the spiritual path. It is a matter and consequence of conscious evolution and fulfillment of all of the requirements for graduation from life in this world.

Four Points of Conduct

Though many guidelines exist for spiritual effort, the following four points of conduct are offered as a general complementary focus (intention) for the serious spiritual student. These points of conduct should be complemented by serious heart-centered work (such as the development of humility, compassion, and goodwill). Each of these points may be studied meditatively.

The first point is personal sacrifice to the cause of good. Attachment to personal (mundane) energies (desires) (limitations) (values) must ultimately be sacrificed. That attainment cannot be accomplished without a beginning; this point is an overall qualification of spiritual intent. The spiritual student should resolve to progress beyond personal energies, by letting go (releasing) the bonds of personality-centered existence. Personality-centered existence includes not only physical and emotional attachments, but that aspect of mental life which involves opinions and rationalizations as well. The spiritual student should value the cause of good above purely personal causes. This implies increasing selflessness (unselfishness) as the reality of God and the (esoteric) relationship between the individual and the group (humanity) (life) are realized. But what is the cause of good (appropriateness)?

The second point is absolute integrity in all situations. Life (and progress) in this lower (human) (objective) world is a thread (string) (stream) (sequence) of situations (circumstances) (crises) (tests) (opportunities) to be faced and conquered. Each situation (and every moment is a situation) offers lessons to be learned and opportunities for contribution to the cause of good. But progress requires continued (and continually refined) honesty and integrity. Integrity implies (in part) purification (preparation), integration (of the personality), and alignment (of the soul and personality) (with the cause of good). Absolute integrity may be a goal, but it is also an attitude and a frame (intention) of mind with which to face every situation, a qualification of every effort (and response) in the daily life.

The third point is impeccable wisdom in relationships with others. Impeccable (flawless) wisdom is to be cultivated and applied (with integrity) to every

situation. The most (generally) important of situations are those which involve human relationships (and relationships which involve life-forms). Right human relations must be achieved, between individuals and between groups, until (ultimately) all are integrated consciously into the reality of one life. The proper interaction of personalities is a constructive and complementary (mutually completing) experience. Personal or purely mundane relationships are discouraged. With the proper spiritual cultivation (preparation), each relationship with others becomes spiritualized (enlightened) (meaningful) (but not glamorous or personal), automatically. With spiritual poise the student is not distracted, ruffled, or drawn into mundane compromise (absorption) by any situation or relationship; but rather, the spiritual student offers encouragement to all, through every relationship, conscious or otherwise.

The fourth point involves dedicated times of the search for truth and the study of self. This search and study requires the establishment of a dedicated pattern of meditation. A regular rhythm and commitment must be established and inertia (resistance) overcome. Such a dedicated pattern requires determination, an open mind, and a willingness to make whatever adjustments are discovered to be needed. The search for truth (the study of self) is a never-ending quest, but one which must be embarked upon and realized without attachment, if the spiritual student is to find the real purpose of life.

« Commentary No. 179

The Death of Self

One of the significant milestones in the spiritual life is the elimination of separateness or the death of self. In this sense, death does not refer to the end of incarnation, but rather, it refers to the end of self-centered existence, and the beginning of the enlightened life (without self). The true individuality (the soul) is not lost, nor is the personality terminated. Only the independence and separateness of the personality is ended, as the real self (the soul) takes complete control of its reflection in the lower worlds.

The death of self involves the complete sublimation of the personality, as the mind and the emotions, and the physical instrument lose all sense of resistance

to the downpouring energies of the soul. The personality is the ego, and it is that sense of ego which must ultimately be destroyed (transformed) into useful cooperation and complete subordination to the higher self. It is the vanity and conceit and deception of the ego that are finally overcome as the humility of true spiritual strength (freedom from the limitations of self-centered existence) is achieved. And in that newfound spiritual poise is found the three-fold ray of life (love) (light) in God.

The true self is the (relatively) immortal soul which is forever coexistent and atoned with every other soul. The false self (the personality) (which is usually centered in the separative concrete mind) is quite mortal and, of its own accord, separated from other lives by the illusion of its selfhood. In reality, the ego (personal self) is merely loose association (integration) of elemental (involutionary) lives identified wholly with the aspect of form (matter) rather than the aspect of consciousness. As the false (lower) self is overcome, the individual is reborn (in the midst of life in the lower worlds) into higher consciousness. This process (transformation) has some analogies, including some emotionally-polarized orthodox religious experiences as well as some daily esoteric exercises in which the humility of higher existence is brought forth into the responsive mind and heart of the dedicated disciple.

The death of self is a most potent transition for the aspirant, because it includes (suggests) (leads to) a complete repolarization of consciousness and a deep commitment to God (the spiritual path) and to the world of souls (humanity). The true self is a noble existence in which the life of God predominates. The individuality exists as a powerful focus of energy, but in such a refined, impersonal, selfless way that complete harmony qualifies every relationship in a group (lifewave) context. There is no independence, yet there is perfect freedom. What seems to be a paradox is resolved by the underlying purpose of life and the revelation of divine existence. The individual who becomes God (while retaining the individuality) experiences that greatness through deepest humility. No sense of separation can exist on those levels, and no personal energy can enter the field of causation for the lower worlds.

The individual who refuses to die to self clings to the temporary form of futile existence. The individual who conquers himself achieves the freedom of creative consciousness unbound by the form through which it works. The death of self

(self-centeredness) is essential (mandatory) to ultimate progress upon the spiritual path, for there comes a time in the life at which a certain major crises must be faced. The spiritual student who passes that test must die to self (be transformed and reborn in the spiritual self). It is a gate through which each must pass who is to evolve beyond the human experience, a gate through which independence and separateness and ego cannot pass, a gate through which can pass only the individuals who have achieved self-mastery.

« Commentary No. 399

The Personality Presence 1

In the lower (personality) sense, presence is defined as the bearing, carriage, manifestation, or aura (auric projection) of a person, particularly as that bearing (aura) relates to the immediate vicinity (environment) (since the personality presence is likely to affect that environment).

In the higher sense (soul), presence is defined as the (overall) quality of the personality that is refined enough to facilitate rapport with the soul (i.e., the character (poise) consciousness, and temperament (effectiveness) that enables the spiritual student to achieve an intimate (close) (impersonal) (pure) relationship (rapport) with the soul and within a group context). Presence in the higher sense also refers to the character and quality (consciousness) of the soul, as manifested through an aligned (qualified) personality. Thus in the higher sense, the distinction of soul and personality is not essential.

But in the lower sense, the presence (projection) of the personality is an important consideration for the spiritual student, for the student (person) in incarnation must live (interact) as a personality while simultaneously being (hopefully) (eventually) completely (continuously) qualified by the soul (i.e., wholly responsive to the character and consciousness of the soul, without impediment by the personality (personal energy)). Thus, one of the more considerable challenges (opportunities) for the spiritual student is to be aware of and eventually learn to control that personality presence. Prior to the time that the personality becomes aware of the spiritual path, and for some time after that beginning awareness, the personality naturally (appropriately) develops along

experiential (personality-centered) (self-centered) lines (of least resistance to the personality), becoming relatively loud (dynamic) (outgoing) (interactive) (intrusive) as the personality grows in strength. That loudness is evident on all levels of personality existence, to the extent that the personality is active on each level.

The basic problem of the personality, in this context, is the lack of discipline (refinement) of the personality resulting in an unconscious expulsion (radiation) (projection) of force (energy) (noise) on subtle levels (etheric, astral, mental), which in turn affects the immediate environment. If the personality presence is particularly loud (on whatever level) or particularly focused, then the effects are not necessarily limited to the immediate environment, but may be (relatively) far-reaching or pointed. The loudness (noise) of the personality (i.e., the coarse presence (nature) of the (unaligned) (unrefined) personality) effectively undermines any attempts of the personality toward alignment with the soul, so the student must properly dampen the (ordinary) personality nature and refine its nature in order to successfully approach the soul and establish a conscious (meaningful) link (relative alignment) with that soul.

The soul (inner (higher) self) exists as the “voice of the silence” and can only be approached in a gentle (humble) (quiet) (peaceful) (unobtrusive) (impersonal) manner. Compared to the considerably refined (purified) (qualified) nature of the soul, the typical (ordinary) (educated) (refined) (well-developed) (potent) (intelligent) personality is quite coarse (loud) (to some extent, even violent, on subtle levels). A reactive personality is (potentially) particularly violent, on astral and concrete mental levels (even if the physical reaction appears to be well-in-hand). An integrated personality, of course, tends to be less reactive, particularly where qualified or refined by sustained conscious effort.

The Personality Presence 2

Where the personality is properly integrated and aligned, the personality vehicles act in unison, responsive to the mind and to the soul. But prior to proper integration, where the personality is strong (self-indulgent) (loud), the personality expression (presence) on each level is relatively independent (yet reactive). The transition (reformation) of the personality from the personality-centered stage to the soul-qualified stage is a time when the spiritual student must properly and carefully assess the character (impact) of each of the vehicles (levels of expression) in turn, and in each circumstance, in order to understand and effect the needed adjustments (qualifications) (refinements). This transition period is necessary for the student to become reasonably successful (effectively qualified) on each level.

For a personality absorbed in the day to day aspects of (mundane) life, the presence (loudness) of the personality is not really a problem (for the spiritual student, however, being absorbed so would be a problem), but during the transition from personality qualification to soul qualification, it becomes more and more necessary for the student to quiet (dampen) the personality on each level. In a (passive) (inactive) sense the soul is always present within a living personality, but the presence of the soul will not (cannot) manifest through a loud (coarse) (unresponsive) (unrefined) personality. The loud personality presence (nature) forces the soul to remain aloof and essentially indifferent to the particulars of personality experience.

Thus the student finds himself in the position of having to give up personality attributes (strengths) eons in achieving. However, it is not so much a matter of giving up as it is a matter of refinement and redirection, of qualification, of adapting and adjusting the personality for more refined (and more worthy) applications. For as long as the personality is loud, rapprochement (rapport) in any higher (real) sense is not possible; and yet, there exists (ever present) an inner (subtle) tension (encouragement) for the personality to strive toward harmony (rapport) with the soul, so as to achieve both an inner (meaningful) contact and alignment with the soul's group. Once the approach is relatively complete, and relative peace (quiet) (harmlessness) (humility) (awareness) is the

guiding rule, then the duality of identity (the distinction of soul and personality) will cease (it never really existed).

An additional responsibility of the spiritual student that accrues in making the transition to soul control involves the recognition of how much (and in what ways) the personality presence affects the consciousness (atmosphere) (environment) around it. It is the unending obligation of the spiritual student to guard against excesses (unqualified release of energy) that would create anything less than a gentle, unobtrusive bearing (presence). Initially, this control (awareness) (self-discipline) is incorporated consciously, but later it is effected automatically (by continued qualification incidental to the increasingly refined nature). The stronger the personality, the greater is the potential for good or ill, depending on the character, quality, and temperament. Where the personality is wholly subordinated and responsive to the soul presence, then that strength is only a positive potential.

The real problem of the spiritual student is learning to live in the (mundane) world without being (literally) engrossed in it (absorbed by mundane or personal energy). In advancing upon the path, each (all) must be (become) aware of and in control of the etheric, auric, and mental projections (and aware of and responsive to the essence (subtle presence) of the real self (soul)).

« Commentary No. 872

Beyond Discipline 1

Self-discipline is an essential preliminary to the spiritual path that continues through the intermediate stages of the path. It involves a number of spiritual practices that help prepare the student for spiritual work and spiritual growth. Gradually self-discipline is transcended by spiritual discipline, which is in turn transcended by being or unconscious and natural adherence to the patterns of higher life.

Self-discipline is entirely preparatory, while spiritual discipline involves becoming as a prelude to being. Self-discipline involves adherence to various (purposive) rules (which take advantage of natural law) intended to bring about

a conquering of the (independence and relative coarseness) of the lower self (personality) (mind) (ego). Spiritual discipline involves more conscious realization of and adherence to more subtle rules (more subtle aspects of natural law) that facilitate real growth in (quality and extent of) consciousness (and particularly in the sense of conscious awareness). Spiritual discipline in no way undermines continuation of self-discipline (the preliminary adherence), as it includes the lesser and builds upon it. The difference is that in spiritual discipline there is no resistance to the preliminaries. Self-discipline has become (for the lesser self) a natural process (more properly, the lesser self has realized the higher naturalness of the discipline).

Proper discipline is an entirely healthy endeavor, undertaken without entanglement or attachment (but one is nonetheless serious and conscientious concerning the endeavor), and undertaken consciously and deliberately with full appreciation of its naturalness and its intended purpose. Beyond discipline is adherence to the underlying patterns of the evolutionary flow, with conscious appreciation of the principles involved, but without necessarily a conscious appreciation of any of the details or specifics (which are just not important in themselves). Beyond discipline there is still growth in depth and breadth of consciousness and quality, there is still deeper awareness and understanding (more properly, growth in wisdom), and there is still an adherence to the disciplinary patterns, but they have become effortless and are wholly unimpeded by the lower self.

In a sense, the (preliminaries of self-discipline and spiritual) discipline is a matter of doing (and being) what is right (and what is needed) through some conscious albeit relative realization of values (rightness or appropriateness), but that sense of appropriateness comes more or less intellectually and through conscience. It may begin tentatively by adherence to rules that are not wholly understood but which become more and more realizable, and grow through adherence with full appreciation for the processes and results produced thereby. In understanding the (natural, cosmic) law (in its various forms or implementations), there is a natural consequence of adherence or collaboration. But in self-discipline and in spiritual discipline, there is the involvement of the waking-consciousness in a more or less deliberate way.

In the (necessarily non-spatial, non-temporal) domain in conscious awareness beyond discipline, there is a greater adherence to the evolutionary patterns, not in any sense a matter of reasoning or deliberation, but in the sense of unconditioned participation. In the preliminaries and intermediate stages, one overcomes the lower conditioning by imposing a higher conditioning and qualification. In the beyond, one proceeds in an unconditioned and unqualified sense. One has passed beyond conditioning, beyond qualification, beyond reasoning, to being.

« Commentary No. 873

Beyond Discipline 2

In the shila paramita, the paramita of morality and discipline (and beyond), there is a growing openness that allows and affords the student to participate less and less deliberately in the patterns of life, i.e., to participate more and more fully (properly) (in the higher sense), not passively but selflessly. In the paradox of discipline, it is not possible to reach beyond discipline without having passed through the preliminary and intermediate stages (of discipline). One cannot reach beyond conditioning and qualification without reconditioning and higher qualification. And when one is beyond these things, one appears yet to adhere to all of the lesser discipline, albeit less consciously and less deliberately.

The preliminaries are essentially (albeit purposively) contrived, the intermediate stages less so, and beyond not at all so. In the preliminaries there is a great struggle with the lower self (personality) (mind) (ego). In the intermediate stages there is an even greater, albeit much more subtle struggle, with the more subtle aspects of the lower self. But in the domain beyond discipline, one falls naturally into patterns that persist unaffected by the apparent (lower) chaos of manifestation (being wholly involved in the (higher) chaos of manifestation). The preliminary and intermediate stages are marked by effort and achievement; the third stage (beyond) is marked by effortlessness. But in this (higher) effortlessness is a great wisdom and realization. There is pure, absolute, and superior action.

Some may think themselves to be beyond discipline, but they are simply enchanted by the ego and the glamour of the path, using that enchantment

(delusion) to excuse themselves from what the lesser self wishes not to do or be. The ego naturally resists any form of spiritual progress and resorts to increasingly subtle means to maintain itself. Anyone who makes such a claim (of being beyond discipline) is obviously deluded. Those who are beyond discipline are generally not even recognizable as such except by those who are "there" already or who are close enough to perceive and comprehend that essential nature (beyond even quality). The ideal and intended goal may be comprehended, but it is rather (most) difficult of achievement. In fact, passing beyond discipline is an achievement in non-achievement.

In this paramita, morality is discipline and discipline is morality. This great (intended) participation in life (morality) is without attachment and without entanglement, without reasoning or rationalization, without struggle and without ego, and yet one must pass through all of these things before one can rise above (beyond) them. The keys to this passage beyond (ascension) are preparation and service, and in both preparation and service there must be a letting go of selfishness and all self-centeredness, a letting go of all attachments, of all preconceived notions, of all beliefs and opinions, thus allowing realization (self-realization) to occur. Beyond discipline is allowance, the great freedom of being one with all. Beyond separateness is reality. To go beyond is not to leave, but to be.

For all of the students approaching and upon the path of becoming, there is continual (periodic) (not continuous) meditation, that is premeditated (necessarily contrived). For those beyond there is unpremeditated and constant (continuous) meditation (and nonetheless participative in life). Beyond happiness there is happiness. Beyond meditation there is meditation. Beyond discipline there is discipline. Beyond the self is realization. Beyond realization is self-realization.

Personality Transcendence

Once the personality (lower self) (human nature) has been refined, on physical, emotional, and concrete mental levels, once the personality has been properly cultivated and properly integrated so that there is the possibility of alignment of personality and soul, then one must embrace the process of personality transcendence that leads through alignment to and beyond self-mastery.

The process of personality transcendence builds upon the preliminary and intermediate disciplines and focuses primarily on the student becoming truly (non-superficially) aware of the personality presence and passing beyond discipline (without losing it) to actually embracing the higher Self. If one is not fully aware of the personality nature and the subtleties of the ego, if one does not actually realize the distinctions between personality and soul, then one will continue to deceive oneself throughout the attempt to embrace this process. But as one becomes aware of all of the indications of personality (ego), and as the personality becomes further purified and refined in consciousness, one begins to sense the energy and quality of the soul itself (rather than deceiving oneself into thinking that the more noble part of the personality is the soul).

The process of personality transcendence does not destroy the personality, but it does destroy the personality as a limiting factor. As the personality is transcended, it no longer appreciably impedes the alignment of personality and soul. As the personality is transcended, it gradually ceases to be an independent factor. As the personality is transcended, there is no more reversion to rationalization or reasoning or reliance on feelings at the emotional level. The personality becomes a willing, responsive instrument of expression (service) (sharing of qualified energy), in fact (not merely intellectually) and substantially (not merely incidentally). The personality is then able to clearly reflect the higher feelings (insight) (intuition) of the (higher) Self (without distortion or personal bias).

Personality transcendence follows eventually from personality transformation. Transformation refers to the changes that take place in the personality at the material and process levels of consciousness. Transcendence refers to going

beyond transformation to actually embracing that which is higher. Transformation is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for transcendence. Another implication of the process of personality transcendence is that the personality and ego are inherently material and empirical, while the soul is inherently spiritual and transcendental. Many people are spiritually-minded yet remain largely materially focused on more subtle levels. Through personality transcendence, the (alchemically) transformed personality loses its material attachments and becomes amenable and responsive to higher energies and forces (applied energies).

There is actually another, more subtle dimension to this process. The soul is both immanent and transcendent. In cultivating and transforming and conquering and transcending the personality, the student not only transcends the personality as a personality but embraces the immanence of the underlying reality (the soul on its level). But the method is transcendence. If one merely embraces (apparent) immanence, then one will be absorbed at that level and never reach the underlying reality. But if one embraces transcendence, then one can also embrace immanence. The distinctions are necessary even as one transcends distinctions.

« Commentary No. 1222

Catharsis

Catharsis is a process, of purification or purgation, that brings about spiritual renewal or release from tension. While much of the process of purification is gradual and almost incidental to life in the lower worlds, the spiritual student who invokes catharsis accelerates that process. Once a person is genuinely committed to the (spiritual) path, then acceleration of the process (growth in consciousness) is inevitable.

In one sense, catharsis is the process in which a demon (weakness) (limitation), that is otherwise masked by the personality life, is evoked or brought to the surface of conscious awareness so that it can be recognized and resolved, either by release (letting go) or tempering (qualification) or transformation (into its more suitable counterpart). In another, broader sense, catharsis involves self-obstruction in the sense of a person (spiritual student) consciously or

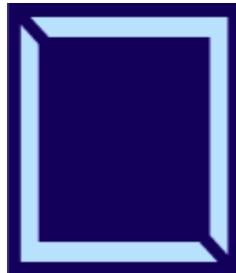
unconsciously evoking a phase of experience and expression in which the person is enveloped (psychically) in an etheric-astral cocoon that is substantially inhibiting, yet which eventually produces considerable freedom from limitations as the cocoon is dissolved and the (spiritually-renewed) person passes on the next phase. That process (catharsis) can be rather lengthy, particularly if the person is more-or-less passive to the opportunity. But where a person actively engages the process (self-transformation), it is more intense and relatively brief.

The whole purpose of catharsis is to bring about self-transformation, either through specific catalytic processes or through some more general, broader catalysis. There are many and various limitations to human experience and expression. The spiritual path involves growth in consciousness, a deepening of realization and broadening of awareness, through overcoming or transcending the many and various weaknesses or limitations. To accomplish this (freedom from substantial limitation) is very difficult and generally takes many lifetimes, but through genuine commitment to the spiritual path it is possible to accomplish a great deal in each lifetime. Once invoked, the spiritual path (dharma-karma) will periodically bring about the needed crises that enable catharsis. Then catharsis affords the breakdown of (some) conditioning, the facing and resolving of (some of) one's own limitations, and consequent advancement (spiritual maturity).

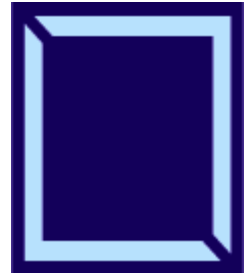
Catharsis may relate to the relatively obvious human limitations (human nature at materialistic and egoistic levels) (e.g., self-centeredness), or to more subtle limitations (e.g., specific beliefs, opinions, attachments, that limit further realization). Catharsis is both a profoundly metaphysical process and a substantially psychological one. It is a matter of facilitation of change, of substantial growth, of adaptation to inner needs. It is a facing of the darkness within, bringing it to the surface, dealing with it, and in so doing, finding the light and love within, that displaces the darkness and transforms human (personality) limitations into spiritual strengths.

Catharsis is often a substantially painful process, leading eventually to joyful renewal and release of tension. If it is painful, it is so because of natural (personality) (ego) resistance to spiritual growth, resistance to discovery (of self-truth). Indeed, it is generally that resistance that obstructs growth in the first place. It is the resistance (inertia) of the lower self (ego) (intellect) (personality-

centeredness) (self-absorption) that must be overcome. Catharsis is, in this sense, merely one of a number of processes of self-transformation.



Section 6.43



Personality Awareness

In order to overcome the natural impedimentiveness of the personality, the student must cultivate an effective awareness of what is and how is the (particular) personality, e.g., what characteristics and tendencies are there, how the personality functions to protect itself and sustain its illusion of independence. Thus some degree of personality awareness must be achieved before the personality can be effectively tempered.

Awareness of Personality 1

The human personality is potentially a considerable asset to the spiritual student, but it must first be carefully cultivated and tempered in order to be more useful and effective than (naturally) impedimentive. For most people, the personality is already an adequate (generally effective) instrument for experience and expression, but for the spiritual student, the personality must be refined and the natural personality-centeredness of the personality must be overcome as well. In order to overcome the natural impedimentiveness of the personality, the student must cultivate an effective awareness of what and how the (particular) personality is (e.g., what characteristics and tendencies, how the personality functions to protect itself and sustain its illusion of independence), before the personality can be effectively tempered.

It is therefore relatively quite important for the spiritual student to be continually aware of the degree of his or her personality-centeredness (in the case of an untempered personality) or the degree of personality presence (in the case of a partially tempered personality or a personality that is tempered part of the time (or both)). Personality-centeredness implies the absorption of the personality on mundane (personal) levels and/or the absorption of the personality in glamour and illusion. It is extremely difficult for a personality-centered person (even a spiritual student) to be aware of that personality-centeredness.

So the student must cultivate measures of self-discipline such that (1) the personality is gradually refined (making it more receptive and responsive to higher impression) and (2) the waking-consciousness becomes increasingly aware of the times and extent of personality-centeredness. In that awareness are the seeds for gradually taking control of the personality and wresting it from its absorbed state (all of which is over and above the need for the student to overcome the self-centeredness of the personality (i.e., personality-centeredness and self-centeredness are two distinctly different phenomena although often manifesting simultaneously)).

Personality-centeredness is in a sense the extreme case of personality presence or the degree to which the personality is functioning as an (independent) personality (instead of as a consciously and effectively receptive and responsive instrument of higher purpose) (one who is personality-centered can be only marginally receptive and responsive (intelligently cooperative) at best, while one who is not personality-centered is thereby wholly receptive and responsive). In the context of a spiritual group, personality-centeredness is separative and counterproductive. In the context of an advanced spiritual group, even personality presence is separative and counterproductive (impedimentive). Thus one must be properly tempered in order to work effectively in the context of a spiritual group.

The real keys to overcoming both personality-centeredness and personality presence are awareness of what constitutes personality-centeredness and personality presence coupled with continual (continuous) self-awareness (i.e., awareness of what and how the personality is functioning). The first key is a matter of consciously learning from the appropriate (pertinent) theosophical and metaphysical teachings, while the second key is a matter of conscious and deliberate cultivated awareness and the ability to discriminate the personality presence from the properly-tempered personality. Many intelligent aspirants and even some (probationary) disciples (spiritual students) have difficulty becoming so aware and in exercising proper discrimination.

« Commentary No. 814

Awareness of Personality 2

The fundamental problem of the untempered or partially tempered personality (one that is personality-centered or which manifests some extent of personality presence, respectively) is that the waking-consciousness naturally identifies with the personality and therefore (without considerable training and self-discipline) has considerable difficulty in discriminating between the real (the absence of personality) and the unreal (the personality presence). [Of course it is not “wrong” for the personality to be personality-centered or for there to be a personality presence (participation of the personality as a personality and not as a responsive instrument), but that is counterproductive from the point of view of

the soul and in the context of the spiritual path (where the objectives of life and the values embraced (or to be embraced) are different from those of people who are not on the path and not subject to its rules)].

Two of the keys to the personality's (self) deception are glamour (feeling) and illusion (rationalization). Emotionally-polarized people (emopols) are particularly susceptible to glamour, while mentally-polarized people (menpols) are particularly susceptible to rationalization (the problem of a menpol who is englamoured is often compounded by rationalization and the problem of an emopol who rationalizes is often compounded by emotional bias). The personality encourages the absorption of the waking-consciousness in glamour and illusion.

When the mind first seeks to wrestle with this problem of personality-centeredness and personality presence, the obvious discriminating factors have to do with coarseness (and apparent quality of consciousness (as manifested) (e.g., character, disposition, temperament, etc.)) (i.e., the color of the personality (aura)). This helps in the refinement process but does not really address the more subtle factors (that may not be obvious to the waking-consciousness). The mind gradually learns to recognize many of the personality indicators (and in recognition are the seeds of overcoming) and eventually develops the ability to discriminate even the more subtle aspects of personality (i.e., the tone of the personality). But this is necessarily a long and difficult process as the personality is intelligently subtle and deceptive and seeks to undermine the student's efforts.

Through self-observation (and retrospection) the degrees of coarseness manifested can be recognized and qualification evoked to bring about a suitable refinement. But where the personality is absorbed (in mundane, personal matters (including glamour)) self-observation and retrospection may not suffice to bring about the needed awareness and self-transformation. One must also actively (consciously and deliberately) cultivate the processes of (continual or continuous) self-observation and (daily) retrospection such that the waking-consciousness (the focus of one's human consciousness) becomes aware of even the more subtle forms of absorption.

One of the crucial keys to success in these endeavors is honesty (and particularly self-honesty). One must be intelligently and sensibly open to truth (and particularly to the truth about oneself) or else the personality will have the upper hand in extending or continuing its deception. In fact, being open to truth may not even suffice. Indeed, one may actually have to love truth and actively (consciously and deliberately) seek truth before the veils of personality-generated glamour and illusion (self-deception) can be overcome. This process is further compounded by the layered nature of truth (e.g., the deception of the personality is layered such that one must actually penetrate (reveal) layer after layer (one by one) (each more subtle) of self-deception).

« Commentary No. 815

Awareness of Personality 3

One who is properly trained and experienced in occult matters should be able to recognize (discern and discriminate) the relative degree of personality presence and in that recognition (coupled with sincere intention (will)) should be able to bring about the proper tempering of the personality such that the personality will be a non-impedimentive and constructive (collaborative) instrument for spiritual work. But those who are not so trained and experienced (yet have embarked upon the spiritual path nonetheless) must institute a process of continual (hopefully continuous and eventually unconscious but nonetheless effective) vigilance in order to achieve the needed recognition and subsequent refinement and qualification.

The student who cannot easily discern and discriminate the personality presence should continually ask a number of pertinent questions. How and to what extent is the ego manifesting itself in my life? To what extent am I manifesting as a personality? To what extent is my personality qualified by higher purpose and quality? How is the personality manifesting as a personality? How is the personality qualified by the soul? What are the ways of the personality? What is the quality and nature of the soul? How can I manifest that quality and nature? What ways of the world have I embraced, consciously or otherwise, and how do those ways undermine the manifestation of higher purpose? How can my personality be refined and cultivated to reduce

and eliminate its presence? How can I utilize my personality (spiritually) effectively, without undermining the higher purpose and quality in manifestation? To what extent am I absorbed in the mundane and personal world? How am I enamoured? What assumptions have I made and what are their effects? What opinions do I have and how closely are they held? How can I be loosened from my opinions and how can I have no opinions?

If the student is both honest and earnest in asking these questions (and in formulating additional pertinent questions) and patient and persistent in listening to (for) answers, however subtle they may be, then progress will be achieved. The "work" is continual, as ever the process is refined and new recognitions occur. Eventually the qualification of the personality by the soul (which is necessarily indirect and subjective) will increase and become more and more obvious to the waking-consciousness (helping the waking-consciousness then to discriminate between the personality presence and the soul's quality). Ultimately, as the soul's quality is recognized, it will become painful to be anything other than that soul qualification (i.e., every emergence of personality will be painful to the waking-consciousness which will then seek to dampen the personality in order to restore the flow of the soul qualification).

Of course the spiritual student cannot expect to be soul-aligned or soul-infused all of the time (although that is indeed one of the goals), and there will naturally be times in which the personality emerges (as a personality). Stress, for example, naturally evokes both the personality presence (more notably in the form of manifested weaknesses and vulnerabilities (e.g., impatience and irritability)) and the seeds of their overcoming, but stress (and its effects in the personality) is not an easy matter to deal with.

The extent to which a personality participates in anything (e.g., a spiritual (metaphysical) (theosophical) group (activity)) is the extent to which the soul (higher self) (higher purpose) (truth) (wisdom) is not present. In the final analysis, the soul is only and ever revealed in the absence of personality.

Awareness of Personality 4

After many cycles of incarnations for experience and interludes (pralaya) for assimilation, the personality is eventually developed and refined to the point where it begins to sense the presence or quality of the soul. Just prior to that point, the mind (waking-consciousness) believes in the existence of the soul and works toward becoming consciously and continuously aware of the distinction between the soul (quality) and its personality (color and tone), but can only properly measure the soul's presence in terms of the absence of the personality. However, after the mind (personality) (waking-consciousness) begins to sense the presence of the soul (i.e., after the noise of the personality and ego have been largely (but never actually completely) overcome)), then the discernment (discrimination) of personality presence becomes relatively more easy (intuitive).

Prior to this turning point the personality has the upper hand as it is self-enchanted (i.e., absorbed in material (mundane) (personal) glamour and illusion) and the personality actively deceives the waking-consciousness (which is after all only an aspect of itself) in its falsehood (even to the point where the personality masquerades as the soul). But once the soul quality is consciously recognized, the personality is increasingly seen (perceived) to be of lesser quality (relative to that of the soul) (even as the quality of the personality is actually improving). From that point on the soul has the more apparent momentum and the waking-consciousness actually begins to enchant the personality with the quality of the soul (i.e., the personality begins to "like" the feeling that results from its awareness of the soul's quality). At that point, the personality begins to cooperate with the efforts of refinement, seeking its own temperance as a means of improving its ability to bathe in the presence of the soul (even as that means the personality is weakened in its sense of separation and independence).

However, even at that point, the struggle is not ended, as the personality is still "present" to some extent and its (now secondary) objective of self-preservation becomes even more subtle in its manifestation. Thus the (waking-consciousness of the) spiritual student must still be (further) refined and further trained to permit increased awareness (discernment) of the personality presence (and the more subtle distinctions between personality and soul (in

manifestation)). On the other hand, having some awareness of the soul means that the soul qualification (energy) (forces) is more actively felt (available) and the student can more easily recognize the finer distinctions between the real (the self) and the unreal (the not-self).

Believing in the existence of the soul (active relationship to God) conveys some momentum to the aspirant's efforts. But once the soul is actually felt (and this does not mean the personality's masquerade), that momentum is increased relatively dramatically. In subsequent lifetimes and prior to the fulfillment of each lifetime's recapitulation in which the soul's presence is again consciously felt, such a student will simply "know" of the soul's reality, having unconscious memories of the earlier incarnation(s). But it is only when the soul's presence (quality) is actually felt that the personality can begin to respond actively.

Awareness of personality must nonetheless be continually realized, consciously or unconsciously, in order for the spiritual student to continue within the momentum of the path, for only by that awareness and realization can the personality be effectively and efficiently utilized for good.



