



THE UPPER TRIAD

SPECIAL ISSUE NUMBER 4

AN INTRODUCTION TO
THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

Preface

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Commentaries on the Esoteric Philosophy

Recommended Reading

Free-Subscription Form

THE UPPER TRIAD

The Upper Triad is a journal of metaphysical, theosophical, and esoteric philosophy. The journal is published monthly by the Upper Triad Association, a tax-exempt, non-profit, philosophical society. The Upper Triad is distributed free of charge to any interested persons. This work is financed almost entirely by voluntary contributions. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Commentaries and quotations printed in the journal are intended to stimulate constructive thinking and further study along spiritual lines. Each thought may be accepted, deferred, or rejected, in whole or in part, according to the perspective of the reader.

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SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. THE UNITY OF ALL LIFE. That there exists one God, both immanent and transcendent, within which are differentiated all lives and all forms.

2. THE PURPOSE OF LIFE. That the purpose of life is the evolution of consciousness through experience and expression. That all life is conditioned by purpose within a grand scheme of progressive cyclic evolution.

3. REINCARNATION AND KARMA. That human evolution proceeds through many progressive incarnations according to a cosmic law of periodicity, ever onward and upward. That life is conditioned by the Great Teacher, the Law of Karma, which yields learning experiences and encourages evolution as a consequence of free will, through every thought, feeling, and action.

4. THE NATURE OF TRUTH. That truth can be found in philosophy, religion, and science, which are but aspects of one coherent and inclusive truth having no inherent conflict or contradiction. That there are many paths to God, embracing all religions and spiritual philosophy. That truth is relative and can be perceived in many ways and on many levels, according to consciousness.

5. THE PROBLEM OF LIFE. That the real problem of life in the lower worlds is the elimination of glamour and illusion. That glamour and illusion can be fully overcome, as the student achieves the alignment of a purified and integrated personality with the soul, through intelligent meditation.

6. PERSONALITY AND SOUL. That the true individuality is the soul which inhabits the personality. That the personality is composed of three interrelated instruments: the physical body, the emotional or astral body, and the lower mind. That the soul is the essence of the divinity within.

7. THE SPIRITUAL PATH. That the spiritual path in its many aspects embraces the higher stages of human evolution, as the human soul takes its stand and commits itself to conscious and selfless development. That this process encompasses the development of the inner, latent spirituality and the application of one's faculties in service to God and to humanity.

PREFACE

The material presented here is intended to serve as an introduction to the esoteric philosophy for persons not already familiar with its terminology, basic principles, etc., or persons who wish to have a collection of basic commentaries for periodic review. The original commentaries are part of an encyclopedic set of commentaries, published individually in the Upper Triad Journal over the course of a number of years.

The majority of Upper Triad commentaries are not easy to read, due to the style of writing and the numerous correlations suggested via parentheses. This style is deliberate, for the commentaries are not intended for the casual reader, but for the more deliberate reader and/or the serious student. The typical reader is more accustomed to a casual, linear reading habit. Thus many of the commentaries in the regular issues are intended to discourage the casual reading and to encourage the more deliberate approach that allows and stimulates the higher faculties to participate. The basic commentaries included here are somewhat easier to read than most, and are intended to provide a sufficient basis for reading and understanding (to some extent) the remaining commentaries or at least to enable the reader to appreciate a current issue of the Upper Triad Journal without being overwhelmed by a new terminology or unfamiliar concepts.

The commentaries selected for this special issue are each separately complete, but the ordering for this issue provides more obvious continuity than is the case for the regular monthly issues. Part I, after explaining what the esoteric philosophy is, begins its focus with (generic) man, what he is, what are his dimensions, the natural laws, what is God, how does God manifest, and how the individual can reach and better understand God, through meditation. Part II concerns the spiritual path proper, the spiritual life and values, how to cultivate and integrate the personality and align the personality with the soul, and how to achieve a better understanding of the wisdom teachings.

The approach and format of this material is intended to aid the user in achieving one of the many possible orientations in the study of the esoteric philosophy, but as is usually true in life, there are many paths by which one may accomplish this end, and even once started, the momentum may follow any one of a number of directions and perspectives. Implied here is that all are not meant to travel the same path in life, even though all are intended to achieve the same overall goal. The approach of these commentaries is more to explain and help in obtaining an understanding, rather than deluge the seeker with facts or information, even though, in this context, a great deal of information is presented. Following the basic commentaries is a list of suggested reading material that may further aid in filling in the pieces of the overall scope of the philosophy.

There are of course a great many meaningful subjects within the philosophy that could not be included in a special issue of this size and scope. Those subjects are, hopefully, properly covered in the various other commentaries. The philosophy as embraced by the Upper Triad Group and presented through the various commentaries is reasonably consistent with other theosophical teachings, although many metaphysical organizations may perceive things entirely otherwise. Thus the reader alone should be the judge of what is meaningful and acceptable. This material is simply an offering, based upon the perception, experience, and extent of understanding of the Upper Triad Group, however limited that might be.

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A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(1) No. 23 - THE ESOTERIC

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

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

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

Great care must be taken in translating from the abstract to the concrete, for the emotional and intellectual approaches most often result in misunderstanding and the misrepresentation of truth, often in a glamorous and personality-centered atmosphere. The devotional, meditative, impersonal, and intuitive atmosphere is the safest in which to discern and disseminate truth. The serious student accepts a truth only when the inner authority recognizes the truth. The spiritual student should concentrate on living the spiritual life, through the study of the highest teachings available, through meditation and the alignment of personality and soul, through purification and preparation, and through the unselfish application of the life in the service of God and humanity. The esoteric teachings point constantly to an understanding of God (life) and living properly in the lower worlds, to the understanding of the spiritual self and relationships, and to the evolution of consciousness. May humanity prepare itself for the responsibilities which come with the esoteric teachings as they are gradually transformed into the exoteric domain.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(2) No. 46 - THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES

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

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

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

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

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

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(3) No. 1 - THE NATURE OF TRUTH

Truth is an indication of reality, via perception, interpretation, and the capacity for understanding. The source of truth (in its unlimited or absolute form) is reality (God) itself, which is found in the realms beyond the illusionary world of personality, beyond the form-worlds of the physical, emotional, and mental planes. As reality existent in the mind of God, truth is untouchable by ordinary consciousness. But truth can be touched in part on various levels short of the constancy of God. Truth perceived on the various levels of consciousness (and through the multifarious perspectives) is truth constrained or limited to that level or perspective. Generally, the higher (deeper)(broader) the degree of perception, the more pure (and greater) is the essence of truth perceived. At the source, truth is a unified and coherent (singular) energy; on human levels, truth is (through dispersion and limitation) fragmented and colored (distorted) by human consciousness.

A particular truth (fragment) can be perceived, interpreted, and understood in a myriad of ways, depending very much upon the quality of mind and the plane or level (and method) of consciousness within which the truth is recognized. The comprehension of truth depends on the spiritual maturity of the student, the degree to which experience has been assimilated and transformed into quality (wisdom). The understanding and interpretation of truth depends also on the type and quality of the soul and personality rays. The highest contact with truth is a direct realization (on soul levels), uncolored by mind or emotion.

But the spiritual student is expected to recognize truth with every experience in life as well as to achieve such recognition on the highest possible plane. Truth can be perceived (by degrees) in response to external observations (sense impressions) though such must be abstracted from the illusion of the lower reality and sense-world. The voice of the silence (the spiritual intuition and the realization (awareness) of the contemplative self) is the internal means of truth perception, through the higher self (soul).

Truth can be found in all things and on all levels and through all perspectives. The aspirant must cultivate the discernment of truth uncolored by reaction to the personality means. There is no authority for truth. Truth belongs to no one and to no group, but to all. The various personalities and groups are merely instruments and (lower) mechanisms. No truth is exclusive or confined to a single channel. Truth must (properly) be perceived without attachment to the person or organization through which a truth is (superficially) reached.

The truth discerned (and interpreted) by others should be respected. Each person perceives truth in a unique way; such perception varies so much that comparisons and judgements can only be biased (and relative at best). What is truth to one person may mean very little to another. But the student of life can learn from the experience of other persons. The beliefs of others need not be accepted, but those beliefs can be considered and respected. The student should feel no need to impress his or her views upon another, for each must discern truth for himself. Beliefs may be shared, but with the realization that each can only know that truth which is right for himself, and not that which is right for someone else. One should not cling to or be attached to beliefs or opinions; for in spiritual growth, beliefs should become clarified in or replaced by higher truths. An open mind should be encouraged that the student may remain adaptable (but not passive). As the conscious mind is improved, spiritual truths are further recognized and assimilated.

(4) No. 6 - THE MONAD AND ITS REFLECTIONS

The monad is the highest aspect of the human being, one of three major levels. The other two levels are the soul and the personality. The monad is the divine spark of God whose presence cannot even be glimpsed until the student has attained lasting soul-consciousness. The monad is the Father or Shiva aspect which expresses itself through the upper triad of atma-buddhi-manas. Atma is the spiritual will; buddhi is the spiritual intuition; and manas is the abstract or higher mind. The reflection (manifestation) of the monad on those three levels of consciousness is the soul or higher self. The monad is constantly en rapport with the Godhead, while the soul is the descent (reflection) of the monad into matter (consciousness).

The soul is that immortal essence that chooses to incarnate under the law of karma, time and time again, through the various personality rays, for the purpose of gaining experience and thereby evolving. Due to the interrelatedness of all life, the evolution of the soul contributes also to the evolution of the greater life. The soul is that essence which transcends the earthly worlds of consciousness and is the totality of individual experience, talent, virtue, and conscience. The soul is the individuality, and it functions through several vehicles or bodies. Each vehicle is attuned to a different rate of vibration of matter. These vehicles are the reflection of the soul into matter (which is the second reflection of the monad) and comprise the lower triad. With the dense physical body, the lower triad becomes a quaternary. The three aspects of the lower self or personality are the concrete mind, the astral or emotional body, and the energy body (the etheric or vital body). These are the instruments for the expression of the three lower human principles: mental, emotional, and physical. The physical body is simply an outer covering for the etheric body.

The personality (lower self) is the three-fold vehicle for experience during a physical incarnation. It is the creation (reflection) in matter by the soul. Upon the death of the dense physical body, there is normally a withdrawal of consciousness from the physical onto successively higher levels. The personality vehicles (etheric, emotional, and mental) are successively discarded and disintegrated. The individuality (the soul) then stands free of those earthly limitations and rests. After the proper assimilation of the experience of the past life, and after due preparation, the soul seeks another birth for further experience and expression. A new personality is built or created by the soul that incorporates improvements in the physical, emotional, and mental characteristics (as earned or developed). These improvements are based on the past experience and karma of the soul, and the resultant personality is (of course) subject to the karma that has been evoked for the individual and for the environment of the incarnation. But the form should be distinguished from the life within the form. The form is matter, and the life within the form is (a much higher) consciousness.

The personality is energized or organized matter with a rather primitive consciousness. The soul is the higher consciousness and individuality, while the monad is pure spirit. The monad and the soul are both sexless; it is only the personality that manifests as male or female. Each aspect (sex) contributes experiences to benefit the evolving soul. Often the soul will incarnate alternately male and female, or at least according to some pattern. The soul will normally incarnate a number of times in each sub-race of each of the great root-races, and through various national environments, each with its own special contribution of experience.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(5) No. 3 - THE NIGHT OF TIME

According to the demands of evolution, the soul periodically descends into the world of matter, reflecting itself into the lower, objective world. That incarnation of the soul into the physical, emotional, and mental realms is sometimes referred to as the night of time. During the night of time, the personality consciousness is normally quite limited or constrained to the relative illusion (darkness) of separated existence in time and space.

The soul as the unit of human evolution gradually evolves from emptiness (unconsciousness) to completion. It is only during the later stages of the path that the soul has unfolded sufficiently and the personality is sufficiently responsive to the soul, that soul-consciousness can be achieved. Normally there is no recollection of previous lifetimes (nor is such recollection necessarily an indication of soul-consciousness), but the conscience that is the storehouse of experience, and the virtues and talents that have been earned are usually present, at least unconsciously. For most, it would be a hindrance and a distraction to have conscious knowledge either of past lives or of the probable future. Besides, it is the essence of that previous experience that matters, and that essence exists in the soul as quality and character. The spiritual student must learn to live quietly and peacefully in the eternal present, without clinging to the past or basing happiness on what the future may bring. True happiness is a quality of the timeless self (the soul), an expression of the God within, and an attitude of mind. Only when the timeless life has been achieved can there be true freedom and happiness. The purpose of life is not to escape from the world, but to evolve beyond the limitations of the world while retaining the ability to live and work in the world with true freedom (wisdom).

The truly free soul works unhindered through a purified personality nature. Circumstances of time and situation should be taken in stride, without distraction. The student need not be discouraged by world conditions or the particular situations and circumstances to be faced. As the spiritual student progresses, the hold of the various illusions (time and space, duality) lessens and the student is gradually led out of the darkness into the light of greater existence, onward and upward toward higher consciousness and unity of life. The esoteric darkness (the limited awareness of the personality in the lower worlds) is overcome and the soul is then able to function more effectively in both worlds (objective and subjective). Having completed the evolution (relative perfection) in the physical, emotional, and mental planes, the soul then moves on into a higher spiral of evolution. But in order for the student of life to reach that state of relative perfection, the student must assimilate the experience and knowledge gained in the lower worlds and enter into the timeless (eternal) perspective (which is immortality).

The night of time for an individual may be measured in years, but the night of time for humanity is measured (in time) by millenia. The night of time for humanity becomes increasingly important as the spiritual student deepens and as the unity of humanity as one life is gradually realized. There is then increasing concern for humanity (and the greater incarnation). The soul is a unified onlooker who views the unfolding events and experience in time and space as an essential part of the timeless plan for the evolution of human consciousness. And it is as that soul that the individual truly contributes to the consciousness of humanity. As life and all events are seen in terms of consciousness (rather than in terms of individuals in time and space), then the night of time shall become a dawn of continued awakening for all of humanity.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(6) No. 2 - 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 a lifetime or incarnation 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 superconsciousness. 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.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(7) No. 8 - THE SEVEN PLANES

The world of human existence encompasses seven major levels or planes of consciousness. The first (highest) plane is the source of human existence; the second is the plane of the (human) monad; and the lower five planes form the present domain of human evolution and range of human consciousness. Most of humanity express themselves only on the lowest three levels, and have awareness on only the lowest (physical) plane. Each of the seven planes has seven subdivisions (sub-planes). Each of the forty-nine sub-planes is formed of matter of a particular density and polarization. Each succeeding higher sub-plane is formed of finer or more subtle matter. Each plane is a world or dimension in itself, having a distinct polarization, yet interpenetrating the other planes. There are no 'higher' or 'lower' realms, simply many coexistent dimensions. The terms 'higher' and 'lower' are used to refer to the relative quality (consciousness) of the matter.

The lowest world (the seventh or physical plane) has two major divisions. The lowest three sub-planes comprise the dense physical or chemical region that is characterized by the physical matter known to modern science. The upper four sub-planes comprise the etheric region. The matter of the four ethers is quite physical, but it is of a much finer nature. The etheric region is a world of physical plane forces and energies. Much of the phenomena in the physical world finds its force or intermediate cause in the etheric region. In fact, most of the physical life support processes are etheric functions.

The next higher plane (the sixth) is called the astral or emotional plane (the desire world). It is characterized as a sea of emotional energies; it also has seven subdivisions of matter. The lower sub-planes are of the coarse matter of the unpleasant (selfish) emotions. The higher sub-planes are of finer matter of the more mature emotions. This sea of emotional energies is interpreted through color by those who have astral vision. Each hue or tone indicates a quality of emotion. But the clairvoyant vision is quite colored by the individual's own emotional nature and perspective. The astral plane, like the etheric region of the physical plane, can be considered as an energy field. The astral world is governed to a high degree by magnetic attraction and repulsion; similar emotions are attractive and dissimilar feelings are repulsive.

The world beyond the astral is the mental or manasic plane (the fifth). It has two major divisions: the lower region is that of concrete thought and the higher region is that of abstract (formless) thought. The loftier thoughts find themselves in the higher sub-planes. The fourth world is the plane of buddhi or intuition. Above (beyond) the buddhic plane is the plane of atma (spiritual will) or nirvana (the third plane). The second plane is the home world of the human spirit, the monadic plane. And finally, the highest plane of the seven is the World of God, the relative source of all lesser manifestation.

The physical plane is characterized by time and space. In the astral world there is only a slight, rather vague correspondence to time and space. Beyond the astral, time and space have little significance, if any. The essence of each plane is energy; spirit and matter are the two relative poles of energy. Spirit is the highest aspect of matter, and matter is the lowest aspect of spirit, by degrees. Matter is a momentary expression, while spirit is eternal. The highest worlds are created first, the lowest worlds last. The lowest planes are the first to disintegrate and pass into obscurity, while the highest planes are the last. The septenary manifestation of matter comes and goes with the breath of Brahma, but God, the Absolute, persists.

(8) DIAGRAM No. 1 - THE SEVEN PLANES

This diagram shows the seven planes, their respective principles in Sanskrit and English terms (e.g., ATMA, Spiritual Will), and their respective sub-planes.

I. Atomic Plane	1. (ASP) Atomic Sub-plane	
	2.	
ADI	3.	
	4.	
(World of God)	5.	
	6.	
	7.	
II. Monadic Plane	1. (ASP)	
	2.	
ANUPADAKA	3.	
	4.	
(Divine Spirit)	5.	
	6.	
	7.	
III. Spiritual Plane	1. (ASP)	
	2.	
ATMA	3.	
	4.	
(Life Spirit)	5.	
(Spiritual Will)	6.	
	7.	
IV. Intuitional Plane	1. (ASP)	
	2.	
BUDDHI	3.	
	4.	
(Spiritual Intuition)	5.	
	6.	
	7.	
V. Mental Plane	1. (ASP)	
	2.	Abstract Mental
MANAS	3.	
	4.	Concrete Mental
	5.	
	6.	
	7.	
VI. Emotional Plane	1. (ASP)	
	2.	Higher Astral
KAMA	3.	
	4.	Lower Astral
(The Astral Plane)	5.	
(The Desire World)	6.	
	7.	
VII. Physical Plane	1. Reflecting Ether (ASP)	
	2. Light Ether	Ethereic Region
STHULA	3. Life Ether	
	4. Chemical Ether	Dense Physical or Chemical Region
	5. Gaseous Sub-plane	
	6. Liquid Sub-plane	
	7. Solid Sub-plane	

THE MONAD

THE SOUL

THE PERSONALITY

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(9) No. 9 - THE ETHERIC BODY AND HEALING

The etheric (vital)(energy) body of man is a vehicle of consciousness that interpenetrates and sustains the dense physical body. The etheric body is often called the etheric double, for it is the same shape and slightly larger than its dense physical counterpart. The etheric body is like a sea of sparkling points, a web of dynamic energy. Each spark or point of light is a focus for vital, sustaining forces to flow into the dense physical body.

The etheric or energy body has four levels, corresponding to the four etheric sub-planes of the physical world. The forces of the etheric body on the first or reflecting ether provide a vital function in relation to memory, for the reflecting ether is a realm of impressions in the form of etheric energies. The second or light ether is the realm of sense perception. The forces along the negative pole of the light ether permit the functions of sight, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling. The second ether forces of the etheric body also generate the blood heat by flowing along the positive pole. The forces of the etheric body in the third or life ether are the forces of propagation. The forces of the fourth or chemical ether provide for the growth and maintenance of the dense physical body. Without the etheric double there could be no growth, no motion, and no vitalization of the physical body; the cells of the physical body would simply die without replacement.

The work of the energy body is continuous; however, during the active waking state, the energy of the physical body is expended faster than the vital forces can keep up (usually). Thus the individual becomes tired and must sleep. During sleep, the vital forces of the etheric body can work unimpeded by physical, emotional, and mental activity (which expends energy), and the physical body can be restored to its normal strength for a new day of experience. This action of the etheric body is very much related to the health of the physical body. The vital body is actually the body of causes as far as the dense physical is concerned, for the health of the etheric double determines (controls) the health of the dense physical. Karmic patterns appear in the etheric prior to manifestation in the dense physical instrument. Medical science will be greatly enhanced when treatment is performed on etheric levels (and on other levels of causes) rather than on dense physical levels (which are levels of effects), and especially when medical science has an appreciation for the law of karma.

Psychic or spiritual healing is generally performed on etheric or astral levels, for a dense physical healing requires etheric adjustment, and an etheric healing requires an astral adjustment. Similarly, an emotional healing requires an adjustment on the next higher level (which is mental). The causes of disease in a body, whether directly or indirectly karmic, will be found on the next higher level of consciousness. Thus, mental or emotional problems can cause a chain reaction of disease on lower levels. The effects may be displaced in time, but nevertheless remain related. The spiritual student is gradually trained to look for and recognize the causes (on various levels), rather than to look only at the effects. Any form of disease can be traced back to some fundamental (general or specific) cause. The quality of thoughts and feelings usually has a rather direct effect upon health. Though the individual cannot interfere with karma, he can consciously adjust his mental, emotional, and physical behavior for the better, which should certainly improve his health and simultaneously enhance his ability to fulfill karma and to respond to dharma in a more enlightened manner.

The astral plane is the region of consciousness that exists between the physical plane and the mental plane. The astral (emotional) world is coexistent with the other planes through interpenetration. Atoms of astral matter are similar to physical atoms except that they are much finer in texture, vibrate at a different (higher) level (octave), and are polarized quite differently. The astral realm (the desire world) is a sea of fluctuating emotional energies (feelings). The lower sub-planes of the astral world are vibrations of rather coarse, unrefined, selfish, materialistic, or unpleasant emotions (relating closely to the physical world). The higher sub-planes are vibrations of the more pleasant emotions and of aspiration and devotion.

The astral world is also the world of dreams; for when a person sleeps the desire body (astral body) is utilized to reflect the sights and sounds of the astral plane, though in a rather illusionary manner. Astral vision differs markedly from the physical vision, and considerable training, discipline, and experience is required before any meaningful information can be brought back from the astral plane. Psychics with the astral vision (clairvoyance) or hearing (clairaudience) are usually untrained and their perceptions are normally quite colored (distorted) by their own personality thought-forms and feelings. The desire world is filled with glamour (illusion on astral levels) and therefore most astral impressions are quite misleading and extremely unreliable. Only where the emotions are purified and the thinking is refined (clear)(without any bias) can the individual be properly trained to function effectively and consciously on the astral plane. The serious spiritual student is hardly interested in astral phenomena, unless he has been properly trained to work constructively in the astral body. The serious student is not really interested in phenomena at all.

There are three kinds of entities which function (consciously or unconsciously) on the astral plane: human, non-human, and artificial. Each kind has a variety of types and levels. Humans may function on the astral plane during sleep or after death, or unconsciously (or consciously) with the generation of feelings, desires, and emotions. There are many non-human types who live and work on astral levels; some are rather unevolved (such as the astral elementals), and some are quite intelligent (such as the higher order of devas (angels) who do much constructive work). Artificial astral entities are created quite easily by human emotion and feeling, which vitalizes astral matter. As emotions are generated (good or bad)(consciously or otherwise), so are astral matter and entities of similar quality attracted.

Astral phenomena (forms and energies) are rather transparent and colorful (either dull or bright, depending on quality). Each emotion or feeling has a characteristic vibration that can be interpreted in terms of color. The translation of that color to physical brain consciousness, however, may be misleading. The colors within the aura (astral body) are indicative of the condition (and quality) of the emotional nature. The lower (higher) emotions and desires are represented by relatively coarse (refined) colors. In contrast to the etheric (vital) body which is the same shape as the dense physical body (but a few inches larger), the astral body is an ovoid which completely envelops the lower bodies. The astral body (the aura) is the seat of the emotional and aspirational life; and in the relatively evolved humans, it is a rather well organized and stable vehicle, radiant with the higher emotion, a controlled instrument for experience and expression.

The mental or manasic plane is that plane or region of consciousness that exists between the astral (emotional) and the buddhic (intuitional) planes, while simultaneously coexisting and interpenetrating the other six planes. The mental plane is divided into seven grades or sub-planes of mental substance (matter), and into two regions of thought. The lower mental world is the region of concrete thought where the highest aspect of the human personality functions. The lower or concrete mind is the mortal mind that uses the physical brain as its instrument. The higher mental world is the region of abstract thought where the lowest aspect of the human soul functions. The higher or abstract mind is the (relatively) immortal mind. Manas (the mental principle) is actually the link or bridge between the personality and the soul, the principle through which the personality is integrated and aligned with the soul.

The lower mind is used to calm and discipline (control) the emotional nature. The higher mind is used to bring the lower mind under the control of the soul. The lower mind is used to synthesize and integrate the personality into a single vibration, that the personality might be used more effectively. The higher mind is used to bridge the gap between buddhi (intuition) and the lower self. For this reason, the utilization of abstract and subjective studies and meditations encourages the building of the vital bridge between a soul and its personality. Though mental development is a prerequisite for intuitional development, the mind (the head) should be properly balanced with the heart. As these two aspects (head and heart) develop, the student should be guided by spiritual motive and common sense rather than rationalization. True reasoning is buddhi-manas, the abstract mind enlightened by the intuition.

The emotional, mental, and intuitional development of the spiritual student should proceed at a natural pace (based upon experience, conscience, and humanitarian work). Where there is a forced development or development without proper (unselfish) motive, there are usually resultant dangers and problems (such as over-stimulation, loss of self-control, and an exaggerated sense of ego). The lower mind is a delicate instrument that can be used constructively or destructively. The higher, abstract mind is free from the selfish, critical, and separative thought vibrations that the concrete mind is capable of.

The lower mind must be properly cultivated, for conscious and unconscious thoughts can have quite potent effects on relationships and experiences. As the mind is properly disciplined and balanced, the student can progress more reasonably. Man is slowly becoming polarized on the mental plane and must be encouraged to be careful in the creation of thought-forms. The effect of a person's thinking will generally appear in the emotional and physical life. Good, sound, positive thinking encourages health; while bad, negative, selfish thinking encourages disease on mental, emotional, and physical levels.

Man is becoming a creator. His creative thoughts are archetypes which precede and condition physical manifestation. The mental plane is the realm of consciousness that includes thought-forms that have been consciously or unconsciously created. Much of man's misery comes from careless thinking. The evolving spiritual student is cautioned to think consciously, guard against careless and critical thoughts, and use the mind constructively. While ordinary man thinks (and thereby activates mental energies), the evolved man (the adept) functions consciously on the mental plane (which is an altogether higher level of experience than merely thinking). Such an adept is as aware on the mental plane as the ordinary man is aware on the physical plane.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(12) No. 17 - REINCARNATION AND KARMA

The laws of reincarnation and karma are two of the most fundamental laws concerning human life. Both are subsidiary laws to the law of evolution. The law of reincarnation implies that an evolving human life (soul) must be reborn on this earth time and time again until that soul has reached relative perfection as far as human evolution is concerned (in the physical, emotional, and mental worlds). Reincarnation supports evolution, and not retrogression or transmigration. A human soul cannot inhabit a subhuman body; that would be contrary to the laws of evolution, which require continual (though gradual) progress, onward and upward along the spiral circuit.

An individual human soul is created (appropriated by the monad) at the moment of individualization (the attainment of self-consciousness). From that moment on until the soul transcends the lower worlds, it seeks (under law) to experience and to evolve through a long succession of lives in this world. The soul is the individuality that incarnates. The soul creates a new personality (based on experience and karma) for each life, and that personality is subject to the law of karma (consequence).

The law of karma provides the basic urge toward evolution and enlightenment. It is the law of cause and effect, the great teacher which wisely yields the experiences and opportunities needed (and earned) because of causal energies. In each lifetime, every action, behavior, feeling, thought, and motive sets karmic forces (causes) into motion. Through ignorance much karma is created in the early lives. Karma teaches man to live in harmony with spiritual law, and through the results (effects) received, the needed lessons are learned (consciously or otherwise). The more closely the student lives in harmony with cosmic law, the greater will be the progress toward the higher consciousness. As a man evolves he begins to consciously set forces into motion that will bring the talents and opportunities that are needed. Each seed (cause or action) bears an appropriate fruit (result or effect). Thoughts and feelings result in tendencies and capacities. Experience becomes wisdom and conscience. Injuries (physical, emotional, or mental) inflicted upon others (or self) and rebellion against law (conscious or unconscious) result in physical, emotional, and mental diseases and limitations. Man is responsible for all that he is, all that he has, and all that he does, on all levels.

The reincarnating soul brings with it the accumulation of karma, though normally only a portion of that karma is to be fulfilled in any one lifetime. Perfect justice (in the broadest sense) rules over all of humanity. The physical body, the emotional nature, and the mental capacity of the incarnating soul are only as good as karma determines. Likewise the friendships, experiences, and opportunities are also earned. The law of karma cannot be interfered with. However, changes in behavior and thinking will lead to changes in the results. Karma is the sum total of all forces generated that are as yet unfulfilled. Through free-will a person can add new positive causes which will modify the final outcome (which is a function of time). Man creates karma through free-will; destiny is simply the consequence.

The results of actions in the present life may appear partially or fully within the present lifetime, or they may appear later. Karma is neither good nor bad; karma is not retribution or punishment; karma is the divine force that teaches, and it leads the evolving life into knowledge, wisdom, and relative perfection. Through the working out of karma, sins are forgiven. By living in harmony with law, limitation is overcome and self-mastery is achieved.

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

The inputs to the karmic equation are the vast sea of causes (physical, emotional, and mental behaviors and motives) which spans past moments and lifetimes. All of the past actions have been entered as causes, and new causes are added continuously as the individual lives, thinks, feels, and otherwise experiences. The relationships of an individual to other persons are often major (potent) inputs. The output of the equation is the continuous (weighted) sum total of external forces and influences on the individual or the group. A further complexity is introduced by the superposition of individual, family, group, racial, national, and planetary karma.

Much of the karmic equation concerns the relationships (superpositions and transformations) between causes and effects. Since the effects are continuously responsive to the causes and relationships, the effects constitute a feedback mechanism (the response of the individual creates new causes which in turn modify somewhat the new effects). Each equation is continuously changing, though the changes may be quite small when compared to the output or yield. In general, a large number of causes are superimposed (and distributed in time) and transformed to produce timely and appropriate effects.

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

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

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

Throughout the history (and pre-history) of humanity, man has perceived and defined his God according to his consciousness. In Lemurian days when most of mankind first achieved self-consciousness, man could perceive the superphysical realms, though without any conscious control. Man was aware of the host of great angelic beings who were the messengers of God and the teachers and guides of men. Man was aware of the angelic nature spirits and forces that are manifestations of God (as all things are). Quite naturally, early man developed a pantheistic appreciation of a God who lived through a host of beings, many of which were more highly evolved than man, and therefore (to him) were gods.

One of the early leaders of man was Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament religion. Jehovah was a great angelic being who served as the tribal or racial god or spirit of the Jewish people. Jehovah was originally a very visible and credible god (to his people). In later days, and especially toward the end of the Atlantean era, man began to lose the inner vision as humanity descended further into materialism, and as the realities of ancient days became legends and myths. As the inner vision began to be dimmed by the necessary pilgrimage into matter, man was forced to respect a God whom he could not see, as first-hand knowledge was replaced by faith.

As man evolves there is always a progressive revelation, exoterically and esoterically, according to his needs and capacity to understand. The New Testament teaching was, in part, designed to release man from his tribal and racial consciousness and to bring in an era of identification with humanity. The God of the New Testament religion is the Planetary Logos, the being who ensouls the planet and sustains and vitalizes all lives and forms within that domain. Even today, the transcendent God of religious students corresponds to the Planetary Logos. The God of the esoteric teachings is a still greater being, the Solar Logos which is the ensouling life of the solar system. This being is the greatest life for which the most advanced of humanity can glimpse any real understanding. There will always be greater lives that come before the ken of the evolving human adept (there is a Cosmic Logos and even an Absolute Being), but even the most advanced of humanity have difficulty in even beginning to understand the manifestation of those greater lives.

Of course the term 'God' means different things to different people, for God manifests on many levels and in many different ways, objectively and subjectively. There will always be a personal God, the immanent God within, the divine and noble essence or spirit within every human life. And there will always be an impersonal God, the transcendent God that is the cause behind manifestation. On the highest conceivable level, God is the totality of the objective and subjective universe. But neither God immanent nor God transcendent are in any way anthropomorphic. But man is still a reflection (image) of divinity in the sense of life force and potentiality.

The monotheistic and pantheistic doctrines are merely two perspectives on the one reality, just as the Trinity is an essential unity with three aspects. God works through and is simultaneously countless greater and lesser beings. There is a unity of all life and yet there is also a multiplicity and a diversity of lives within that one life. Students of the ancient and ageless wisdom often used the physical sun as a life-giving symbol of that inherent unity of all life. The further a student proceeds along the spiral of evolution, the greater is the realization and appreciation of that oneness that is God. There remains one God, regardless of differentiation.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(15) No. 10 - THE TRINITY

Before each great day of manifestation, God exists as the undifferentiated or absolute universe. As the manifestation of the cosmos proceeds, God experiences on cosmic levels the first differentiation into the three persons or aspects of the Trinity. The first aspect or person is called (variously) the First Logos, the First Ray, the Father, or Shiva. The second aspect is called the Second Logos, the Second Ray, the Son (the Cosmic Christ), or Vishnu. The third aspect is called the Third Logos, the Third Ray, the Holy Ghost (the Holy Spirit), or Brahma.

From these three aspects proceed further differentiation until the universe has achieved manifestation in the broadest sense. The Trinity constitutes the highest level of manifestation, and corresponds directly to the three major rays (streams of energy) of aspect. Everything on any differentiated level of manifestation or experience can be related through correspondence to one or another of the three rays of aspect.

The First Ray is characterized as the will of God or the plan of God, on the highest level. This first aspect is pure spirit and does not descend into the lesser worlds. It is the Father or power aspect that overshadows the manifested universe. The Father (Shiva) aspect is the transcendent God that remains in the highest heaven world, just short of manifestation. The Second Ray is characterized as love-wisdom on the highest level. This second aspect is consciousness in all of its variations and is the product of the interaction of the Father (spirit) and the Mother (matter). Thus the Son is born and consciousness evolves through manifestation, eventually to be absorbed into the realm of pure spirit. The Cosmic Christ (the Second Ray) descends into the lesser worlds carrying with it all the sparks of divine life (consciousness) that constitute the spiritual essence of all lives. The Second Ray is the Cosmic Christ (Vishnu) whose consciousness pervades all life throughout the worlds of manifestation, the God immanent in all of life and consciousness. The Third Ray is characterized as intelligent activity, as manifestation itself (matter or form in all worlds or levels). The Third Ray is the great breath of God that is God immanent in matter. All things (spirit, consciousness, or form) are merely a part of God in manifestation.

Analogously many lesser lives within God also express themselves as trinities as the higher Trinity is reflected into them (as above, so below). Man, for example, exists on three levels: the Father aspect is the human monad. The Christ aspect is the human soul (the seat of human spiritual consciousness), the incarnation of the monad on causal levels. The third aspect is the human personality that is the incarnation of the soul into mental, emotional, and physical matter. As a person evolves, he purifies the personality-instrument, reaches up, and finally touches the soul and slowly becomes that soul, the Christ-aspect or God within. Later still, that soul finds union with the transcendent aspect, the monad on its own level.

As the lesser aspects of manifestation are gradually perfected, the fruits of experience are absorbed by the higher aspects. Experience (knowledge) is transmuted into love (wisdom). Thus the higher life, containing the myriad of lesser lives, evolves also. As the great day of manifestation approaches its conclusion, the myriad of differentiated lives and forms are gradually reabsorbed into the Trinity on that level, and the three logoi are reabsorbed into the Absolute or unmanifest, to await another great day of experience and evolution through manifestation.

The first differentiation of the Logos (God) in manifestation is the logioic triplicity which constitutes the three major rays (the three aspects of the Trinity): the Father (Shiva), the Son (Vishnu), and the Holy Ghost (Brahma). These are the three rays of aspect. The second differentiation of the Logos is the logioic septenate (the seven rays): three rays of aspect (on a lower level than the triplicity) and four rays of attribute. These are seven great streams of energy, each with a characteristic vibration, life, quality, and purpose. The seven are equal in importance and each contributes a (different) basic vibration and experience to the greater life. On the first level of manifestation the life of the Logos flows through three streams or rays (lives) of energy; on the second level of manifestation the logioic life flows through seven rays of energy. Together they constitute all of manifestation.

The Solar Logos manifests through the seven rays, through seven planes or worlds of consciousness, through seven sacred planets (and five non-sacred planets), and through seven great cycles or days of manifestation (with seven lesser cycles within each greater cycle). Each plane, planet, and cycle is a manifestation of the corresponding ray (numerologically) and its reflection. The Fifth (Sixth) (Seventh) Ray is the reflection into matter of the Third (Second) (First) Ray (respectively). Each kingdom in nature (elemental, mineral, plant, animal, human, angelic, etc.), each lifewave, each department of manifestation or civilization, is especially qualified by one or another of the seven rays. Thus each of the rays has a domain of qualification through correspondence.

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

The names and qualities of the various rays are but general indications of their nature. The qualities overlap, and each of the rays should be studied meditatively, with an appreciation for the relationships between the rays as well as for each ray in the broadest sense. An understanding of the rays is a qualitative one, and the complexities involved are often profound. The Rays (3-4-5-6-7) are considered to be sub-rays of the third aspect of the Trinity. The even rays (2-4-6) form a special path or relationship, as do the odd rays (1-3-5-7). The First Ray is the ray of power (will). The Second Ray is called the ray of love-wisdom. The Third Ray is the ray of active intelligence. The Fourth Ray is called the ray of harmony through conflict. The Fifth Ray is the ray of concrete knowledge. The Sixth Ray is called the ray of devotion, and the Seventh Ray is called the ray of ceremonial order.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(17) No. 21 - INVOLUTION AND EVOLUTION

In the great cyclic panorama of manifestation, the law of evolution demonstrates as impelling evolutionary force on all levels of existence. The subhuman, human, and superhuman lives are all impelled onward along the spiral path of evolution. Each lifewave of a planet is created, in turn, to begin the descent into matter for further experience and expression. Creation and evolution are mutually consistent, for each lifewave is created (differentiated) within God (and by God) as a vast number of monads (sparks from the central flame). Each monad is created in the image of God (which is spirit). The forms that a monad might appropriate (through the intermediary of the soul) are normally quite different in appearance than the forms of the creator.

The created lives are at first quite unconscious. Consciousness and all of the characteristics and qualities of the Godhead are latent within the monad. The process of evolution is to cultivate and develop the latent powers within the monad (and its reflection) through experience, and to add to those qualities (and thus contribute further to the evolution of the greater life). The first half of the cycle of evolution is called involution (unconscious evolution). Involution is the period of the descent into matter until the life becomes indwelling and self-conscious. During this period, involutory forces (and greater lives) work on the various lesser lives and forms from without (externally). Following the point of self-consciousness comes the second half of the cycle, the path of ascent (evolution) or liberation (from matter).

During the involutory period, the work of evolution is done entirely as a group. Each lifewave incarnates together (as a group)(soul). Each group soul incarnates through a multitude of forms that are a part of the lifewave (and kingdom) in nature. Presently there are a number of lifewaves and kingdoms within the planetary aura. There are several involutory kingdoms (elemental, mineral, plant, and animal) and several evolutionary kingdoms (human and superhuman lifewaves). The involutory kingdoms are the subhuman kingdoms. In the subhuman realm there are no individual souls, only the overshadowing group souls. As a lifewave approaches the human kingdom, the group soul is differentiated into individual souls (in appearance) which are simultaneously appropriated by the various monads. This process is called individualization.

Each lifewave inhabits each kingdom in turn; the lifewave which is now human has passed through each of the subhuman kingdoms, but at such an earlier period that the forms and characteristics of the present subhuman kingdoms are vastly different in appearance than they were. Since the process of evolution is continuous and cyclic rather than discrete, the kingdoms and lifewaves sometimes overlap (some monads choose to develop more rapidly or more slowly than the average). It is also possible for two different lifewaves to inhabit the same kingdom (but with different forms). In fact, each kingdom (and each lifewave) may span several levels or planes of consciousness.

The totality of evolution includes the evolution of forms and the evolution of lives (consciousness)(as forms support the experience and expression of all lives). As old forms (bodies) wear out (individually or collectively) they are replaced with new and improved forms, based upon the experience (and karma) of the indwelling or overshadowing life. Each kingdom and each lifewave (on every level of consciousness) contributes its experiences to the evolution of a still greater life. Thus does evolution proceed under law in a spiral (cyclic) progression. All lives evolve, from the subatomic lives to the great cosmic lives, progressing and expanding, onward and upward along the spiral circuit.

Energy is the essence or real character of the universe; energy is life itself. All that is, is energy. Everything in the objective and subjective universe is alive with energy. From the subatomic and nuclear particles (resonant energies) to the great cosmic entities, all is energy. Matter is simply crystallized energy, energy or life that is constrained and limited to the expression of form. Matter is objective substance, energy in the form of building blocks, whether it is physical, emotional, or even mental matter. Matter is negative (passive) energy, that is moved or manipulated or transformed by positive (active) energy. Energy cannot be created or destroyed, but it can be modified or transformed from one form or domain to another.

From the objective perspective, the densest (physical) matter (and its associated forces and energies) is reality, and the superphysical is the realm of illusion. From the higher (subjective) perspective, the inverse is true: matter is illusion, and the world of forces and energies (the subjective realm) is the only reality. Spirit and matter are the two extremes of energy and constitute a duality (paradox)(pair-of-opposites). Spirit is liberated matter and matter is crystallized spirit. Thus is energy the common reality.

Energy is vitality, the capacity to perform work. Force is applied, directed, or focused energy. The task of the spiritual student is to work effectively and constructively with the various energies that are made available to him. The esoteric student bridges the gap (illusion) between subjective and objective realities. The esoteric student lives and works consciously with forces and energies. Work is the transfer of energy from one form or aspect to another. The esoteric student works in the world of causes, responding to the available energies, and mentally transforming and directing them with purpose and wisdom into the objective world in order to produce the needed effects. Behind every effect there is a cause (energy). For every energy sent out, there are appropriate energies evoked, to accomplish the work of evolution.

The human being (like every positive life-form in manifestation) is a receiver, absorber, transformer, and transmitter of energy. From one perspective, the work of human evolution is to perfect this complex energy-mechanism through the cultivation of consciousness, where consciousness is the aspect that provides the motivation, purification, and control of the mechanism (the human personality and soul). The unenlightened and separative consciousness (of the ordinary man) is imperfect and careless; the enlightened cooperative consciousness (of the evolving esoteric student) is efficient and deliberately constructive. Energy is neither good nor evil, for energy is divine essence; but the uses of energy, the motives and purposes of the directing agent, determine the appropriateness or rightness.

As the human being evolves he begins to respond to the higher forces (applied energies) of the soul and begins to unconsciously (and eventually consciously) cooperate with the higher forces. The effect of energy depends on the nature and quality of the receiving apparatus (the soul, the mind, the astral body, etc.), and the coherence, purpose, and intensity of the force (which depends on the nature and quality of the transmitting agent and of the medium, atmosphere, or aura through which the energy must travel). Where there is little understanding and a lack of maturity, there are the dangers of uncontrollable and wrongly applied forces. With spiritual and esoteric maturity comes the understanding, wisdom, and ability to constructively and potently apply the various forms of physical and superphysical energy.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(19) No. 7 - MEDITATION

There are many varieties and stages of meditation. Some forms of meditation involve the personality; others may involve both the personality and the soul. As an exercise, meditation may include prayer (invocation), visualization, concentration, and/or contemplation. As a spiritual exercise, meditation is a conscious act of participation in being. As a way of life, the meditative disposition is the manifestation of the soul through the conscious personality.

The (spiritual) meditation exercise is normally centered in either the heart (mystical, aspirational, or devotional) or in the head (mental). The higher form of meditation is balanced between the head and the heart and involves the intuitive realization of the soul or higher self. Meditation in the heart is preferable until the strong (stable)(mature) devotional nature has been developed. Such a nature is characterized by humility, love, and goodwill; and is accompanied by a serious and sincere spiritual purpose (motive).

Meditation is the means by which the personality is made receptive and responsive to the soul. As a result of proper meditation (and discipline), the abstract ideas and intuition of the higher self are brought into the lower mind (and brain). One of the objects of meditation is the integration of the lower self and the alignment of personality and soul, resulting in stability, serenity, spiritual strength, and service (spiritual purpose). Once the rapport of mind and soul has been established, meditation becomes a process of renewal (soul contact) and manifestation (of soul energies).

Meditation requires a measure of self-control of the physical, emotional, and mental natures, and should encourage such control. Meditation can be dangerous without spiritual motive, as the resulting stimulation requires adjustment and progress in the spiritual life. Meditation should be prompted by the need to find the Self and to become that Self. The approach to meditation should be well-grounded in common-sense. Meditation should be a comfortable, yet disciplined process, without extreme or excess. Having attained some alignment of soul and personality, the spiritual student utilizes daily meditation to strengthen the spiritual life. The object is to live in the higher consciousness consistently and continually, while simultaneously working through the lower instrument (mind and body). The meditative life does not imply isolation or withdrawal from the outer life; it simply means living a life of wisdom (spiritual quality) without being absorbed in the lower world.

There are many formal and informal methods of meditation, both heart-centered and head-centered. Care should be taken to determine the method and application best suited for the individual. Meditation is both personal (individual) and impersonal (beyond the personal); there is no one method that is right for everyone. Meditation normally requires quiet and comfortable surroundings. A candle may be lighted during the meditation, as it has a stabilizing effect and symbolizes the willingness of the lower self to cooperate with the soul. The back should be aligned vertically, and the physical body, the emotions and the mind (in turn) should be stilled. No meditation should be a passive experience; while maintaining control of the lower self, the mind can participate in the higher consciousness. The meditation period should not be too long or too short. A short daily meditation is far better than a longer occasional meditation. Consistency of time and place is definitely helpful. A daily rhythm of soul-contact is needed in order to be spiritually effective. The experienced (spiritual) meditator learns to carry forth the meditation energy (light of the soul) into the daily life.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(20) No. 12 - APPLIED MEDITATION

Meditation is the process in which the emotions and the mind are quieted and brought into the harmony of the true (higher) self. Meditation plays a major role in the search (by the waking-consciousness) for the Self and in the process of becoming that Self. When the student has become the higher consciousness, then meditation is the means by which that Self (beingness) is expressed. But then meditation can also be an applied process of specific focus and purpose. One such purpose is the creation (restoration)(maintenance) of peace and harmony in the lower life. With stability and harmony in the personality, it becomes much easier for the soul to maintain a measure of control and guidance of the mental and emotional character. Success in this endeavor depends on the willingness, purity, and availability of the personality. Meditation needs to be a daily experience so that the soul can more easily influence the lower life.

Meditation encourages the manifestation of the light and love of the higher self, through the personality and into the activities of the daily life. Though the alignment (union) of personality and soul is the generalized goal, there is much constructive work that may be performed during (and beyond) that process of cultivation and upliftment. Meditation can be applied to any reasonable purpose for which prayer might be used; in fact, prayer becomes more meaningful when followed by meditation. In prayer, the emotions and the mind are often barriers to enlightenment and fulfillment, and the understanding must wait until the lower self is quiet (and responsive). Meditation is generally (relatively) more free from the desires (distractions) of the personality life than is prayer. Prayer is often very personal (selfish), while meditation is more likely to be unselfish. Meditation is the interior experience of listening to God (the Voice of the Silence); and it is a process that cultivates the true spiritual intuition (the conscience)(wisdom)(understanding)(guidance) of the higher self.

Meditation may be applied to the search for self-understanding; it can be the means through which truth can be discerned. Whenever the unsettling and misleading emotions (and mind) are stilled, the understanding that is appropriate can be found. Meditation can also be applied to healing processes. Through invocation and visualization, healing energy can be made available. The object is to encourage healing (consistent with karma) without interference, and for the good of all. Meditation can be applied directly to the self-purification process and toward the establishment of right human relations. Through self-analysis, the student can learn where and how to make adjustments in the personality life; and those adjustments can be made through meditation (mental and emotional control)(self-programming). Where human relationships need improvement (or healing), meditation can be used to adjust attitudes and feelings so that cooperation and mature relationships can be established. This work can be performed for individual relationships as well as for human relations in general.

One of the more potent meditation exercises is the visualization of a person or group (or humanity) as being enveloped in pure white light; this has considerable power to encourage healing and harmony. The planetary network of light and love can similarly be strengthened through visualization and invocation. Meditation should be qualified for constructive results, but without any expectancy of immediate or specific results, for such may undermine the usefulness of the effort (by compounding karma). The student should concern himself with listening to the guidance from within, doing whatever constructive work that is appropriate, and living in harmony with the divine plan.

The simple (profound) spiritual discipline (exercise) of retrospection is attributed (exoterically) to Pythagoras. The object of the exercise is to live day by day the purgatory and first heaven experiences that normally occur upon the death of the physical body. By consciously living these events daily the student not only passes more rapidly into the second heaven, but the capacity to experience and to assimilate experience during the present life is expanded, thereby enhancing the usefulness and effectiveness of the incarnation.

Hell and purgatory are regions of consciousness in the astral plane where, upon death, the individual experiences a panorama of the past life with a feeling that purges the baser desires and encourages the correction of the weaknesses and vices which hinder progress. This feeling is wisely adapted to that purpose. The first heaven is a higher region of consciousness in the astral plane where, similarly, another panorama of the past life is experienced with the purpose of strengthening the good that was manifested and assimilating the virtues and talents that were developed. The talents and virtues and conscience are the qualities that are incorporated into the higher self (soul), to be available appropriately in the next incarnation. After the experiences of purgatory and the first heaven, the explicit memories of the incarnation are left behind and only the conscience (and quality) is taken forward.

The exercise of retrospection is usually performed daily in the evening just before passing into sleep. The events of the day are recalled and visualized in reverse order, beginning with the most recent experience and working backwards in time toward the morning's awakening. Each event is analyzed for the quality of behavior, words spoken, feelings, and thoughts, and especially for the quality of motives. Those events or motives that were unfortunate or improper should be noted, and repentance, reform, and correction enacted or planned wherever and however it may be appropriate. These are potent factors in the fulfillment of karma. Wherever the student has been wronged there should be forgiveness, and wherever injury has been caused there should be compensation made. Weaknesses should be uplifted into virtues, by implementing corrective action. Those events that were of a positive nature should also be noted, that qualities might be strengthened. Thus is the student judged (by himself) on all points, accepting both blame and praise wherever it is due, without punishment and without inflating the ego. The actions of other persons should not be judged; retrospection is a self-centered (but necessary) exercise.

The discipline of retrospection can also be extended in two directions. Over a period of time, the student can systematically review the events and experiences of the lifetime (in reverse order), beginning with the day before the exercise was implemented daily and ending with the earliest childhood memory. As much detail as possible should be recalled, as in fact, retrospection is also a training of the mind (through observation and discernment). When the student becomes quite proficient in this exercise, it can also be extended to a minute-by-minute self-evaluation, instead of (or in addition to) a daily routine. The student can then be continuously and consciously aware of his behavior, feelings, thoughts, and motives, while responding with evaluation and adjustment at that time. Through this simple exercise, the energies of the soul are brought to bear upon the personality, as the concrete mind is trained and the abstract mind is exercised. Through observation, recognition, awareness, and adjustment, considerable progress can be made upon the spiritual path.

The spiritual path is the path of conscious evolution. Though the bulk of humanity evolve gradually toward soul-consciousness, some souls choose to accomplish in relatively few lifetimes (incarnations) what would normally take many lives. The decision to tread the spiritual path is made by the soul, which then seeks to enlist the cooperation of the mind (and the entire personality). The soul must reestablish that cooperation and realization in each lifetime.

At first, the path is a most difficult undertaking. Each soul has an accumulation of karma to be fulfilled. The earlier lives generate much more karma than can reasonably be worked out in just a few lives. Normally karma is fulfilled through a relatively slow process. Those who are on the path invoke the rapid working out of karma and minimize the production of nonessential karma. The spiritual student must overcome the limitations of living in the outer world, learn the required lessons for graduation, and become free and qualified to serve mankind in a much more potent capacity. For the disciple, new karma is fulfilled almost instantly, for the (spiritual) path is rather narrow (and a slight deviation evokes an almost instantaneous response). The soul that is not committed to the path is free to wander to some extent.

Though there is but one path, there exist countless differentiations within that one path. The path of enlightenment is different for every individual. There are certain general requirements (in consciousness and experience) before the student can attain liberation, however, and each lesser path within the one path yields a measure of development or experience in a particular field. A soul majors in the path that is the soul ray, and minors in each of the other six paths (rays). Some paths are mystical (devotional) and some paths are more occult. Liberation implies considerable balance between head and heart.

The one path is also divided into three major stages or paths that each soul on the path must pass through. The first stage is called the probationary path, the path of purification, aspiration, and preparation (where the student is concerned primarily with physical, emotional, and mental discipline and purification). This stage once required a teacher for direction, but today there is a wealth of information available and the student is generally on his own. The probationary path may require a number of lifetimes for its completion, but when the student is sufficiently prepared, he can then pass on to the second stage (discipleship).

In the second stage, the student is primarily occupied with serving humanity according to whatever talents and opportunities have been earned. The disciple must be stable, strong, unselfish, and self-reliant. The student must depend upon the true teacher, the Christ-self or God within (the soul). The disciple is one who has aligned the personality and the soul, and who proceeds to do the work (service) that is before him. In the third stage, the disciple becomes an adept, a master of wisdom.

There are numerous (optional) schools and organizations (secret and otherwise) to help the evolving student. Each school is but a stepping-stone on the lower stages of the path. No school can provide assistance on the later stages without soul alignment. In the lower stages, affiliations are not necessary, for the needed teachings are always available to the seeker. From probation to mastery, the spiritual path requires considerable determination and sacrifice. But the rewards are also considerable: the joy of giving, the joy of consciously serving God (and therefore humanity and all of life), and the joy of living in accordance with cosmic law.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(23) No. 22 - THE PATH OF PROBATION

The probationary path is the first stage or phase of the spiritual path. It is a path of purification and preparation; it is the building of a foundation with which to support the intermediate and advanced work of discipleship. Purification of physical, emotional, and mental faculties is a prerequisite for understanding, awareness, integration, and alignment. Bodies of low vibration cannot be spiritually integrated; a body of low (coarse) vibration cannot respond to the spiritual energies (guidance and enlightenment) which are of higher (fine) vibration. The three instruments (the physical body, the emotions, and the mind) must be purified and integrated into a single coherent and spiritually responsive mechanism before the personality can be properly aligned with the soul.

Physical purification suggests pure food (in moderate amounts): the incorporation of a sensible, nutritional, and balanced diet, and the gradual phasing out of animal (flesh) foods. Internal and external cleanliness is also required for the physical body, as well as sufficient exercise, sufficient (restful) sleep, fresh air, and a reasonable (moderate) amount of sunshine. This discipline should incorporate a reasonable, common-sense approach to purification. The physical concerns should then pass below the threshold of waking-consciousness, that the spiritual student can concentrate on higher work.

Emotional (astral) purification involves the calming and balancing of the astral (desire) body. The aura (and the astral body) must be purified and uplifted in vibration (quality) until it is a clear, calm, quiet, unruffled, stable, and controlled instrument for the highest emotions. A wildly fluctuating or passive aura that responds to the glammers, desires, and coarse emotions must be tamed and brought into harmony with the spiritual self if the student is to demonstrate the unselfish and impersonal love of the God within. Meditation is a strong aid to emotional and mental discipline (and bringing the emotions under the firm control of the mind). The power of observation coupled with the exercise of retrospection leads to the discernment of weaknesses and limitations, and to the appropriate methods of purification and discipline.

Mental purification especially calls for meditation, retrospection, and the study of the self. Mental refinement implies clear, unbiased thinking on all matters and the elimination of critical, negative, and unpleasant thinking. Through observation, study, concentration, meditation, and visualization, the mind is trained and prepared for abstract thinking and enlightenment. This purification should not be a drastic discipline, but it should be a gradual and progressive reorientation to succeeding higher levels. Through mental purification the mind can be trained as a useful instrument of the soul, free from habits and personality-centered limitations and distractions.

As the process of purification proceeds, the probationer (probationary student)(aspirant) begins to integrate the personality and align the personality with the overshadowing (indwelling) soul, depending always upon the true teacher, the God within, for encouragement. Throughout the paths of probation and discipleship there is an accelerated working off of karma, resulting in greater strength, freedom, and preparation (in the form of virtues, qualities, talents, and abilities). Though the path is often difficult (challenging), there should be courage, confidence, perseverance, and a measure of happiness in spite of whatever circumstances (opportunities) may come. With the increased freedom from karma and limitation comes the opportunity to the spiritual student to place himself in service to a greater cause than his own.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(24) No. 26 - THE PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is the second stage upon the spiritual path. The path of discipleship begins when the probationary student has sufficiently purified and prepared himself for service and when he is reasonably free from karmic limitations. Where probation is a path of preparation (primarily self-centered), discipleship is a path of conscious activity (fulfillment). The disciple is pledged to serve humanity, to cooperate with the plan of the planetary Hierarchy as he perceives it and as best he can, and to continue to develop the powers of the soul (following the guidance of the higher self) through study, meditation, and various service activities.

The disciple continues to build upon the foundation created as a result of the probationary work, but the primary activity is service to humanity according to the needs of the world around him, his particular talents and capacities, and the opportunities that he has earned. The disciple must know himself fairly well, including his strengths, weaknesses, and capacities. The disciple must be relatively free from the glamour and illusion of the outer world. He must be strong in character, for many are the tasks and responsibilities. Harmlessness, cheerfulness, humility, perseverance, and impersonality are only a few of the many virtues that must be present to some extent. The disciple must have an integrated and cooperative personality, aligned and responsive to the direction and the encouragement of the soul and its esoteric group. The disciple must have a pleasant, loving, and stable disposition.

The student upon the path of discipleship must be dependable and self-reliant yet ever aware of the inclusiveness of the world of souls and the purposes of objective and subjective manifestation. The disciple is a focal point of spiritual energy, transmitting and sharing the light, the love, and the power of the fifth kingdom (the kingdom of heaven)(the world of souls). The disciple is also an observer, an onlooker in the world of humanity, an agent and instrument of the world of God. The disciple must fulfill his responsibilities in both worlds, without interfering in the lives of others. The disciple is always available (without question or hesitation)(by commitment); there are no rests or vacations subjectively, yet the worker will rest (release unnecessary tension) objectively (in moderation) in order to maintain his health and capabilities.

The disciple is ever willing to give of himself and his resources without any thought of compensation. Thus the worker will find his resources and energies always replenished and equal to any and every worthy task that is set before him. Where mistakes are made, the disciple will learn from the effects, limitations, and experiences produced and make the necessary and appropriate adjustments within his life. There can be no discouragement and there can be no failure, for the only true failure is failure to learn the lessons of the mistake. So mistakes are recognized, the lessons are learned, and the worker pushes onward, never allowing failure to impair his continuing work.

The disciple differs markedly from the aspirant or probationary student, not only in terms of preparation and service, but also in terms of consciousness. Proper motives, understanding, a certain commitment (dedication) (obligation), and a certain level of consciousness are required for the path of discipleship. The way of the disciple (regardless of soul ray) is the way of love and wisdom, of goodwill in action. The way of the disciple is to obey the inner impulses of the soul, to do the work that is before him to do, to live a life that is an example to others.

The spiritual Hierarchy of the planet is the esoteric government that guides the evolution of humanity. This group is known by many names: the Great White Lodge, the Planetary Hierarchy, the Occult Hierarchy, the Elder Brotherhood, etc. This esoteric hierarchy is the Second Ray planetary center, working with and for the First Ray center (which is called Shamballa) and the Third Ray center (which is humanity). Shamballa represents the personality of the Planetary Logos (Sanat Kumara) and the power aspect (the plan, the purpose, and the will of the Planetary Logos). The Hierarchy is the love-wisdom aspect, dealing with the evolution of consciousness through manifestation.

The Hierarchy has three major departments with seven subordinate departments, corresponding to the three major rays and the seven rays respectively. The first department is led by the Manu of the Aryan root-race, who is responsible for guiding the development of racial forms and characteristics, and their eventual combination and synthesis. The second department is led by the Bodhisvatta, the World Teacher, who is responsible for guiding the development and expansion of consciousness. The Bodhisvatta is the leader of the Hierarchy and is known as the Christ (Lord Matreiya). The third department is led by the Mahachohan, the Lord of civilization, who oversees the work of the Third Ray and the four rays of attribute. The seven minor departments work primarily with the energy of their own (corresponding) ray.

The members of the Hierarchy are the masters (adepts), human souls who have achieved relative perfection and have fulfilled their individual earthly karma (and are no longer required to incarnate). They are the pioneers of the human lifewave, and are far in advance of ordinary man. These particular graduates of the human school of experience who work within the Hierarchy are those who have chosen to remain here (within the planetary aura) for some duration of time, to lead humanity further along the path of evolution. Throughout the course of evolution, each lifewave is assisted, in turn, by the preceding lifewave. Those who lead, turn to offer a helping hand to those who follow. Thus, the Hierarchy is one link in an endless chain of cooperative effort.

As the inner government of the planet, the Hierarchy works primarily with consciousness, guiding and encouraging the aspirants and disciples of the world who, consciously or unconsciously, are their workers in the objective world. There is not any interference in the lives or wills of men, for man must create his own destiny. The Hierarchy is bound by certain rules and principles according to karma and the intentions of the Planetary Logos. Thus the Hierarchy is primarily a force of encouragement, and governs only in a loose sense (of indirect government).

The members of the Hierarchy very rarely work openly among men (if at all), though the Hierarchy may be externalized when humanity has been sufficiently prepared. The workers in the Hierarchy work with souls rather than personalities. It is the task of the aspirants and disciples of the world to find and maintain a rapport of mind (personality) and soul, and through that soul contact, to respond to the plan and purpose of the Hierarchy, that the spiritual student might more effectively serve the Hierarchy and humanity. The means for establishing this soul contact is meditation. Through meditation and the paths of aspiration (probation) and discipleship, the spiritual student prepares himself for the life of service. Through selfless service and group (planetary) meditation, the disciple becomes the (impersonal) instrument and extension of the spiritual Hierarchy of the planet.

There exists within the aura of the planet, a vast network of lines of force through which the various spiritual energies and stimulations flow. Part of the network exists as the etheric web or the energy body of the planet. Another part of the network exists in mental matter rather than etheric matter. The network itself provides a medium (mechanism) for the distribution of spiritual energies to all parts (aspects) of the world.

As the heart center of the planet, the Planetary Hierarchy functions in part as a transformer of extra-planetary energies and as a source of intra-planetary spiritual energy. The Hierarchy works closely with the Planetary Logos in guiding, qualifying, and transmitting these higher energies into the network for distribution. The type and intensity of the energy are qualified by purpose and by the solar and cosmic energies available (that are appropriate). The hierarchial energies flow through the network and are made available to human souls and esoteric groups who then retransmit the energies on more concrete levels, making the energies available to all who can respond to them, and utilizing the energies for constructive purposes.

The prayer life and the meditation life of the religious and spiritual students of all levels enhances and strengthens to a certain extent the planetary network. Prayer and meditation (of the right order) not only strengthen the network but strengthen the relationship of the individual to the network. The greater the (constructive) response of the human soul and mind to the inflowing energies, the greater the effectiveness of the soul. The mind that is aligned with the soul responds to the higher stimulation with constructive service. Thus is the student who meditates effectively and sincerely a critical link in the chain of energy distribution.

The meditation life of a group (both exoteric and esoteric) will have an even greater effect on the network and the effectiveness of the group. A group that has achieved a unity and purity of spiritual purpose will receive and distribute considerable amounts of spiritual energy on human levels, whether it is done consciously or unconsciously. Group meditation work is difficult, for it requires the overcoming of limitations that would impair the group unity. The disciples of the world are learning to function more and more effectively in this group work that transcends the illusion of differences between people, religions, and philosophies. Group work does not require physical proximity since the network provides for the necessary linking. The contribution of individual efforts to the various groups and the (one) group of esoteric groups is considerable. Individual meditations can be qualified for group service whenever the spiritual student gives of himself to the greater needs and spiritual purposes of humanity.

The emotional and mental lives of aspirants and disciples also have an effect on the network and on the relationship of the student to the network. The coarse (lower) emotional and mental vibrations are destructive, and the pure (higher) vibrations are constructive. Glamours and illusions tend to dissociate the student from the energies of enlightenment while the greater truths bring the student into closer alignment. During these times of crises and change, opportunities exist for personal and group purification and growth. As human minds seek to cooperate with higher forces (in service to humanity), ever greater will be the encouragement, guidance, and enlightenment available to those minds through the planetary network, and through the efforts of the Hierarchy and the aspirants and disciples of the world.

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

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

Both glamour and illusion are individual and group problems. The spiritual student must deal with the glammers that affect him (that can be recognized) and mankind must deal (slowly) with the mass of glamour and illusion in the lower worlds. Glamour and illusion can be considered to be the (almost) inevitable result of limitation of consciousness and language, misunderstanding and misinterpretation (of life and the world in which humanity lives). Therefore the problem of glamour and illusion is quite formidable.

There are many glammers and illusions that must inevitably be faced and overcome, including the glammers (and illusions) of materialism, power, destiny, ambition, self-importance, separation from God, good and evil (and all of the pairs of opposites), etc. There are also a number of special glammers that the spiritual student must face, including the glamour of the spiritual path itself, the illusion of the guru or teacher, and the glammers of superiority, authority, and idealism. Three attitudes are said to be breeders of glamour: criticism, separateness, and pride.

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

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

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(28) No. 66 - THE GLAMOUR OF THE PATH

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

The glamour of the path consists of the astral (emotional) and mental residual energies of personality-attachment to various aspects of the path. These include the glamour of the masters (of human evolution) and the Hierarchy, and of 'personal' contact with the masters; the glamour of the special or chosen group or individual; the glamour of service; and the glamour of the various personalities.

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

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

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

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

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(29) No. 367 - PSYCHIC DEVELOPMENT

A potential problem (stumbling block) for aspirants to the spiritual path is an (inordinate) interest in psychic phenomena and attempted psychic development. Phenomena distract the aspirant from the real task at hand, which is to purify and refine his character, integrate his personality, and align it with his soul in order to serve God and humanity.

Long ago in Atlantean days when the emphasis was on emotional (astral) development, psychic awareness was commonplace. But today in the Aryan Epoch, the focus for progressive man has been (and needs to be) shifted to mental development (the mental plane), and for spiritual students, soul alignment (the abstract mental and intuitive planes). Psychic (astral) sensitivities in man have generally been reduced so that man may concentrate on developing and refining the higher, mental faculties. This is a necessary step for soul alignment, intuitive awareness, and wisdom. Thus the true power of the soul (which is much higher than psychic (astral) powers) may be properly tapped.

The aspirant enamoured by phenomena who attempts psychic development may be invoking a number of potential problems. Premature opening of the chakra centers can bring instability and even insanity. Part of the problem is that only with a purified personality, soul alignment, spiritual maturity, and proper training come real discretion, understanding (discernment) and control of psychic (astral) energies. The unaware and unqualified student is ill-equipped to work in a field where glamour and illusion abound, when he has little ability to discern the real from the unreal.

A similar situation applies to those who are involuntary or untrained (and unqualified) psychics and give readings. Many are sincere and well-meaning, but lack the needed discernment; they are likely to have perceptions that are distorted or untrue (astral impressions frequently are not what they seem to be, and are usually biased by the participants' own thoughts and feelings). Only someone with the necessary soul alignment and spiritual maturity can be trained to work with validity on the astral plane (if there is a need). Often information in psychic (astral) readings or impressions tends to inflate the aspirant's ego, which if an individual is personality-centered (instead of soul-aligned), he will easily believe what is said as true as it supports his own self-glamour (self-deception).

Another factor to consider is motive. The serious spiritual student is not self-centered nor interested in developing psychic powers. He does not seek the special attention (ego gratification) that often goes with those who claim to be psychic. He knows there is no easy way (such as from a psychic) to receive answers to problems (no one is an authority with respect to another). Each student must decide for himself (after alignment with the soul) in meditation or prayer. In his desire to serve, the serious student takes the group (soul) approach without emphasis on the individual (personality). He seeks ever to identify with the greater whole (and the greater good) as he shifts his focus from a personal approach to an impersonal, more inclusive one.

The serious student knows he is necessarily responsible for handling his own personality life and problems (opportunities). He realizes the purpose of higher group work is not to solve his personal problems but rather to serve all of humanity and all life. Impersonal encouraging energies are made available to all, and not just shared with group members. When the student deepens and makes a serious commitment to the spiritual path, working for the good of all becomes his goal, and the glamour of psychic phenomena holds no attraction.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(30) No. 4 - STABILITY

The aspirant and the disciple are often tested through challenging circumstances and situations that (if the events are handled wisely) will result in greater stability, serenity, strength, and the capacity for effective service. The disciple can hardly afford to be disturbed in the emotional or mental bodies, for there is a great deal of work to be done that requires stability (clarity) of mind and emotion. The spiritual student should recognize the need for stability, that it might be properly incorporated into the daily life. The disciple must remain calm in the face of the most difficult circumstances, maintaining strength and spiritual purpose, not allowing any impairment of usefulness and effectiveness by being out-of-touch with the higher self. The disciple is then one who is dependable in the service of the Hierarchy and of humanity.

Crises and points of tension are often the stepping-stones to greater spiritual strength and usefulness, for many weaknesses come to the surface that might otherwise remain unrecognized. And in the points of tension (in the spiritual sense) are to be found the spiritual energies with which the student can overcome and uplift those weaknesses or limitations. The crises that are faced by individuals and by groups are mostly tests and opportunities for spiritual growth through change. The value of each trial depends a great deal upon the frame of mind and the way in which the events of the life are approached.

The stability of the disciple implies the state of being firmly established upon the spiritual path and in rapport with the soul. The serious aspirant cannot afford to have a wildly fluctuating emotional (astral) body; such a state must be properly dealt with (brought under control) if the student is to attain discipleship. Instability feeds glamour and illusion, both potent enemies of the student upon the path. There are also psychic instabilities that are often the result of premature psychic development; that is, the development of certain faculties without requisite spiritual maturity. This often leads to serious instabilities, vulnerabilities, a lack of control, and a lack of understanding of the resulting phenomena. The serious spiritual student does not tamper, nor is he concerned with phenomena; he cultivates stability, serenity, strength, and the capacity to serve effectively.

Stability is also a valuable keyword in the life of humanity, for mankind also faces crises that must be dealt with wisely in order for the race to evolve in accordance with the divine plan. Humanity lives in an age of changes, changes that should bring freedom from the crystallizing forms and glammers that are limitations. But in changes there are also dangers, for man has a tendency to over-react, and there can be no real virtue in any extreme. Stability goes hand in hand with moderation. The aspirants and disciples of the world are expected to continue to play a significant and moderating role in the days to come. In spiritual strength and stability will the light of encouragement shine for those who become emotionally or intellectually unsettled by events, for those who are not yet secure in the sanctity of the higher self. Man is today creating the crises of tomorrow, both in the individual sense, and in the life of humanity. So it is important for all to behave, feel, and think positively and constructively, for in action today is generated the vast sea of karmic energies that will subsequently visit humanity. May deeds and thoughts of love encourage this day (age) of changes to manifest constructively, that all may be free to grow together, as one humanity.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(31) No. 50 - CRISIS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

One of the primary purposes of evolution is the development and expansion of consciousness. As a spark from a great fire, the human monad (spirit) and its reflection (the soul) must be fanned into stable and progressive existence. The inherent and latent powers of the Godhead are to be developed in each human life. The original unconsciousness must be developed and expanded through involution into self-consciousness; and that self-consciousness must be expanded and unfolded through evolution into superconsciousness. This development of consciousness may proceed in any one of a number of different ways, each adding its own qualities and epigenetic factors to the eventual product. One of the keynotes of the planetary evolution is crisis.

Through a nearly infinite series of crises, the consciousness is impelled to grow, develop, expand, and undergo epigenesis. Epigenesis is the process of development in new or original ways of talents which were not obviously latent in man, but are included in man's contribution to the developing God of which humanity is an integral part. The major crises in the life (not lifetime) of a human soul include the process of individualization (in which the soul individualizes and becomes self-conscious) and the successive transitions from one plane of consciousness to another. The person of Lemurian (physical) consciousness experiences a major crisis as his polarization of consciousness is transferred from the physical plane to the emotional (astral) plane. Likewise the person of Atlantean (emotional) consciousness undergoes a major crisis as he transfers his consciousness from the astral plane to the mental plane. The integration of the personality by the mind is a crisis, as is the process of alignment between the mind (personality) and the soul. The transference of consciousness from the Aryan (mental) to the buddhic (intuitional) plane (of Christ-consciousness) is also a major crisis. Each of these major crises may take many years to fulfill, and usually bridges between lifetimes.

Within the constant struggle of consciousness with objectivity are many intermediate and minor crises. Intermediate crises include the transference of consciousness from one sub-plane to another. Minor crises include the everyday tensions and pressures of experience, each of which encourages the development of consciousness. The lessons of life can be learned through observation and contemplation or through personal experience; they can be learned rapidly (in the case of the student who has taken conscious responsibility for his own evolution) or quite slowly; they can be learned easily (through awareness) or with considerable difficulty. Through tension (crisis) large or small, intense or gradual, does the impelling force of evolution work, progressively.

The role of the adversary (duality, objectivity, imperfection, limitation, materialism) is to force development (in its own way), even in the case of the gradually evolving and relatively uninspired life. At least this is true for this particular school of experience (there are other worlds and other lifewaves). Attitude toward crisis is a major determining factor for success. With awareness and cooperation (realization) the lessons of each crisis can be learned without pain and without discomfort, learned easily and rapidly. With resistance (inertia) comes pain and difficulty, and a prolonging of the energies which produce crisis (karma). Crises and tensions are beneficial, for through these pressures come the development of consciousness (awareness), the destruction (transmutation) of glamour and illusion, the mastery of the soul over the limitations of objectivity, and the humble offerings and contributions of human development to the evolution of a greater life.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(32) No. 51 - ENCOURAGEMENT

Life upon the spiritual path is not an easy life. When the aspirant begins to take responsibility for his own progress and evolution, he sets forces into motion which bring new intensities (energies) into his life. These new energies are the challenges and responsibilities of the path, experiences and opportunities to be fulfilled. The intensity of karma to be worked out in each lifetime is increased considerably until all has been completed. The path becomes increasingly more narrow, and difficulties and pressures abound. It is easy for the spiritual student to be discouraged, for the path is somewhat lonely and the pressure of illusion of separation is great. As sensitivity increases, the student can become even more discouraged by the imperfections of personality and the imperfections and glammers of the external world.

But the spiritual student can ill afford to dwell in a discouraging way, for fear and depression are enemies of the soul; they interfere and hinder. Rather, the aspirant needs to recognize and appreciate the good in the world and the good within himself. The human being (soul) is a noble creature, being a reflection and a differentiation of divinity. It is only the illusion of the lower world which obscures the spark of divine life from the objective vision. God is everywhere, immanent within all lives. If the student believes first in God (and especially in the God within), then confidence will come and the student shall not lack encouragement.

Seeking encouragement from external events leads to disappointment. Seeking encouragement from within can sometimes result in false hopes and subsequent disappointment, for the masquerading mind can fabricate false energies. Encouragement should not be sought. True encouragement can only follow the student's unselfish concern for others (humanity). As the aspirant forgets himself, then encouragement shall always be with him. He who depends entirely on the Christ (God) within finds strength and confidence equal to any task.

Many upon the path become disappointed with their own lack of (apparent) progress. But the progress of the soul is mostly subjective. Indications of progress in the objective life normally come along after progress has been made. The positive efforts of the aspirant and disciple are not in vain. For though the rewards may not come for years or even lifetimes, the rewards are significant and considerable, and well worth the effort expended. Seeking to see the effects of one's work and progress only hinders and has no place in the life of the disciple who is free from the glammers (and self-importance) of personality. The disciple seeks no recognition; he seeks no reward; and he makes no claims. Though the disciple recognizes that the rewards are real, he is preoccupied with living the spiritual life as best he can, doing the work that is before him to do. The disciple chooses to do right because it is right to do right, rather than because of the rewards (for humanity) that come.

The student whose values are moral, ethical, and spiritual needs no incentive to live a joyful, helpful life. Such a life is natural, spontaneous, and lasting. Encouragement comes through knowing oneself (the soul) and in knowing God. The student finds encouragement (without seeking) as he lives in the eternal now, neither basing happiness on past events nor in future possibilities or expectations. Especially during these times of planetary tension, the encouragement received must be shared. In a sense, it is the dharma (responsibility) of the disciple to encourage mankind toward constructive evolution, that humanity will someday achieve a maturity comparable to that of the great ones who have already graduated from this human school of experience.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(33) No. 171 - THE IMPERSONAL LIFE

The life of the spiritual student through the various stages of probationary effort and discipleship is properly considered to be an increasingly impersonal life. The impersonal life is as necessary and as vital to the spiritual student as the personal or personality-centered life is to the development of the individuality (in the form of the personality). But why should the impersonal life be so (relatively) important to the spiritual student? For the simple reason that the soul is so very impersonal, its nature being that of impersonal love. Through conscious and deliberate union with the soul, the waking-consciousness seeks to participate in (and share) that impersonal love.

The impersonal is that which is not personal, that which exists without reference (deference) to the personality. Impersonal activity is that which does not engage the (independent, separative, or uncontrolled) aspects of the human personality or the emotions. Or in other words, the impersonal life is a life that is centered in the soul rather than the personality, but a life in which the personality is utilized in a practical, disciplined, and spiritually responsive way. Such a personality must be properly and naturally integrated, purified, uplifted, and aligned with the soul. This is in direct contrast with the personal life in which the personality reigns (uncontrollably) supreme as the center or focus of waking-consciousness. The personal pertains to a particular person or individual (as an end in itself) and to the lower human aspects of existence. To be personal (personality-centered) is to be imprisoned in the world of self-sustaining glamour and illusion; to be impersonal is to be free from the limitations of (petty) personal existence.

Impersonality can be easily misunderstood, so it is essential for the student to properly embrace the impersonal life as well as to use the proper approach to impersonality. Impersonality should not imply or suggest coldness or indifference. The right (spiritual) approach to the impersonal life is one of genuine warmth, compassion, and interest (but not to the point of emotional or mental absorption or distraction). The impersonal life is actually transpersonal and superpersonal (and spiritually meaningful).

The typical (beginning) heart-centered aspirant is warm, caring, and entirely personal. The typical head-centered aspirant is cold, uncaring (selfish), but still almost entirely personal. In either case, the student must gradually transform the personal nature into the impersonal nature. And as that transformation proceeds, the student will necessarily come closer and closer in consciousness to the reality of the soul, and the impersonal energy of the soul will resonate with the spiritually responsive personality, and radiate through that aura in an impersonal way.

The spiritual student should be concerned with truth and reality, and as the individual becomes more impersonal, greater truth can be realized. This is so simply because personality-centeredness (self-centeredness) distorts the truth in practically every conceivable way. Even groups can manifest or sustain a dimension of personality-centeredness or impersonality, and thereby contribute to the relative clarity, quality, and meaningfulness (of the effort). Groups that are personality-centered exist primarily to sustain and entertain the personality; and yet, personality-centered groups are definitely appealing (to personality-centered individuals) and may therefore be utilized in some constructive fashion. Impersonal groups serve altogether different aspects of spiritual purpose, and are (fortunately) not very appealing at all (except (unfortunately) to those who fail to recognize the impersonal nature).

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

For many in this world, attachment to physical things and emotional pleasures is a serious limitation in consciousness. To enjoy things and experiences is one thing; to be attached to them is quite another and more serious matter. The aspirant need not deny himself worldly possessions (in moderation), provided he is not enslaved by them. To live in luxury and to live in the world of emotional phenomena are indications of enslavement by that which is physical or emotional. Money, materials, and other things (energies) may pass through the hands of the disciple, but the disciple does not possess that which he is given custody of or responsibility for. He simply utilizes his resources as usefully and as effectively as he can.

The process of denial is normally a process of overcoming the superficial needs and dependence upon illusionary or glamorous things. When these limitations are conquered, the student stands ready to apply his resources for constructive spiritual purposes, with reasonableness, moderation, and detachment. There is no excuse for the serious spiritual student to live in luxury or to appear to. Moderation implies a measure of detachment and selflessness, a concern for others rather than a concern for self-interests.

Detachment is a measure of freedom, but it is also an indication of strength and stability. The student who has properly developed the art of constructive detachment is the student who is relatively strong and stable, a student who can be depended upon to contribute unselfishly to the work that is before him to do. A student who is attached to earthly things and phenomena is a student who simply cannot be trusted with the work of discipleship. The student who has cultivated the proper quality of detachment is neither indifferent to the concerns of men nor is he cold toward others; he is interested in and concerned about the welfare of humanity; he is warm and friendly, yet mature (unmoved by emotional or intellectual appeals). His actions and decisions are based on a set of spiritual values. He is strong and he is free to do that which is right, not necessarily that which the illusionary world expects.

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

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

One of the qualities or virtues to be cultivated by the spiritual student is (dynamic) harmlessness. Harmlessness is an attitude (state of mind) which discourages the student from inflicting any injury (physical, emotional, or mental) upon any life-form. Motives and circumstances should be carefully considered and evaluated before any interference in any life is contemplated. Actually, every action could well be evaluated, and action taken only where there is proper motive, need, kindness, and the intention of harmlessness.

The roles of the various kingdoms in nature can be considered in terms of karma and the need for harmlessness. The plant kingdom has certain responsibilities to perform, including that of providing food and oxygen for the animal and human kingdoms. The animal kingdom also has certain responsibilities, but providing humanity with flesh foods is not one of them. All of the kingdoms in nature are highly interrelated, and even humanity has certain responsibilities to the various kingdoms. These responsibilities and relationships are both karmic and evolutionary, and in themselves are sufficient cause for the conscientious application of harmlessness.

Harmlessness may arise from purely intellectual and rational causes, but it is the genuine harmlessness that is the expression of love that the student should cultivate. Harmlessness needs to be a way of life, an automatic process, a natural response to the circumstances to be faced in the external world. Through the discipline and practice of harmlessness, this virtue can easily be made a part of the daily life. There need be no worry or distraction involved, simply a healthy, positive, loving, and automatic (comfortable) expression in the outer life of the love-nature of the soul.

The expression of harmlessness does not imply a passive way of life; it does suggest a positive attitude and an awareness of the goodness within every life-form. Harmlessness includes looking at the good qualities in other persons, and not dwelling on the bad. If the good is looked for, it will be found, for everyone is an expression of a soul whose nature is love (goodness). The student should recognize the soul or God within every human life as the same God that exists within himself, regardless of whether or not the outer person is aligned with the inner soul. Looking for the good as an expression of harmlessness should overshadow all thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Positive harmlessness implies strength and discipline, not weakness or inability. It takes strength to remain silent where words might not be helpful and constructive. It takes strength to avoid gossip (in thought and speech); it takes strength to eliminate all criticism. Harmlessness is the opposite of selfishness. Harmlessness leads to greater awareness and understanding, and to the capacity for love on much higher levels than the physical and emotional. Harmlessness leads to usefulness, for the selfish person cannot be effectively utilized for constructive (spiritual) work. Harmlessness minimizes limitation. It is also a breeder of virtues, for harmlessness leads to kindness and other heart-centered qualities.

Harmlessness leads to an increased inner awareness that assists in the adjustment of inner teachings to the outward manifestations of life. Though harmlessness is quite a simple virtue, the effects are rather potent and far-reaching. By living the spiritual life in the external world, the positive growth of humanity is encouraged (as harmlessness is considered an integral part of the spiritual life). And when mankind has learned the meaning of harmlessness, then truly can the world disciple emerge as an obvious reality.

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.

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(37) No. 125 - 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.

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.

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

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

The transition between mundane preoccupation (absorption) and mental polarization is natural and ultimately inevitable. But during that (usually very lengthy) transition period the waking-consciousness will naturally oscillate back and forth between being absorbed and not being absorbed. There are many factors which tend to keep the waking-consciousness absorbed. Personal energies and interests are paramount in sustaining absorption. Glamour (mundane experience) in its many forms is perhaps the most serious of personal (individual and group) energies. The great planetary momentum of sustained glamour makes the task of intelligent withdrawal from the mundane consciousness a most difficult one. To be absorbed by glamour is easily the path of least resistance. Spiritual inertia is a most formidable adversary.

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

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

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(40) No. 152 - SPIRITUAL ABSORPTION

Spiritual absorption means the absorption of the conscious mind (the waking-consciousness)(and the entire personality) in the world of the soul, in direct contrast to the phenomenon of mundane absorption. Spiritual absorption requires the direct cooperation and complete alignment of soul and personality. In the spiritually absorbed state, the waking-consciousness may not have any conscious awareness on personality levels (physical, emotional, and concrete mental) or there may be a form of (indirect) perimetric awareness in which the waking-consciousness is aware of internal (personality) conditions or conditions at the periphery of the aura, but in either case being detached from any conditions in the lower worlds. There may be a partially absorbed state in which the waking-consciousness has a (self-imposed) limited ability to interact with the lower state of consciousness and the immediate environment.

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

There is, however, a phenomenon of the deception (glamour) of spiritual withdrawal. An individual may (without spiritual achievement) attempt to withdraw from the lower worlds, either temporarily or permanently, while still in incarnation. The appearance (deception) of spiritual absorption may be achieved, when actually the individual is simply absorbed on astral or concrete mental (personality) levels. Those who are especially susceptible to the glammers of the spiritual path might do well to guard against such distraction. The purpose of the spiritual student is not to withdraw from the lower life (world), but to so conquer the lower life (personality) that the interaction (expression) of the individuality (the soul) and its personality with the outer (objective) world becomes spiritually meaningful.

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

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

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

The intelligent student should realize that he is influenced (to a certain extent) by both internal and external forces. Each source of influence should be examined and the response of the personality to each influence should be assessed. The student should honestly accept responsibility for his own behavior and his response to any situation. As understanding increases, so can the response be conditioned or qualified by will (intention). The student should be able to apply self-knowledge or understanding to the task of self-improvement (the continuing (probationary) effort of purification, preparation, and refinement) as well as to the task of understanding the reality or purpose that underlies all events and appearance in the manifested universe.

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

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

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

(42) No. 96 - KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING

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

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

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

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

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

THE GREAT INVOCATION

From the point of Light within the Mind of God

Let Light stream forth into the minds of men.

Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God

Let Love stream forth into the hearts of men.

May Christ return to Earth.

From the center where the Will of God is known

Let purpose guide the little wills of men -

The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the center which we call the race of men

Let the Plan of Love and Light work out.

And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth.

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There are many books of philosophical and spiritual value that a student might find helpful when read and studied meditatively or contemplatively. A few to consider are: the Alice A. Bailey books, including Discipleship in the New Age (two volumes) and the Treatise on the Seven Rays (five volumes). Also helpful are Ponder on This and Serving Humanity (short compilations from the Bailey material), Bridges (Aart Jurriaanse), the Agni Yoga series, the Bhagavad Gita, the Enneads (Plotinus), the Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception (Max Heindel), the Secret Doctrine (Helena P. Blavatsky), the Tao Te Ching, and the Yoga Sutras (Patanjali).

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