



# THE UPPER TRIAD

SET NUMBER 9

Commentaries on the Esoteric Philosophy

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## THE UPPER TRIAD

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### THE UPPER TRIAD

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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 medium of unity and 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.

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

### No. 161 - FOUR POINTS OF CONDUCT

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

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

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

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

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

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 162 - PLOTINUS AND THE ENNEADS

Plotinus was an Egyptian-born Roman philosopher (and spiritual student) who lived in the third century A.D. He was a student of Ammonius Saccas in Alexandria, Egypt and was exposed to (initiated into) the esoteric (theosophical) tradition which underlies all enlightened philosophy and religion. Plotinus is generally regarded as the founder of Neoplatonism, a philosophy which synthesized the metaphysical and spiritual teachings of the Peripatetic, Platonic, Pythagorean, and Stoic systems. Plotinus was probably influenced the most by Plato, but above all the (underlying) esoteric tradition was the basis of his life and work.

Another student of Ammonius Saccas was Origen, the Christian theologian and foremost member of the catechetical school at Alexandria. Origen applied the esoteric teachings within the framework of orthodox (third century) Christianity, while Plotinus applied the teachings within a parallel (complementary) philosophical (rather than religious) framework. There was no real (inner) conflict between the two expressions, just as today, where many true Christians work within the framework of the orthodox church, and many others (true Christians) work without that orthodox framework. Both Origen and Plotinus developed the ideas of divine triplicities: Origen refers frequently to the Trinity; Plotinus refers often to the One and the Triad of divinity.

The philosophical mysticism of Plotinus has had a considerable influence on (orthodox) Christianity, since it has, as its basis, the esoteric Christian tradition. That esoteric Christian religion actually predates the popular (historical) Christian religion. The philosophy of Plotinus concentrates on the soul and its relationship to God and its relationship to the personality. For Plotinus, salvation was not something to be sought; it was something to be realized. He taught the reality of Christ (the soul) and the meditation through which the spiritual student can become aware of that (real)(inner) spiritual self (but he did not use the Christian terminology). Plotinus was not a sentimentalist, nor was he given to personalities or phenomena. As an esotericist, he maintained a rather strict control over the circulation of the teachings, being careful not to reveal any teachings prematurely (to unprepared or unqualified students).

The written papers of Plotinus are in the form of commentaries or discourses on the philosophy. The existence of a (the) metaphysical (theosophical)(esoteric) system of knowledge (philosophy) is assumed in each of the various commentaries. Each separate discourse or commentary is a development or clarification of a significant point or question. The papers were not written as consecutive or sequential chapters of a larger work; however, the commentaries of Plotinus were collected, titled, and organized by one of his students into a systematic work entitled *The Enneads*.

There are fifty-four commentaries in all, and they are organized as six enneads of nine tractates each. The First Ennead considers living being and the nature of man. The Second Ennead considers the heavens and the two kinds of matter. The Third Ennead considers the cosmos. The Fourth Ennead considers the soul. The Fifth Ennead considers the nous and first being. And the Sixth Ennead considers the existent and the good or the One (including human and divine freedom). In reading the *Enneads*, care must be taken with regard to terminology, as many of the words translated from the Greek have somewhat different meanings than contemporary usage might indicate. The terminology can be easily reconciled in its consistency with the esoteric tradition (that depends almost entirely on various keys)(without which much of the meaning would remain inaccessible).

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

### No. 163 - MEDITATIVE STUDY

The object of meditative study is to enhance the search for truth and the study of self, thereby contributing to the effectiveness of the spiritual student. A (spiritual) meditative atmosphere contributes to the serenity of emotion, the clarity of thinking, and the responsiveness to intuition that is vital to esoteric study and self-realization. Studying in a meditative environment helps to place the student in touch with the thoughts behind the written words, and ultimately with the energy behind the thoughts. A meditative approach to study tends to evoke a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The distraction of physical, emotional, and even mental existence is minimized, if not altogether eliminated.

Purely rational study is quite limited (by and to the concrete mind). Meditative study can (if the concrete mind has been properly prepared and disciplined) go far beyond the concrete mental, by bringing to bear the abstract mind and the intuition of the soul. Meditative study can be applied to reading, listening, or undistracted thinking. It is important to recognize the appropriateness of the chosen subject matter, for in meditative study the student is concerned with an (impersonal) energy flow of some spiritual or philosophical significance. Thus, works chosen for study should be relatively meaningful. According to the quality and appropriateness of the material to be studied, and according to the cultivated ability of the student (and according to the quality of the meditative atmosphere) shall be the relative success of the effort.

In the course of meditatively studying some subject, the student may be placed in attunement with the energy (atmosphere) of the inspiration of the material, as well as the energy of the thought-forms themselves. If the material is suitably chosen and the student is sufficiently prepared (relaxed, at peace, and spiritually responsive) a thread or stream of energy may result (flow), permitting the student to follow (without attachment) intuitively into an expansion (clarification) of the subject (and related areas). The material being studied is actually used to trigger the flow of energy contained within each thought. Therefore, each thought should be read, and pondered for as long as its energy persists, before going on to the next one.

The beauty of meditative or intuitive study is that through increased (purified) awareness and correspondence, the subject matter can be simplified. As each of many and various relationships are explored (realized), everything may fall into place and proper (inclusive) perspective. Patterns can emerge which tie everything neatly together, without paradox, even though the conclusions may not be translatable into words. Each new seed thought can become a trigger for correlation; new and deeper understanding can then be achieved.

The rules for effective meditative study can be learned and realized as the student proceeds. As long as the meditative atmosphere has been properly created (through sincerity and a well-developed pattern of daily meditation), the student can be responsive to energy patterns that work directly on subconscious, conscious, and superconscious levels (as the soul utilizes the meditation for its own purposes). Meditative study provides for an exposure on deeper levels than the merely conscious, and that exposure may be retained inwardly even if the outer mind is unaware of the significance. Significant energies may be assimilated unconsciously, only to appear consciously at a later time when the consciousness is more fully prepared. In fact, in esoteric study, this process of exposure as a precedent to conscious understanding is the usual rule rather than the exception.

Service has been defined as work or action performed that is helpful, useful, and beneficial to others, a contribution to the welfare of humanity. But in a deeper sense, service is the consequence of soul contact, and as such is directly related to the evolutionary urge of life itself. As the student begins to achieve soul contact with increasing regularity and quality, the natural energies of the soul begin to stream forth along lines of light and love (and purpose), so that the soul finds increasingly unimpeded expression through the qualified and obedient personality. This natural outpouring of spiritual energies is the real (immediate) objective of the spiritual path, as each who treads the path ultimately becomes wedded to the path.

If the student becomes concerned with service prematurely (or without sincerity), then the efforts of the student are likely to be personality-centered, and therefore impediments to the free-flowing (apparent) spontaneity of the soul. Even the student who has achieved some measure of soul contact may be (frequently or otherwise) distracted by the rational (or irrational) personality. The student who seeks fruit in action, the student who tries to serve, is a student who fails to understand the fundamental (esoteric) nature of true service. The spiritual student is urged to maintain consistency in soul contact and to respond freely (almost unconsciously) to the energy that is thereby evoked.

Discretion in service (in the deeper sense) is by no means a rational (consciously deliberate) act of discrimination. Discretion is the ability to make responsible decisions and the act of such decision-making. In the deeper sense it is an (almost unconscious) intuitive process that guides all efforts of the (truly aligned and spiritually responsive) spiritual student in the lower worlds. It might well be called the wisdom of appropriateness, for the enlightened spiritual student intuitively recognizes the appropriateness of every action (or inaction); even if the reasons are not apparent, there should be a sense of appropriateness. In this way, the student is guided (by the soul) into the proper place (approach)(disposition) and the influence that the student exerts is more meaningful (in light of higher purpose (law) rather than personalities or reasoning). The poised spiritual student cannot therefore infringe upon the rights (freedoms)(responsibilities)(karma)(dharma) of others.

Discretion in service involves a higher sense of responsibility (which is dharma). Dharma (duty) involves living in harmony with life and the law (purpose) of life. The spiritual student should live harmlessly and with wisdom (discretion), in harmony with the soul and in harmony with energies (laws) which govern the evolution of consciousness on all levels. A life of service (commitment to the soul and to humanity) is a life of complete cooperation with the destiny (intention) of all lives. And at the same time, it is a life of utter simplicity, since the entire focus or concern is centered on the source (the soul). With one-pointed attention to the higher self, the actions performed in the lower world become natural, automatic, and without the infringement of (distraction by) personality-centered energies.

The only truly substantial dharma incurred by the spiritual student is the alignment of the lower life with the higher, for then everything else is placed in proper perspective. The consequence of such alignment (soul contact) may be inexplicable to the ordinary senses, for the law (karma)(evolution) is all-pervasive, and the dedicated (and freely obligated) student is then in atonement with the law, a humble servant of greater forces than the purely personal (selfish), an intelligent and meaningful expression of the divine life and wisdom.

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

### No. 165 - THE PATH AND THE SEVEN RAYS

The spiritual path may be viewed in many ways or perspectives, each contributing its share to the clarification or elucidation of the path. One such perspective involves the esoteric psychology and the nature of the Seven Rays. The basic idea is that each individual or group is a latent synthesis (potentiality) of all of the Seven Rays, and that through successive incarnations, the individual or group develops the character or contribution of each of the Seven Rays.

The relatively unevolved student is qualified by a relatively loose conglomeration of several rays within the personality ray; one ray each for the physical body, the emotional nature, and the lower mind. These rays (and the ray of the personality) may be relatively undeveloped, and thus may be characterized by the so-called weaknesses of each of the particular rays. As the individual evolves in experience and consciousness, those weaknesses and limitations are transformed into the strengths and positive attributes of the respective rays. As the student progresses further, the three rays of the personality are gradually synthesized (integrated)(qualified) by an increasingly dominant personality ray.

Each incarnation or lifetime of experience is an expression of one or another of the seven personality rays. In each incarnation the student will normally develop along the lines of the personality ray. Through a succession of incarnations, the student is able to develop the positive characteristics of each of the various rays. Many such successive cycles may be required for complete development. This process is complicated (simplified) by the ray of the soul. Each soul is qualified by one or another of the Seven Rays, and that soul ray (in turn) qualifies the reflection (expression) of the soul through its personality. As the individual progresses, the soul ray comes more and more into play until it dominates the integrated personality ray. The soul ray is relatively permanent and offers continuity over a succession of many lives.

Ideally, the development of the soul (and its personality) is perfectly balanced through the entire range of the Seven Rays. However, in practice, the situations or circumstances of each incarnation are limited (qualified) by certain rays which periodically influence greater and lesser cycles of evolutionary activity (for the various life-waves and for the planet as a whole) and the individual must adapt (the incarnation) to those circumstances. The result of this is relatively unbalanced development. An individual may be well-developed along certain ray lines, but relatively undeveloped along other lines. Particular incarnations (circumstances and opportunities through conditions) must then be chosen for particularly needed experience and development (and consequent contributions to the greater life).

One might note the similarity of this approach to the astrological approach to the spiritual path, in which the individual (or group) passes successively through each of the signs in (some) sequence (time and time again) until the proper synthesis and balance of all of the attributes have been achieved. Actually, there is no real difference, for the path is One, and each approach (perspective) is coincident (concurrent) with the other. In either case (and there are others) the soul must incarnate many times under varying circumstances and opportunities, in order to achieve completion. And in either case, completion does in no way imply that each individual is identically (ultimately) completed; for in each completion, the student has travelled a different path to achieve the same (overall)(general) degree or quality of consciousness; and in each completion, the student remains uniquely qualified.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 166 - THE HUMAN AURA

The human aura is the energy field associated with the mind and personality. It has several aspects, including the etheric or energy body, the astral or desire body, and the mental aura. All of the sensations, feelings, experiences, thoughts, actions, and characteristics of the personality find their existence or counterpart within the human aura. Each of the several aspects may be considered an aura in itself, on its own level or dimension. Thus, in referring to an aura, one might be referring to any one or more of the several aspects.

The aura is a field of influence and a means of interacting consciously and unconsciously with the immediate environment. As a field, the aura may be large or small, potent or impotent, active or passive, transmissive or reactive, bright or dull, controlled or uncontrolled, dynamic or (relatively) static, stable or unstable, strong or weak, offensive or defensive, impersonal or personal. The aura may be constituted as any combination of the preceding variables or dimensions, and in varying degrees. The aura may be everchanging or varying in one or more of these characteristics.

As the aura interacts with the external world, it serves as an instrument of experience. Through the aura the personality is influenced (to a certain extent, depending on the character of the aura) by the environment, and through the aura is the environment (and other lives) influenced to a certain extent by the individual. The bulk of information (experience) obtained by an individual comes through the human aura (and is perceived and interpreted) (consciously or unconsciously) by the personality. The aura is the primary element of sense-perception, because it colors or influences perception according to its character. A person is influenced more by the environment through the aura than through the (apparent) faculties of the ordinary senses. And how a person influences the environment is mostly a matter of the aura and its interaction with the external world.

As the individual progresses spiritually, the aura becomes more and more purified and disciplined and responsive to the inner self. The distortions of mundane emotional and mental life are minimized (if not altogether eliminated), and the influence of the spiritually-centered student is then enhanced as the aura transmits the quality (potency) of the spiritual character. It is not so much what is performed in the outer world by the qualified spiritual student as much as the presence of such a spiritualized and influential personality. Such processes are mainly unconscious, a result of being, rather than a consequence of doing or trying.

The various aspects of the human aura (body) relate in various ways between the personality and its environment. The etheric or vital aura is concerned with etheric (physical) energies. The stability (balance) of the etheric body is essential to physical well-being and vitality. The astral or emotional aura is larger, more subtle than the etheric body, and inherently more interactive with the environment. All of the emotional characteristics, feelings, desires, tendencies, and vulnerabilities are contained within the astral body or aura. The astral body of the well-disciplined spiritual student is quite stable, clear, serene, and mature, being relatively undistracted by emotional currents. Similarly, the mental aura is larger and even more subtle than the astral body. If the aura is relatively pure and responsive to the inner spiritual potency, then the energies of the soul can flow easily into and through the clarified mental aura and its subordinate elements (astral and etheric counterparts) which together constitute a singular and effective spiritual instrument.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 167 - THE FIRST ENNEAD (1)

The First Ennead of Plotinus considers living being and the nature of man. The first tractate (commentary) of the First Ennead is entitled the Animate and the Man. Considered are the relationships between the soul, the waking-consciousness, and the body; the place of sense-perception, discursive reasoning, and intellection; and the relationship of the (individual) soul to the (soul of the) life-wave. A number of pertinent questions are addressed and clarified, as the author ultimately defines man as the waking-consciousness, an important distinction in view of the various ways in which a person can exercise identification.

Where (what) is the seat of the human (personal) interests (desires)(feelings)(affections)(experiences)(sensations)? The seat of personal interest and experience is the seat of sense-perception which is the personality (the body and the emotions). Discursive (analytical)(concrete) reasoning is attributed to the lower mind which is also the highest aspect of the personality. The soul employs (deploys) the body (personality) as the agent to the instrument, yet the soul remains unaffected by and unreceptive to the acts and experiences of its personality. Thus, the soul uses the body as an instrument (and may have some influence upon it) but does not share the experiences of the body. What aspects of ordinary life (in incarnation) can be assigned to the soul? Very little, for the soul is only related to as the waking-consciousness reaches the levels of the soul (in contrast to that of mundane or common existence).

What is meant by the Animate? The living organism (mind and body) which is that instrument of the soul. The body has acquired a life of its own, but how does the body stand to the soul? There is certainly an interaction (relationship) between the soul and the body, but that is not a coalescence. For the soul is veritably noble (relatively)(immortal)(impassive). But the soul might be considered in two (or three) ways. The individual soul is at all times inseparable from the essential soul (of the life-wave). The soul derives its nobility from the intrinsic divinity of the outpouring of life which is the essential soul. But that noble, individual soul is also related (in some occult fashion) to the personality of its own creation (appropriation). The lowest aspect of the soul is the abstract mental, which links to the concrete mental nature of the personality. The noble nature (mind and soul) is related to the human nature (emotions and the mind) and the animal nature (body and emotions).

The couplement of soul and body is essentially the mind (or more accurately, the waking-consciousness which is designed to function through the mental faculties). The couplement (waking-consciousness) subsists by virtue of the (indirect) (impersonal) presence of the soul. The man (the mind) is considered the associate of the reasoning soul. The soul is considered the realm of higher causation (insofar as the person is concerned), yet the realm of lower causation (which is an interrelated reflection of the higher) incorporates the mind, the emotions, and the body (and their environment). The desire faculty (and the experience of desire (sensation)) is seated entirely within the personality, whereas the higher (noble) faculties (the experience of judgement and realization apart from the senses)(the abstract mind and the intuition) are within the presence and influence of the soul. The soul stands apart from that which is lesser, and yet exists within the form. The soul remains not sympathetic, though the most noble of thoughts and feelings do begin to touch the place of the soul. The divinity of that greater life begins to shine forth into the lesser in accordance with the receptivity (purity)(preparedness)(responsiveness) of the focus of the waking-consciousness.

Importance is defined as the quality or state of being significant or meaningful. Importance implies the power of influencing or the quality of having evident value, through relationships, effects, or existence. There are three aspects of importance that deserve mention and elaboration: self-importance (and its extension to the group), the importance of a particular effort or activity, and the discernment of significance (relative importance).

The proper balance of self-value is essential to spiritual progress. Any exaggerated sense of importance (or lack of importance) is an impediment and a distraction. Everyone is important in the sense that all souls are noble (of divine heritage and in support of the greater or spiritual existence), but no one is important in any personal, personality, or separated (exclusive) sense. The basis of this truth is the common life which is noble with respect to the lives and forms through which that common life functions. The cultivation of true humility (self-respect) and a lack of (separated) self-importance is expected of everyone who would tread the spiritual path. The vanity of man is one of the greatest of stumbling blocks. The spiritual student should not consider himself important relative to others. Likewise, no group should be considered especially important with respect to other groups. Each individual and each group may be significant in its own (particular) way, but it remains inappropriate to attribute much significance to any with respect to others.

The importance of any particular effort or activity should also be viewed dispassionately. The spiritual student is encouraged to do what (seems) ought to be done, to perform whatever work is worth doing or seems to be appropriate. To attribute any special (exaggerated) importance to a task or project (no matter how worthwhile it seems) is to invite further glamour and illusion. There is indeed much significant work to be done, but that work should be (is better) performed and viewed dispassionately. To be attached to the work is to be distracted by it. To view any particular work as especially meaningful is to enter as well the glamour or fallacy of importance. The spiritual student is encouraged to cultivate an attitude (and perspective) of appropriateness, rather than importance.

The discernment (determination)(realization) of significance in information or experience is not necessarily an easy or rational task. The spiritual student should learn to discern the (relative) significance of information (through correlation) and experience (through assimilation) without any exaggeration or distortion by means of personal energies (bias). To attribute significance where none exists is as inappropriate as to miss entirely the significance which does exist. Actually, it is better in many ways to forego (conscious) realization of significance than to exaggerate or attribute significance that should not be. For in the former case, the significance may be realized later or on deeper levels of consciousness; while in the latter case, mistaken or exaggerated significance can create strong mental and subconscious barriers to the truth, which in turn discourage proper understanding.

The spiritual student should sincerely try to place everything into a moderate perspective. If significance is self-evident (and right), then so be it; otherwise (and even so) let no claims be made of great significance or importance. To concede that nothing is important is to admit that everything is important, and that that importance is merely relative and moderate. The essence of the problem of importance is the glamour of importance, but with a dispassionate approach, even such glamour may be dispelled and truth revealed. So be it.

Differentiation is the first of two major processes involved with the manifestation of the universe (the other process is integration). The process of differentiation is the process by which simple, singular variables or elements (or aspects) become more complicated and diverse. The object of differentiation is to develop a diversity of forms within a diverse structure or fabric of manifestation, in order to develop different and various characteristics. Without this process of differentiation, there would be no field for creative manifestation, experience, and subsequent evolution.

Through the process of differentiation primordial atoms of matter are each transformed into many and varied subordinate atoms. The original outpouring of precursory life is differentiated into many and varied streams or life-waves. Each stream is differentiated in turn into individual (apparently separate) lives (souls) within the stream. And each soul is further differentiated into constituent lives (forms)(atoms) on various levels and in various ways. Forms are differentiated and the lives within the various forms are differentiated. And yet, even though differentiated or distinguished one from another (which is merely a perspective), each remains one with every other, for the essence of the source remains an intrinsic unity, living simultaneously and concurrently through the myriad of differentiated lives and forms. Thus each aspect of manifestation at its greatest point of diversification remains quite related to the other aspects and to the chain of derivatives (or path) from (through) which such a state (aspect) has been achieved.

In the beginning of manifestation, a single dimension undergoes successive differentiations into an increasing multidimensional existence. A number of interrelated schemes of differentiation occur simultaneously and interactively. The homogeneous (simple) one is transformed into the heterogeneous (complex) many; and yet, esoterically, the original homogeneity and simplicity is maintained, as all of manifestation is merely a reflection (and a perspective). Each act (process) of differentiation is an act of will, related to the purpose of manifestation and being self-consistent with evolutionary intention. As diversity (variety) is achieved, the life force is diffused (thus differentiation is also a diffusion process).

Many hints to the process of universal differentiation may be found within the framework of differential calculus, a branch of mathematics which deals with the rate of change of functions (aspects)(elements) with respect to their variables (characteristics). In the case of simple (one-dimensional and ordinary) variables, differentiation is a process of reduction in the power of the function and an increase in the magnitude (extent)(spread) of the derived activity. In the case of complex or multidimensional variables, differentiation is easily a process of increasing complexity (distinction). In either case, the power of the variable tends to decrease as the essence of the variable is diffused, and as the power (implication) of the subordinate elements is increased. The energy of the system remains relatively constant as the power and diversity change mutually and (relatively though not necessarily directly) inversely.

The scope of the process of differentiation is almost completely interactive, as each subsequent act of differentiation gives rise to new and different (various) rates of vibration (with corresponding characteristics). Differentiation is a development of the framework and scope of manifestation as a grand prelude to the development of life. But the real work of manifestation (evolution) occurs as the process of differentiation interacts with the process of integration.

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 170 - THE RAY OF LIFE

The first of the Seven Rays of qualification and manifestation is the ray of life which supports and attains the entire field of evolutionary activity. This First Ray of power is basic or fundamental to each of the other six rays, while none of the other six rays are fundamental to the First Ray (but may be fundamental to each other). The First Ray is the first to manifest and it is the last to be withdrawn from manifestation. Without life (spirit) and the First Ray there could be no love (consciousness)(Second Ray) or light (form)(activity)(the Third Ray).

The First Ray in manifestation interacts with all of the rays and with every element or aspect of life and manifestation. There are a number of primary (major) keywords which are associated with the First Ray. Each of these keywords can contribute significantly to the understanding of the nature and character of the First Ray. The equivalence (interrelatedness) of these keywords provides the basis of an esoteric analysis of the quality or energy of the ray. Among the primary keywords for the First Ray are life, purpose, power, spirit, will, energy, and law. Each of these keywords is fundamental to the First Ray but may be applied (through aspect) to each of the various rays. There are also a number of secondary keywords derived in various ways from the major keywords, such as freedom, vitality, leadership, government, emergence (creation)(genesis), and strength.

First Ray analysis begins with life and purpose and ends with death and the fulfillment of purpose. Purpose provides the meaning or significance for life, and life allows a purpose to be accomplished. Life is power (potency)(potential) and the momentum to ultimately achieve some (evolutionary) intention (object)(goal)(completion). That power (life)(principle) animates (vibrates)(sustains) and motivates every atom on every level, every form and every aspect of differentiated life. The essence of life is the spirit which utilizes consciousness and form. Purpose is accomplished (is projected)(in reality) as an act of will, and in the highest sense, all of life and the field of manifestation is a simple consequence of an act (formulation) of divine will. All is energy; naught can possibly exist (conceptually or otherwise) apart from energy or life. Purpose, on every conceivable level, is indelibly stamped or impressed within every form of energy. And law is but another aspect of will and purpose, for all is qualified by the various laws (greater and lesser), and law (evolution)(life) itself. The law of karma, for example, is especially linked to the First Ray of life.

Each of the various qualities may be clarified by equivalence and direct association, pairwise, such as: life equivalenced with purpose, power equated to energy, law associated with will, energy associated with spirit. This may be done with secondary keywords as well. Further clarification may be obtained in the consideration (contemplation) of the basic First Ray paradox (and its several derivatives). That paradox is essentially the equivalence of life and death, the beginning and the end, freedom and destiny. From the association of these concepts can be realized the essential unity of the First Ray that underlies all of life. That unity expresses itself (esoterically) as the end preexistent in the causation (and the various corollaries to this statement).

The First Ray is manifestation. The First Ray is also the ultimate synthesis and assimilation (abstraction) of manifestation (experience). The ray of life is the ray of creation, vibration, animation, and ultimate dissolution (withdrawal). But what is life, really, beside its equivalence and association with purpose, power, spirit, will, energy, and law? Life is.

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. The very nature of the soul is that of impersonal love, and 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 spiritual student to properly manifest the impersonal life as well as to use the proper approach to impersonality. To be impersonal 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 second tractate of the First Ennead is entitled the Virtues, but the real focus of the commentary is the concept of likeness to God, and the attainment of such likeness (and the role that the virtues play in such attainment). The soul's purpose is acknowledged as liberation (escape) from (through) the world of form (matter)(evil) and reunion with the supreme aspect (the human monad). The process of liberation implies that sufficient progress (evolution) has already been attained in the pilgrimage in matter and that the soul has sounded forth the call for liberation. This reunion also implies completion and fulfilment (abstraction) of purpose. Plotinus is concerned with the path of liberation and the means through which that liberation should be rightly achieved. That path may require several lifetimes, for the withdrawal of the soul from active manifestation is a relatively difficult and tedious process.

Much philosophical reasoning (enquiry) is set forth in pursuit of the proper approach to the soul (and its monad). The virtues are analyzed, but especially the nature or concept of virtue is considered. The supreme (monad) is said to possess (by reflection) archetypes or exemplars which are patterns (intentions) (potentialities) for evolutionary development. Each archetype has a correspondence on each successively lower level of existence. The civic (ordinary) virtues are said to be good (meaningful and worthy of attention), but nevertheless, somewhat removed from the reality of the exemplars themselves. The ordinary virtues are said to be stepping stones to higher correspondence. There exist (at least) several categories of virtues, including those that are preliminary and have to do with (mostly) human personality interactions; those that are considered purifications, which further lead the student toward the beauty (purity) of the soul; and virtues which actually resonate with the undamped character of the soul itself (which are therefore much closer to the archetypes). A distinction is also made between virtues and the source of virtue.

Goodness is said to be something more than purification. The nature of the soul is obscured by the personality. As the personality is developed, purified, and refined, the nature of the soul (goodness) becomes evident. The soul is seen to be inviolately free from (above) all passions and affections (desires). The process of liberation is considered as a disengagement from (release from absorption in) the ordinary mundane (human) world of activity. That process is actually one of assimilation and attraction, as the fruits of experience in the lower worlds are withdrawn (transformed) into their higher correspondence (in fulfilment of the original archetypes). What is actually abstracted is quality (consciousness). Experience in the lower worlds is intended to develop the waking-consciousness to the point where it can function at the level of the soul. At that point, the primal excellence of the soul can be fully manifested, on its own level.

The mystical path which Plotinus develops and clarifies is essentially a conscious process of abstraction; it is not a path of development per se, because it presupposes sufficient preparation. It is simply a path to restore (to) the primal excellence. It is a path in which the preliminary virtues give way to loftier virtues, as a means of attaining the likeness of God. And in this path it is the power of the soul (having been developed through assimilation) that produces all of the virtues. This paradox is easily resolvable in the exchange of energy between the soul and its reflection. Through the increasing quality of consciousness, the spiritual aspirant attains to the likeness of God, as that quality becomes (directly) God (the soul itself).

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

### No. 173 - COMPETITION

Competition might best be defined as a somewhat separative but natural (even intentional) response to the evolutionary urge present within all lives and forms. That response may well be exaggerated or distorted by the personality, but nonetheless it has some basis in the overall plan for diversification and epigenesis. Depending on the context (perspective)(circumstances) and intention (motives)(and spirit), competition may or may not be appropriate, and competition may or may not be constructive and useful. The real object of competition is to produce new or improved opportunities for experience and progression; it is deeply rooted in the need for (overall) development, and primarily in the group context. In this intended sense, competition may actually contribute to the good (progress) of the lifewave, as individuals and groups contribute their share of experience to the greater life. However, competition may be simultaneously productive (in some sense) and destructive (in other ways). Care should be taken to assess the impact of competition, and perhaps what is even more significant (in the destructive or separative sense), the impact of the spirit of competition.

If competition (diversification)(parallel development or experience) is overshadowed by a conscious realization of true purpose, then no spirit of competition can exist. Rather, a spirit of cooperation will pervade all efforts and parallel or mutual experience. Is not cooperation merely the highest form of competition (or more precisely, are not cooperation and competition merely two forms of mutual or interactive development?)? The (destructive) spirit of competition is simply the result of attachment and personality (separative) involvement. The spiritual student is urged to moderate and actually eliminate any sense of competition, for the spirit of competition is only associated with a (temporary) stage of experience, and one which has no real (significant) usefulness in the spiritual context. The spiritually-minded individual should have no spirit of competition, for such a spirit only strengthens the personality-centeredness and the separativeness of objective (personality) existence.

One of the outstanding characteristics of the disciple is inherent in the refusal to compete (which implies the refusal to consider as separate from or superior to any other person). There should be no rivalry among spiritual students of all faiths, nor should there be any rivalry or sense of competition among the various religious or metaphysical (or philosophical) groups. When the student (and the group) approaches the reality (unity) of the self, it is realized that no advantage one to another can possibly exist. It is realized too, that the struggle for survival is, at best, an experimental scheme to develop certain characteristics for all to (later) benefit.

The ways of the world may be well and proper for those who are passing through that stage (and who are absorbed in the mundane world)(and who are even so contributing somehow to the greater life), but the spiritual student must refrain from much of the worldly atmosphere in order to be properly established as a link between the lesser and greater domains. The world of individuality (in the personal sense) and concomitant involvement in processes of competition (and the fulfilment of desire in its many mundane forms) must ultimately yield to a world in which a growing sense of cooperation and interrelatedness (for the good of all) shall predominate. As the individual ceases striving for personal ends, and begins to strive purely for the good of humanity (or for the planetary life (balance)), then a new stage is entered in which it is possible for the individual to actually consciously participate (cooperate) in the greater life. And ultimately, even striving must cease, as being is realized.

Death has been defined as the permanent cessation of all vital functions, the ending or completion of a cycle or particular activity. A more appropriate (metaphysical) definition is to equivalence death with the concept of transition, the passage or change from one state of consciousness or manifestation to another. When a particular human being dies, that individual simply experiences transition, the passing from (focus) waking-consciousness in the physical world into the (lower) superphysical worlds. That transition suggests the ending of life in the physical world and the preparation for continued life (existence)(experience) on a higher plane of consciousness, or the preparation for a return for further experience (reincarnation) in human form in the physical world.

But there is not (and cannot be) any real death (destruction). The life (consciousness) continues to exist independently of the form. That life is indestructible, though it may be manifested in various ways and upon various levels. And even the form itself (matter) cannot be destroyed; for the form is merely transformed from one state to another. The physical body disintegrates as the constituent atoms are returned to their natural state of basic formlessness, only to be reformed in various ways in other times. The universal manifestation is forever changing, as one experience leads to another, as one form outlives its usefulness and is set free to begin anew, as the life evolves from one state of consciousness to the next. Life and death are as natural as experience and manifestation themselves, and should be viewed with acceptance of their naturalness.

The spiritual student should recognize the appropriateness and meaningfulness of life in the lower worlds, but should also recognize the natural inevitability of death (transition) for all living creatures, each in its own way and in its own time. The student should not be attached to life in the lower worlds, nor should the student fear or otherwise resist death when the time comes. Furthermore, the spiritual student should not be attached to the lives of others. There may be (should be) a sincere measure of compassion in recognition of pain or suffering, but at the same time, the student should recognize and understand the processes (action and consequence) that result in pain, suffering, and even death. To express sorrow (grief) at the death of a loved one may be quite natural, but it also indicates a measure of attachment and selfishness. Even the most detached of spiritual students may feel a certain sadness in response to the death of a living creature, and yet, at the same time, a certain (inner)(quiet) joy should temper all sadness, the joy of release (freedom) into higher existence, as every death contains within a new birth.

For those souls fully conscious in the (human) superphysical worlds (as so few souls are), the birth (reincarnation) of an individual into the physical world is viewed as death, and is viewed with great compassion. For life in the lower worlds is a most difficult (but necessary) life of limitation and (apparent) separation from the realities of higher existence. Because of the appropriateness (karma) of life (experience) in the lower worlds, lives should not be terminated prematurely (nor should they be prolonged needlessly). Certainly, reasonable measures may be taken to support continued (useful) life and experience in the lower worlds, but when the soul attempts withdrawal, then the human efforts (or interference) should cease. The need for dynamic harmlessness should be readily apparent to all who tread (or seek to tread) the spiritual path, and a reverence for (all) life should overshadow and qualify every waking moment. Needless to say, the deliberate or careless taking of another's life is strictly forbidden, for such is in direct conflict with the intention of life (and death).

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 175 - THE RAY OF LOVE

The second of the Seven Rays of qualification and manifestation is the ray of love-wisdom which qualifies all of manifestation as consciousness. The Second Ray of love is fundamental or basic to all but the First Ray of power (life)(and even to the First Ray in some respects). This Second Ray of love (consciousness) is the ultimate ray of relationships, since it is the ray of interaction (communication) on all levels and in all realms.

The Second Ray is one of the three major (primary) rays for the simple reason that evolution through a manifested universe (experience and expression) would not be possible without it. The First Ray provides the foundation of manifestation as life (spirit). The Third Ray provides the field of manifestation as form (light)(matter). But it is the Second Ray of consciousness which provides the link between purpose and activity, and the means for growth (evolution) and the abstraction (assimilation) of experience through unfolding consciousness. The purpose (ideality) of the First Ray is reflected into the activity (practicality) of the Third Ray, but it is the moderation of the Second Ray which provides the balance necessary to sustain meaningful evolution.

There are a number of primary (major) keywords which are associated with the Second Ray. These keywords may be equivalenced in various ways to elucidate the character of this central ray of love-wisdom. Among the primary keywords for the Second Ray are love, wisdom, quality, consciousness, union, and moderation. There are also a number of secondary keywords that may be derived in various ways, such as teaching, magnetism, discipleship, healing, reformation, patience, compassion, and intuition. The two major aspects of the Second Ray (which are love and wisdom) may be equivalenced (in the esoteric sense), along with the other keywords. Love is the wisdom that underlies all of creation; love is also the wisdom to be gained from all of manifestation. Love (wisdom) is the supreme quality of life in every respect, the beauty of consciousness itself. Love (in its impersonal sense) is the union or process of interaction between higher and lower, masculine (active) and feminine (responsive) principles. As such, the Second Ray is the supreme ray of duality (and, esoterically, the ray of the resolution of duality).

As balance (moderation) it is the Second Ray of love (wisdom) which must temper or moderate the light of the Third Ray and the power (will)(energy) of the First Ray. It is the heart (compassion)(inclusiveness) which must temper or moderate the head. It is the soul which must balance the ultimate purpose (life) of the monad with the (temporary) independence and arrogance of the personality. The Second Ray in its highest aspect is the ray of impersonality. During manifestation, that ray is reflected through the Fourth Ray of beauty (harmony)(contrast) and the Sixth Ray of personality (devotion). Thus is the Second Ray also the ray of conflict (contrast) between the personal and the impersonal, between personal love and impersonal (all-inclusive) love. It is the Second Ray which constitutes the soul of all of life in manifestation, and therefore the inner link (which is love) between all lives.

As the ray of the Solar Logos, the Second Ray qualifies every aspect of manifestation (purpose)(experience)(expression) within the solar system. God is love, for God (the Solar Logos) is (for all practical purposes) the Second Ray of love-wisdom. And as the Christ principle, the Second Ray of love overshadows all of consciousness and the entire spiritual path of unfolding divinity. It is no wonder then, that love should constitute such a central position in the heart and soul of all creation.

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

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

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

Two of the hallmarks of wisdom are discretion and a sense of appropriateness. Discretion and discernment (in the spiritual sense)(in the sense of true wisdom) are the consequence of mental qualification and enlightenment (and their relationship to observation (and right interpretation and conclusion)). Wisdom does not necessarily suggest complete or objective knowledge; often there may be a confidence and a sense of appropriateness superior to knowledge. The student of wisdom acts with discretion and appropriateness, even if specific knowledge or understanding is remiss. Reasoning remains a worthy instrument to the enlightened mind, but it should always be subordinated to realization (spiritual intuition) in the higher forms. The spiritual student should take great care to properly discern and recognize appropriateness.

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

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 177 - THE FIRST ENNEAD (3)

The third tractate of the First Ennead is entitled Dialectic. The question is asked of what art, method, or discipline will spiritual attainment or perfection be achieved. The answer or response is an elucidation of dialectic (as defined and used by Plato and Plotinus). There are many definitions of dialectic. In the orthodox sense dialectic is logical discussion, reasoning by dialogue (or questions and answers) as a method of philosophical investigation. In another major sense, dialectic is a process in which an entity passes over into and is preserved and fulfilled by its opposite. Both of these definitions provide some foundation for understanding dialectic in a higher sense.

According to Plotinus, dialectic is the science, method, or discipline of spiritual realization. The nature of dialectic is alike for all, but the approach (preparation) depends on the student's temperament, capabilities, and experience. There are two stages to the path: the lower degree incorporates the paths of approach and the probationary path; the higher degree incorporates the path of discipleship and beyond. In the first stage, the student is striving upwards, being concerned with the conversion of the lower life. This includes self-assessment and a training program designed for the particular student. The second stage is for those who have overcome the lower life and have reached the upper sphere (or in other words, have purified the lower self and have achieved alignment of soul and personality). It is in this second stage that the true (higher form of) dialectic is experienced.

The lower form of dialectic is a discussion that involves (primarily) the rational mind. A middle form of dialectic involves an internal reasoning process that is enlightened by the energy of the soul, as the concrete mind comes into (approximate) contact with the soul. The higher form is pure realization (on soul levels) with the concrete mind standing by as the recipient and benefactor. Such dialectic brings with it the power of truth (reality) to every analysis, but that analysis transcends rational thinking and reasoning. The rational mind can only respond to that higher knowing (realization). Dialectic (in this higher sense) deals with certainties (realities) rather than hypotheses. It is a super-reasoning process on abstract mental and intuitive (buddhic) levels. Dialectic is the internal dialogue of the soul itself, which is also the dialogue (interaction) with the realm of universals.

Dialectic is thus said to be the supreme philosophical method, leading always to reality. Philosophy is said to be the supremely precious, and dialectic the precious part of (esoteric) philosophy. Dialectic relates philosophy to true contemplation and the elimination of personal energy. One cannot master dialectic without having cultivated the lower (and intermediate) virtues. The supreme (human) virtue is said to be wisdom, which is the virtue peculiarly induced by dialectic. But neither wisdom nor dialectic can be attained without spiritual refinement and preparation.

The master of dialectic is one who ever knows what questions to ask (which are really no questions at all), how to ask them, and how to respond to the threads of energy received as a result of the questions-which-are-not-questions. The master of dialectic is the master of himself and the master of silence; he knows which energies to avoid and which energies to cultivate. He knows how to enter the quiet, still place, and he knows how to follow any and every thread without distraction or distortion. The master of dialectic is a heart (and mind) and soul uplifted to God, with no thought of selfhood, with only the love of truth and a willingness to live wholly by its dictates.

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 178 - COOPERATION

The chief value of cooperation lies in the ability of a group to accomplish what the members cannot do individually. A group effort may succeed in some task where individuals fail, or a group effort may simply be more effective or more efficient than individual efforts. Cooperation may exist (or be cultivated) between individuals, between groups, between groups and individuals, and between individuals or groups and laws (concepts). Cooperation is in itself a constructive effort, the goal of which is some sort of mutual or universal benefit.

The motives and goals of cooperation may be selfish or unselfish, concrete and tangible or abstract and timeless (removed from the immediate experience). The gains of cooperation may be mundane or spiritual, personal or impersonal, individual or collective, limited (to the members and participants) or unlimited. But even in the less spiritually meaningful forms of cooperation are lessons to be learned. And in the more spiritually meaningful forms of cooperation are tasks performed or accomplished for the greater group (humanity)(life) with concomitant lessons for all concerned. In a sense, all cooperative efforts are preliminaries to group consciousness and the reality (unity) of life. Through constructive and cooperative efforts people may learn to get along with each other. There are many subtle benefits and products to cooperative endeavors, beyond that which is readily apparent.

One of the key values of cooperation is the cultivation of self-discipline (which implies subordination of the members to the group effort or goal). In this way, cooperation may be a stepping stone toward the transformation of self-centeredness to universal values and principles. The spiritual student is encouraged to cultivate a discerning but cooperative disposition. An attitude of helpfulness goes hand in hand with qualities such as kindness, compassion, and goodwill. A sense or spirit of sincere cooperation may go a long way toward the transformation of separateness and exclusiveness into group consciousness and the inclusiveness of life itself. But a commitment to cooperation does not require or imply a commitment to any particular worthwhile cooperative effort. Discernment is still required for the spiritual student to recognize the more appropriate course of action and disposition.

Cooperation is an intrinsic part of the evolutionary plan for all kingdoms. In fact, a bond of cooperation exists between each of the various kingdoms, whether realized consciously or not. Man contributes directly to the evolution of the elemental lives which constitute the forms in the external world. Likewise bonds exist between the human kingdom and the other sub-human kingdoms (mineral, plant, and animal). Bonds also exist between humanity and the angelic kingdom (the multidimensional world of deva lives). In various ways do all of the kingdoms of nature cooperate with each other as an integral part of the divine evolutionary plan. Cooperation is a major keyword and seed thought for evolution. Karma and cooperation are linked together in a most interesting fashion, as the unity and interrelatedness of all life and consciousness (and form) is demonstrated throughout the karmic (evolutionary) arena.

One of the greatest of bonds for the spiritual student is the dharma of cooperation with the evolutionary laws (principles)(concepts) and higher lives (as they are understood). The spiritual student is expected to live according to the highest principles and standards that he can realize and accept. And in so living is the cooperation of the aspirant with evolutionary intent assured. The commitment of the student to the spiritual path is a major undertaking, and one which incorporates wisdom and cooperation on a grand scale.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 179 - THE DEATH OF SELF

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

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

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

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

The individual who refuses to die to self clings to the temporary form of futile existence. The individual who conquers himself achieves the freedom of creative consciousness unbound by the form through which it works. The death of self (self-centeredness) is essential (mandatory) to ultimate progress upon the spiritual path, for there comes a time in the life at which a certain major crisis must be faced. The spiritual student who passes that test must die to self (be transformed and reborn in the spiritual self). It is a gate through which each must pass who is to evolve beyond the human experience, a gate through which independence and separateness and ego cannot pass, a gate through which can pass only the individuals who have achieved self-mastery.

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 180 - THE RAY OF LIGHT

The third of the Seven Rays is the ray of active intelligence which qualifies all of manifestation in the sense of form (matter). It is the ray of activity and the ray of matter, and it provides the foundation for existence of the four (minor) rays of attribute. As the First Ray is the ray of life and as the Second Ray is the ray of love, the Third Ray is the ray of light.

Matter is a form of crystalized spirit; light is a form of energy, a form of radiation inherent in the third aspect of manifestation. That form of energy is evident in many ways, including the light of the atoms (atomic lives), the light of integrated forms (on the various planes of consciousness), the simple light of intelligence (wherever it is found), the light of mind, the greater light of the soul, the light of the world, the light of the Sun (Son), and the light of the universe. Light has both concrete and abstract connotations, all within the Third Ray and its relationships. The electromagnetic radiation that is involved with physical plane vision is one concrete example. The inner light (enlightenment) and spiritual truth are more abstract examples. The source of light is simply activity (active intelligence).

Active intelligence is the field of manifestation. And every aspect of manifestation is reflected in the keywords which are associated with this Third Ray of activity. Among the primary keywords for the Third Ray besides active intelligence are manifestation, thought, understanding, comprehension, light, form, matter, appearance, evolution, and truth. Other related (secondary) keywords include philosophy, economy, adaptation, contemplation, and expediency. The Third Ray is very much the ray of evolution through experience, knowledge, and development, and as such it works closely with the Second Ray of consciousness. Where the Second Ray is the ray of the soul, the Third Ray is the ray of the mind and the personality. The mental principle is essentially Third Ray, and the relationship between mind, light, and form bears close study.

The spiritual student must learn to work with light energies in various ways (according to temperament). As the student progresses he contributes more and more to the blending of two aspects of light energy: the light of the form and the light of the higher self. As these two are properly fused the student becomes a radiator (and channel) of light energy. Radiation is actually a consequence of transformation (transmutation) as the hidden energies of matter (form) are released (purified and transformed) into higher experience. The mind is primarily the instrument of focus for light energy. As the mind is purified, disciplined, cultivated, and prepared, it becomes lighted and the entire aura engages in the processes of light. That radiation of light enables other energies to be released and transmitted, the most important of which is love. Thus light and love complement each other in a profound way, through evolutionary interdependence.

The third aspect is vibration (oscillation) in its infinite variations. Light is essentially motion or movement of a periodic nature. Manifestation is activity; activity requires vibration (which is adaptable) beyond inertia; and vibration is itself a form of light. That field of manifestation incorporates four rays of light (the rays of attribute), each with its characteristic light, vibration, domain, and interaction (exchange of energy) with the others. The Fourth Ray of balance allows the energies of the upper triad to be reflected into the lower triad. The Fifth Ray complements the Sixth Ray as the head complements the heart. And the Seventh Ray reflects the power (energy)(life) of the First Ray into the structure, organization, and rules (order) of manifestation.