



# THE UPPER TRIAD

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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. 181 - COMPOSURE

The composure of the spiritual student (disciple) is characterized by an aura of serenity and tranquillity. That aura is an interactive energy field that reflects (transmits) the quality of thought and feeling. In the case of the spiritual student, that aura is to be cultivated as an instrument of composure, a means for maintaining a spiritual orientation in the waking-consciousness, and a means of maintaining a moderate temperament (as to the personality).

The student achieves the proper composure through intelligent meditation, spiritual discipline and refinement, and through the careful programming of suitable energies. The methods of programming for composure may vary widely according to the talents and temperament of the student, but inevitably the aura is properly qualified by light and love and potency. Such an aura must be properly stabilized and balanced, for the energies utilized can be quite distracting if not entirely manageable. It is very important for the student to maintain his spiritual composure at all times (if at all possible), for the student is held responsible and accountable for the energy which is evoked and released through his presence in incarnation. If the composure is lost, even momentarily, some energy is also lost or wasted (not lost in any absolute sense, but scattered and removed from effective utilization).

From time to time, even the most dedicated and cultivated of disciples may become ruffled or distracted or unsettled, slightly or otherwise. In such a case, the student must make a conscious (and semi-automatic, pre-programmed) effort to recompose (regain the proper composure) as soon as the out-of-balance state is realized. In fact, the mind should be programmed (cultivated) to trigger an immediate awareness or recognition of the situation for the benefit of the waking-consciousness. This allows the student to recover almost immediately, and minimizes the scattered energy. In due course, the student learns to recognize his vulnerabilities (in time and situations) and actually learns to overcome the possibility of lack of composure. The potent tranquillity and equability of the dedicated student is quite a contrast when compared with the condition of the aura charged by ordinary consciousness.

The opposite of composure is confusion. Confusion is characterized by a lack of clarity or distinctiveness, perplexity, bewilderment, even vagueness. In a deeper sense, the state of the aura during a period of confusion is actually a clouding of consciousness. Confusion may be a slight or simple matter of indecisiveness, but whatever the degree or extent, confusion (lack of composure) suggests a scattering of energy (a scattering of consciousness) and an impure mixture of energy (a mixture of impurities). By impurities it is meant inconsistencies, two or more energies of dissimilar vibration (tone)(quality) that are not harmonious. These can be quite subtle in nature and arise even from simple contrast or conflict. The inconsistency between what is done and what should be done (according to conscience), for example, creates an energy conflict (confusion of energies) within the aura.

Consistency and composure are quite related, objectively and subjectively. The spiritual student should intelligently resolve inconsistencies, that he might remain quietly composed throughout whatever experiences and situations may need to be faced. If the student is not easily disturbed (bothered)(upset), he may be trusted with more (highly qualified) energies to be properly released into the environment (through the radiation of the aura). But the implacable student must also be spiritually responsive (easily impressed by the quality of the soul), if his composure is to be properly utilized and remain meaningful.

The fourth tractate of the First Ennead is entitled Happiness. The object is to distinguish between true happiness and welfare or prosperity. Welfare and prosperity are considered within the reach of all (lower) lives, but true happiness is said to be a condition in consciousness (disposition) in which the awareness of the soul is required. The lower order of happiness is simply the good of life, based upon appearances, the conditions of life, achievements, and even inborn tendencies. True happiness is a higher order of happiness altogether, centered in the inner peace of being, in accordance with the purpose of nature. In this sense, even the soul of the lower kingdoms can participate.

The state of well-being is seen as a good in itself, apart from perception, and therefore goodness can be experienced on all levels, even in the lower kingdoms. But true happiness is not based upon any (artificial) sense of well-being, nor is it dependent on sensation or any form of outer experience, attainment, or condition. True happiness is inherent in the possession (realization) of the perfect (divine)(inner) life. All beings possess (participate) in this divine life, either potentially, unconsciously, or effectively. True happiness is said to be related to the effective inner life and the end of seeking. Those who are proficient in the inner life of the soul, work no longer for themselves, but for God, the lifewave, and the soul itself.

One who has attained true happiness is (relatively) unaffected by pain, suffering, or sorrow. True happiness is not affected by any form of (apparent) misfortune, since true happiness depends only on the divine changeless (existing beyond the outer world of changes) essence within the form. Even drugs (food or drink) and disease, which are viewed as bringing about a suspension (distortion) (compromise)(clouding) of consciousness, deter not the happiness based upon inner peace. The inner peace pervades both the waking and sleeping states, for it is dependent upon neither. Furthermore, there are no means to true happiness. It exists, and it can be experienced, but it cannot be attained in any objective or deliberate sense. As one becomes centered in the soul, one simply realizes that quiet, inner joy that is true being.

Pleasant conditions may be sought for the sake of integrity (the simple, purified life of the spiritually responsive personality) rather than compromise (the complicated or distracting life of involvement in lesser matters). But even with inner peace there must be an acceptance of karma (conditions). Even with true happiness, one may carry personal suffering (and the suffering of humanity) as well as can be. But with strength, untroubled by appearances (even painful ones), the inner life persists. The enlightened view and experience the world quite differently than other mortals; the outer events do not penetrate the inner calm of the enlightened, only the observation and assessment are reflected into the inner being. The one who is proficient in the esoteric peace retains his composure, having the consciousness centered (focused) within, while simultaneously functioning effectively in the outer world.

True happiness is thus removed from sensation or emotion, removed even from the joy of reasoning, as the mind is held steadfast in the light of the inner self. The true individuality is neither the male or female body (expression) nor the personality nature; thus, happiness centered in the lower self is at best, temporary and impotent when compared with the reality of higher existence. Happiness that is centered upon the real is a form of immortality in which the proficient ever bathe, while helping the balance of humanity onward and upward, from darkness into light.

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 183 - HUMANITY

Humanity is the name given to the lifewave which inhabits the human kingdom of nature. There is a natural tendency to identify the lifewave with the particular kingdom which it happens to be passing through, but the student should be careful to distinguish between them. The lifewave is a thread of life (consciousness) which evolves progressively through the various kingdoms of nature. Each kingdom provides special conditions for the lifewave to experience. The lifewave evolves through experience, and the various kingdoms change (very slowly) to provide the proper conditions for each (successive) lifewave.

The lifewave (life)(lives) which presently constitutes (inhabits) the human kingdom will someday pass on (collectively) into the next kingdom, just as the life which is presently passing through the conditions of consciousness and experience which characterize the animal kingdom will someday pass into the human kingdom (though that kingdom will necessarily be quite unlike it is today). People (in this human experience) tend to identify with the human form and the human kingdom, but it should be kept in mind that this is only a temporary stage in experience (lasting millions of years perhaps, but nevertheless temporary). The reality of the soul transcends the human experience.

One of the major characteristics of the human experience is self-consciousness. Even the most highly evolved animal lives are lacking this essential ingredient. The birth of self-consciousness suggests the temporary illusion of separateness through multiplicity. The human being is usually very much aware (unconsciously) of his separateness (in form and apparent consciousness) from other human lives. Even when the student begins to appreciate the existence of the soul, it is thought of as a particular, individualized soul. And it is, a uniquely individualized entity related to its reflection as an incarnated personality. But it is much more, as well. The soul is not only an integral part of humanity, but all of humanity is an integral part of each soul, for through each soul lives the one life which is humanity (the lifewave).

As the consciousness of the student is raised, it becomes possible to live through all lives simultaneously, to identify with the lifewave itself primarily, and with the individualized soul only in a secondary sense. The pulse (life) and consciousness of the lifewave are realized and the student is then able to appreciate more fully the duality and contrast of human existence. Humanity can then be seen as a single life which experiences a timeframe vastly different from that of the localized (individual) consciousness. The quality of human consciousness is improved as the various focal points of experience are improved in quality. Each extension of the whole (to the individualized soul) contributes to the consciousness of humanity, and the lessons of humanity are likewise contributed to the consciousness of the individual, especially as the individual participates directly in the consciousness of the lifewave.

The contrast of humanity, between self-consciousness and creative group-consciousness (between separateness and unity) is part of the necessary experience of human evolution. The lifewave evolves in many ways, through various perspectives, and the interaction between the various facets of human experience provides the means for progressing beyond the realm of contrast. The spiritual student should endeavor to enter into the life and consciousness of humanity (on soul levels), for it is humanity (in the intermediate sense) which provides the basis for existence in individualized form. No human being can live independently of the lifewave, and every human being has an inner obligation to that lifewave of which he is a reflection.

The effects of physical plane music on the human personality are many and varied. The two primary variables (factors) are the quality (and form) of the music and the quality (responsiveness) of the personality. Much depends upon the nature of the mind and the degree of independence present in the physical and emotional bodies. The whole process involves the interaction of energy (music) with energy (the aura and the personality).

The quality of music depends primarily on the purity of the tones produced and the concordance or harmony of the various tones and instruments. Music is essentially qualified vibration. On one extreme is music (noise) that is produced with many impurities and an absence of harmony. Much of the popular music today is produced with varying degrees of impurity, with many coarse and discordant notes (which are not recognized as such by those for whom that music is appealing). On the other extreme is much of what is called classical music, music noted for its purity, clarity, harmony, and constructive effects. Not all of the classical music can be considered in this category (of the highest form of physical plane music), for even classical music varies widely in form and quality. Coarse popular music carries with it a (potentially) destructive element. Refined classical music carries with it the potential for constructive interaction between the soul, the mind, and the entire personality.

The quality of the personality determines the response of the personality (on its physical, emotional, and mental levels) to the various forms of music. A coarse, discordant personality (aura) will usually find coarse, discordant music to be appealing. A refined, purified, and disciplined personality will usually find refined (classical) music to be far more appropriate. The bulk of humanity fall somewhere between these two degrees, and the taste or responsiveness of the personality to music may vary considerably even for a particular individual. The environment or atmosphere also plays an important role, for music can sustain a particular atmosphere for quite some time.

Coarse, discordant music tends to stimulate the lower astral; other forms of popular music usually stimulate the emotional body on intermediate levels. Whenever the emotional (astral) body is stimulated by music, the physical form tends to move in response. In other forms of music, in which the mind (rather than the emotions) predominates, the emotional body is calmed and relaxed while the physical form is not normally engaged. Much of the popular music can create tension and frustration (even in very subtle, unconscious ways). By observation and consideration, the spiritual student should be able to recognize the effects of various forms of music on his own aura and temperament, and take appropriate action to improve and qualify the situation.

Physical plane music can produce quite profound effects on emotional and mental levels, and some forms of (quiet, classical) music can actually encourage and evoke the alignment of soul and mind (and heart). Loud or coarse music can be quite stimulating in the lowest sense, while quiet and refined (mostly classical and semi-classical) music can be gently stimulating in the highest sense. Meditation music (if used) should be chosen for its gentleness and purity. The higher forms of music can be participated in with interesting and constructive effects. For the spiritual student at least, the lower forms of music are distracting and unproductive (if not counter-productive) (and should be avoided or tuned out). With proper discretion the various forms of (refined) music can be utilized quite effectively, but first the student should understand himself and observe first-hand the interaction of music and personality.

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

### No. 185 - DERIVATION OF THE TWELVE

From one to three to seven to twelve, the derivation of manifestation is a logical process. In the beginning there exist one primary force or essence, the Absolute, and two prime realities: the Absolute and its absence (the null universe). From the interaction of the two precursory realities is produced (withdrawn)(created) the First Ray or Logos (which is life). The Third Ray (which is form) is produced by the reflection (in one perspective) of the First Ray, while the Second Ray (consciousness) is produced from the mutual interaction of the First Ray and the Third Ray, an even (mystical) ray born of two occult rays. From another (equally valid) perspective, the Second Ray proceeds from the First Ray, and the Third Ray proceeds from the Second Ray. The two processes (perspectives) actually occur synchronously.

On one level, the First Ray is as close to the unmanifest as is possible, and the Third Ray is the totality of manifestation. As the cosmos unfolds through interaction and production, the three primary rays are emerged. By interaction and production it is not meant combination or exchange. By interaction (production) is meant creation through induction. From unity proceeds duality, and from duality proceeds divine triplicity. The subsequent manifestation of the three (the Trinity) into the seven (the Seven Rays) occurs through progressive interaction. The First Ray and the Second Ray interact (creatively) to produce the reflection of the (non-participating)(missing) Third Ray, which becomes the Fifth Ray. The First Ray and the Third Ray interact to produce the reflection of the (missing) Second Ray, which becomes the Sixth Ray. Similarly, the Second Ray and the Third Ray interact to produce the reflection of the (missing) First Ray, which becomes the Seventh Ray. And finally, the Fourth Ray (the last of the seven to be produced, esoterically the first to exist) is produced from an interaction of all three (major) rays.

The lower three rays (5, 6, and 7) are actually second-order rays (each produced by an interaction of two major rays) while the ray of balance (the Fourth Ray) is a third-order (more complicated) ray (produced by an interaction of all three major rays). In correspondence with the two processes by which the Second Ray is produced, the Fourth Ray is also produced by the simultaneous interaction of the first three rays and their respective reflections. In this sense, the Second Ray and the Fourth Ray are more profound (in their central significance). The three primary rays are also manifested on successively lower levels (each stage of manifestation suggests greater complexity and lower levels) but remain first-order rays. In fact, each of the rays function simultaneously on every level of manifestation for which its existence is possible (the three major rays correspond to a major level (dimension)(scope) of manifestation)(likewise, the Seven Rays).

The twelve are derived directly from the seven, as each of the major (three) rays interacts pairwise with each of the minor (four) rays (or in other words, twelve is the simple product of three and four, but the process remains esoteric) (the mathematical operations are essentially symbolic). From the seven and the twelve, all of the multifarious levels of manifestation are produced. The form side tends to follow powers of seven, but there is really little difference between the two perspectives (seven and twelve). In the methods (processes) through which the various rays and elements are produced are found a number of keys to understanding the nature and characteristics of each of the rays. The interrelatedness of the whole remains quite apparent, throughout the many permutations and cycles of manifestation.

From the standpoint of the waking-consciousness, the past exists as a field of memory, the period of time (and space in time) beginning with the birth of objective manifestation and ending with the present moment. From that standpoint or perspective the past exists only as a memory field, but in a greater reality the past has a greater existence, as an integral part of the totality of life (without time). However, for practical purposes the past need only be considered as a function of memory (history) and a matter of perception (and the extraction of useful information).

The memory of past experience and expression (in physical, emotional, and mental terms) exists in both personal (particular) and impersonal forms. The personal (individual) memory includes events perceived and recalled consciously and unconsciously. Throughout conscious and unconscious experience, the mind (and aura) takes in far more information than is consciously observed. In fact, it might be said that the superconscious memory holds within it practically all of the possible information relating to individual experience on every level of (human) consciousness. But there exists as well an impersonal memory, a memory of nature in which all events, circumstances, and consciousness are recorded indelibly for all of the past. Within that impersonal memory of nature the past exists as a complete historical record. Even within matter itself (on various levels) can be found many elements of memory.

The real value of the past lies in the learning of lessons and in the understanding of the patterns of life (with respect to purpose and the evolution of consciousness). Many lessons in life are not assimilated or realized consciously or in the present tense. Some (moderate) reflection or contemplation (retrospection) upon the past can help an individual to realize many of those lessons. Also many lessons are learned unconsciously or subconsciously as the mind relates past experience through analysis and correspondence. With considerable skill and training it is possible for the student to accurately view the records of the memory of nature and to assimilate the experience of the past, not simply in the individual sense (which is hardly important) but in the greater sense of life itself, the consciousness of the lifewave, and the pattern of evolution.

But two significant (related) problems exist with respect to the past (and to the waking-consciousness); one is perception and the other is personal energy (glamour). The properly trained esoteric student is (relatively) free from personal energies and can easily view and properly interpret the memory of nature. For such a student there exists (virtually) no glamour or distraction, no curiosity, no personal motives that would distort the perception and interpretation of the past. But the past is usually complicated by perception. The untrained or unprepared student (relying only on superficial psychic faculties) would perceive the past through the distortion of the aura and the distortions of the reflecting ether (which is not the true memory of nature). Though the past exists as fact, the past can be perceived and interpreted in countless ways according to the consciousness of the enquirer. Thus it is important for the spiritual student to be unconcerned by personal energies and immature interests.

The proper recall of the past (in terms of meaningful information) requires a clarity of vision and a purity (depth) of consciousness. The truth (of the past) can only be realized to the extent that the consciousness lives in truth. The spiritual student should dwell primarily on the subjective whole which exists beyond the limitations of time; beyond the past, the present, and the future; where truth lives unburdened by any concept of time or space.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 187 - THE FIRST ENNEAD (5)

The fifth tractate of the First Ennead is entitled Happiness and the Extension of Time. Happiness is considered in its two dimensions (apparent and real) with respect to time, as a present (instantaneous) quality, and with respect to duration. Apparent happiness (pleasure) is that dimension of happiness resulting from phenomenal existence and mundane affairs. Real (true) happiness is that other dimension of happiness that results from quality, virtue, and inner existence (which is being).

Happiness is usually considered as a present (current) state or quality experienced by an individual in time. Such happiness requires the presence of the emotional or mental state; it is not a matter of anything past or future, for it is only substantial in the present tense and only to the extent that it is manifested or experienced by the waking-consciousness. In the case of apparent happiness, the state (of happiness) appears and disappears and fluctuates in intensity depending on outer conditions and their relationships with consciousness. In the case of true happiness, the state is relatively constant, being the result of a depth of consciousness and a temperament conditioned by inner values and higher consciousness.

Passing (phenomenal) happiness does not really vary because of time, but it does vary according to events and circumstances in time. Eternal (inner) happiness is quite unrelated to time or to events in time. But in either case, happiness exists only in the present tense. Memory is not happiness, but memory can affect (phenomenal) happiness in the present tense (as in the experience of memory). Felicity (the quality or state of being happy) does not of itself increase or decrease as a function of time. Greater (true) happiness is a consequence (reward) of higher virtue, notwithstanding a duration in time. Virtue (and real happiness) is simply not a time-dependent phenomenon.

However, there is a relationship between a quality of pain (unhappiness) or pleasure (apparent happiness) and the time over which it is experienced. The product of the duration of an experience with its intensity or magnitude (the integration of experience over time) may determine certain effects and processes in the personality. Experience has as its object the learning of certain lessons pertaining to the progress or evolution of consciousness. Significant pain over a short period of time is more likely to make a direct impression on the waking-consciousness than slight but malingering pain over a long period of time. Pain is essentially an attention-getting device for the purpose of learning. Thus happiness and unhappiness in time are effects of consciousness and related to learning experience. All of experience aims toward something present (at the focus of consciousness), yet much is still experienced and assimilated unconsciously (and out of time).

Moral excellence is seen to be far more important than (transient)(personality-centered) happiness. The true, inner happiness comes when the student has the demonstrated ability to experience and to assimilate experience without emotional or phenomenal involvement (absorption), when the student has risen above the purely mundane existence. Time and circumstances simply cannot deter the student who has achieved inner happiness (as the consequence of quality in consciousness). Time is seen as the illusion of eternity, but eternity is really timelessness. Life is measured by eternity, not by time. Everlasting time is not related to eternity, for eternity exists without time. Those who live unabsorbed by the active (mundane) life attain happiness in greater depth (reality), for the good (true happiness) results from the inner disposition (wisdom) and the contemplative life.

One of the more meaningful keywords in the everyday life of the spiritual student is moderation. Moderation is the prevention of extremes in behavior or expression (on physical, emotional, and mental levels), the observation of (adherence to) reasonable self-imposed limits, the maintenance of a calm and temperate disposition. Moderation implies a measure of conscious self-control and a degree of unconscious (programmed) self-control.

The problems of excess (extreme behavior or indulgence) are manifold for the spiritual student (who naturally and intentionally strives for clarity of consciousness and purity of disposition). Extreme behavior (indulgence) is a considerable distraction of the personality from the serenity required for rapport with the soul. The lack of moderation suggests a high degree of absorption in mundane affairs and in personality matters. Extreme behavior and exaggeration in any form breed absorption (glamour and illusion). On the other hand, moderation strengthens the spiritual disposition and helps the individual to be more aware of truth and reality. The extremes breed distortion; the point of balance (moderation) between the extremes cultivates accuracy and truth.

Both the unrestrained head and the unrestrained heart (emotions) are formidable problems. The head (concrete mind)(intellect) is naturally critical and separative, exclusive and individualistic, rational and irrational. Opinions rigidly adhered to, and the closed mind in general, are indications of the head unrestrained. Where the head is restrained (moderated)(cultivated), it becomes more reasonable and more responsive to the intuition and realization of the soul. Moderation in thinking should be cultivated in order to achieve the dynamic, creative, and contemplative mentality needed of the spiritual student. The unrestrained emotions distort and distract the focus of the waking-consciousness from the clarity of emotion required of the spiritual student. Extreme emotions are highly disruptive and absorbing, in either extreme.

Actually, moderation is very much a relative concept. Many aspects of behavior that are considered ordinary and reasonable by mundane (worldly) standards would be considered extreme by spiritual and esoteric standards. Conversely, many practices and disciplines considered to be moderate by spiritual standards may be considered extreme by worldly standards. Moderation is quite dependent on the individual circumstances and the progress of the student upon the path. Much depends on the point of view and the degree of cultivation achieved in the personality. The instabilities of worldly focus and experience cannot be tolerated in the highly organized (vitalized)(natural) and spiritually responsive instruments of the esoteric student. The standards that are natural and comforting to the spiritual student should be viewed in context and in relation to the spiritual path and the demands of higher consciousness.

The moderation of worldly distractions (physical, emotional, and mental excesses) is actually part of the process of the purification and preparation of the personality of the spiritual student. The student who commits himself to the spiritual path endeavors to transform the personality, to an instrument highly responsive to the purposes of evolution, to the soul, to life and consciousness (awareness)(rather than to material or phenomenal existence). As the student progresses, what is considered moderate also progresses. The degree of self-control (and inherent freedom) is enhanced, and the moderation of temperament and behavior is more easily inspired. The secret of moderation rests within the concept of reasonable and self-imposed limits (which result in greater freedom and truth (reality)).

The call of the spiritual path is the sending forth of the characteristic note of evolution with respect to a particular lifewave of souls. Few souls realize, accept, and heed the call to hastened evolution and the demands of such a path. Most continue along the gradual spiral of evolution, unresponsive to the call. But for those souls which heed the call, the characteristic note of evolution is incorporated within the soul and the characteristic note of the soul is changed accordingly. The call of the path to the soul is merely an invitation, but the call of the soul to its reflection (the personality) is a summons of authority and potency.

As the soul is reoriented to the subjective realization of the spiritual path, its relationship to the personality changes markedly. Normally the soul is content to relate to its personality only in an indirect fashion, slowly assimilating the experience of life in the lower worlds and having little to do with the instrument (the personality) itself. The soul simply qualifies the lower life indirectly until such time as the personality has virtually completed the lower experience. But the soul which responds to the call of the spiritual path begins to send forth certain energies into the life and consciousness of the personality, not really in a direct fashion, but in relatively subtle ways.

First the soul must issue a challenge to the lower life. This is effected through the sounding of the basic note of the soul. The challenge is primarily one of cooperation with the soul, of the subordination of the personality. If the mind is strong or if the personality is not reasonably integrated and coherent, then considerable conflict follows the challenge until the personality is finally integrated and the mind subordinated to the quality (will) of the soul. Much of the conflict occurs without conscious realization. The soul sends forth the call (challenge) and the battle is on (usually) long before the waking-consciousness becomes aware of the conflict (process). When the conflict is resolved and the mind has assumed its proper place (as the link between soul and personality), then the personality is responsive to the call of the spiritual path and conscious cooperation becomes possible.

The continuing call of the soul to the personality may take any number of forms, depending on the ray relationships (of soul, personality, mind, emotions, etc.) and the degree of development. The call generally consists of a strong inner (mostly unconscious) prompting to the particular course of action (preparation and purification of the personality) in anticipation of discipleship and a life of active spiritual service. But the response of the mind (and personality) may be quite slow at first, due to the natural resistance (inertia) of the lower life. A major breakthrough occurs as the waking-consciousness decides to cooperate with the soul and as the lower self makes its commitment to the soul (and to conscious evolution).

The soul continues to be characterized by internal recollectedness and impersonal meditation, yet the energy and quality of the soul naturally flows into the responsive personality (as the lower self is gradually prepared) according to the natural rhythm of the soul and its relationship to the path. The call of the path is transmitted through the soul to the personality and the lower self gradually withdraws from involvement (absorption) in mundane life and begins to focus on truth and reality. The energies of the path are transmitted through the personality into the lower worlds, as the summons is answered and resolved, and as the Voice of the Silence begins to dominate the life and affairs of the manifested personality.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 190 - REFLECTION

The reflection of the first three rays (of the Seven Rays) into the lower triad of objective experience is an important process which contributes to the development of all the rays and all of the lives within their field of manifestation. Each of the three major rays produces a reflection of itself by enfolding or casting its light (character) through the Fourth Ray of balance (or the absence of the Fourth Ray)(which constitutes a surface of reflection between the upper triad and the lower triad).

The three major rays are transmitted (descend) into the objective worlds along with their reflections. The basic energy of each of the three major rays is incorporated in its reflection or image, but the emphasis (perspective)(character) can be quite different. Though the inherent energy of the original (major) ray is present in its reflection, the derived (reflected) ray appropriates an energy of its own that is based on its greater involvement in the lower (objective) worlds. Thus the higher rays are more subjective; life predominates and form is subordinated. The reverse is true for the lower rays. The reflected rays are more objective; matter and form predominate while life is subordinated to the form. The derived rays are simply more involved with matter and form and therefore provide a contrast with the original rays.

Each derived (reflected) ray is the product of induction (a consequence of creative meditation). The derived rays are made manifest or apparent in order to provide a domain and realm of meaningful experience and expression, without obligating or distracting the original rays. Each of the derived rays adds a dimension of experience to its original, a dimension that can (later) be assimilated by its primary. The contrast of a major ray and its reflection provides the bulk of experience for both rays. A process of abstraction and assimilation continues throughout manifestation, but toward the end of the period of manifestation, each primary ray must fully abstract the quality of its reflection. That process is essentially synthetic, as each ray (through contrast) produces new energies.

The inherent qualities of each primary ray are easily seen within the domain and character of the reflection. The differences between the two rays are a matter of appearance and manifestation. The similarities (likeness) are recognized as inherent or subjective qualities. The First Ray of life (power)(purpose)(energy) is reflected as the Seventh Ray of order (organization)(matter)(form). The contrast between energy and matter is quite dramatic, yet energy (power) is inherent within all matter. The contrast between the First Ray and the Seventh Ray is greater than that between the Second Ray and the Sixth Ray (which is in turn greater than the contrast between the Third Ray and the Fifth Ray) because the magnitude of contrast depends on the distance (separation)(spread) of the ray and its reflection from the surface of reflection (the central Fourth Ray).

The Second Ray of love and wisdom is reflected into the Sixth Ray of devotion, aspiration, and idealism. The heart is the central theme or energy of these two rays, the Second Ray being more subjective and less distracted (distorted) by personal energies. Similarly, the Third Ray of abstract mind is reflected into the Fifth Ray of concrete mind. With respect to the principle of mind (and the domain of the two rays of mind), the Third Ray provides the abstract, philosophical, subjective, and contemplative dimension, while the Fifth Ray provides the concrete, scientific, objective, and analytical dimension. In each case (of the three pairs of rays), the Fourth Ray of balance provides the linkage (and surface of reflection) for communion of the primary ray and its reflection, through the synthetic triangles (1:4:7), (2:4:6), and (3:4:5).

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 191 - THE PRESENT

From the standpoint of the waking-consciousness, the present exists only as a momentary (eternal) field of localized and immediate awareness in the objective sense. The present is therefore a focal point in time and space for the benefit of the waking-consciousness that is absorbed by mundane (objective) experience. The present tense is a phenomenon associated primarily with experience in the physical world (but also to a lesser extent with the emotional plane). The present tense is the focus of objective time (rather than subjective time and the greater reality that it represents), and for all practical purposes, it is the present tense which provides the bulk of experience and expression for the waking-consciousness in incarnation.

The present is the (apparent) frontier of experience. The present is a consequence of previous experience since the past is a considerable influence on the present. All of the causes of the past (near or distant) are projected forward in time according to the needs (karma) of the individual and the concomitant needs of the greater life. The causes exist out-of-time, but precipitate in time and space as needed, as meaningful effects (consequences) and lessons to be learned. The magic of the present tense is its dynamic place in the timestream; the present tense interacts simultaneously with the past (since it derives primarily from past action) and the future (since the present is a creative force for future consequences). One of the secrets of time (and space) can be realized in the expansion of the present tense (focus).

At the focus (convergence)(resolution)(concentration)(distortion) of time, the present is the immeasurable and elusive (exclusive) intersection of the past with the future. It is the attention of the personality (waking-consciousness) (mind) that gives meaning to the present tense. The reality of lower (objective) experience is better represented by an eternal focal point of attention through which passes the ebb and flow of an objective timestream. Through that focal point the timestream is perceived (distorted) and forced to pass. But the present is such that all focal points (one for each individual in objective incarnation) exist simultaneously, each distorting (changing through interaction) the timestream in at least a localized way. With the natural equivalence of time and space, the present exists only in terms of the immediate field of perception in time and space. That perception (participation) includes observation and creative interaction with both the past and present, the immediate environment (physically, emotionally, and mentally), and the stream of consciousness.

The paradox (misunderstanding) of the present tense arises from absorption in objective (material) existence. The present seems to be the only reality of time, whereas in truth the present has no intrinsic reality apart from eternity (timelessness). The eternal now (the realization of being) is so unconcerned with past, present, or future, because all are seen as a single totality, out of time. It is the natural timelessness (impersonality) of the soul that provides for the expansion of consciousness and corresponding self-realization (the acceptance of reality). The spiritual adept is a master of time and circumstances, for the mind of the adept lives in the eternal (timeless) reality of the soul, and from that vantage point interacts creatively (and dispassionately) with the objective world. The truth of the present can only be realized to the extent that the consciousness lives in truth (timelessness). The spiritual student should dwell primarily on the subjective whole which exists beyond the limitations of time; beyond the past, the present, and the future; where truth lives unburdened by any concept of time and space.

The sixth tractate (commentary) of the First Ennead is entitled Beauty. Therein Plotinus considers the nature of beauty and the relationship of beauty to the soul (and to God). Beauty is considered in several dimensions (orders). The lower order comprises the beauty perceived through the senses (through sight and hearing). Another (higher) order comprises the beauty found in the conduct of life, in actions, character, and virtue. An even higher order comprises the beauty inherent within communion with the soul (and God) and the vision of truth. The lower order pertains to concrete experience while the higher orders are increasingly more abstract. In each case, beauty depends on perception and realization, and the order of beauty realized depends on the extent to which the higher levels of consciousness are involved.

Beauty is defined as the quality or aggregate of qualities in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses (in the lower aspect) or exalts the mind and spirit (in the higher aspect). Beauty depends on symmetry and (compound) unity, on the proper synthesis of components. Beauty is a matter of perceived accord and harmony, being a measure of how close the object or experience approaches the ideal form or archetype. In the higher sense, beauty is a matter of truth (goodness) and reality, perceived beyond the senses, through the participation of the soul itself. There is a superficial beauty and an inner (intrinsic) beauty. The authentic (inner) beauty stirs the soul by association (correlation) with God, through the inherent and divine grace. The greatest joy is regarded to be the perception (participation) of the soul, to see with the sight (inner vision) of the soul, and with its affinity for truth (reality)(beauty)(goodness).

The separated (independent)(unenlightened) personality is considered ugly (dull) by virtue of its association with matter (the opposite pole of spirit). The soul is seen to be beautiful by its concordance with divine life (light). Thus the ideal is seen to be beautiful in its pattern and unity (brightness), and its reflection into matter to be relatively ugly by comparison. Cleanliness and purity of matter (the vehicles of the personality) are then seen to be necessary for communion. The distraction (and distortion) of the personality in the lower worlds must be overcome so that the higher order of beauty might be realized. The soul (personality) immersed in the world of matter is seen simply as the distant (imperfect) reflection of the soul resplendent on its own level. That which is truly beautiful draws the beholder (the mind and personality) upward in consciousness until communion (the higher realization of divine beauty) is achieved.

Beauty, then, is regarded as a potent force that draws the mind and the soul of the spiritual student onward and upward (inward) to the source of light and love (and life). Pleasure (happiness) drawn from the lower order no longer satisfies and is released. The real joy (beauty) of inner experience replaces the lower order, and increasingly the vision of the spiritual path (truth) is realized, as the focus of consciousness achieves conscious communion with the divine center within (the soul)(God). That process is one of becoming closer and closer to God in terms of quality (consciousness); thus the spiritual student is enjoined to become Godlike in all things, that the beauty of creation and the achievement of divine humility might be consciously entered. The nature of God (the good) can only be realized by participation. An even higher order of beauty (beyond communion) is suggested as the soul (monad) begins to participate in the principles of cosmic existence.

Prudence is defined as the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason (and intuition). It suggests discretion in the management of experience, providence in the use of resources, and caution as to danger or risk. Ordinary prudence is a function of the personality, where through reasoning the individual may determine the relative appropriateness of action in the lower worlds. As the student progresses and as the intuition begins to shine through the responsive mind and waking-consciousness, prudence is realized (manifested) as a natural function of the soul.

Ordinary prudence is limited to (by) the personality and the degree of integration and stability achieved by the personality. Through observation and experience, common-sense, and the practical understanding of cause and effect, the student is able to consciously reason through any given situation to determine the (apparent) appropriate course of action or disposition. Contenance (self-restraint) based upon reason (rather than emotion or glamour) is the first real step along the path. Such prudence is a matter of personal (individual) discretion, based upon limited knowledge and understanding (and further limited by experience and mental capacity). Nevertheless, ordinary prudence (centered in the personality) is sufficient to carry the spiritual student through all of the preliminary stages of the spiritual path. As the student recognizes consciously the needed work, it can be more easily accomplished. The various aspects of preparation can then be accomplished with practical wisdom.

But as the student progresses, a greater sense of appropriateness (and timeliness) is realized. Instead of being limited by the efforts of the intelligent personality, the student begins to realize the vast resources of the soul. The energies and clarification of the soul then guide the student (by degrees) both consciously and unconsciously. The intuition of the soul, coupled with the practical experience of the personality, provides even greater insight into life and the situations and circumstances faced. Unlimited by the personality, the enlightened student can correlate the world of causes with the world of effects. Self-realization and the deeper (inclusive) understanding of experience then provide the individual with a continuous and accurate sense of appropriateness.

This sense of appropriateness is simply a sense of realization (intuitive discernment) of the most suitable course of action (especially with respect to conduct and disposition). The sense of appropriateness is a subjective, intuitive, inner feeling sometimes (as appropriate) accompanied by a detailed and comprehensive understanding, but always accompanied by a knowing (recognition) of appropriateness. One simply knows (automatically and intuitively) what to do, when to do it, and how to do it properly. With increasing mindfulness (concern for the purpose of life), the sense of appropriateness (prudence) of the spiritual student becomes quite dependable and highly inclusive.

But this natural prudence must be earned, through the proper cultivation of the personality, through humility and spiritual maturity, through the practical experience of the objective life, and through the conscious correlation of experience with the esoteric (theosophical)(metaphysical) teachings. A strong (dominant) mind untempered by the soul is a formidable barrier to the natural sense of appropriateness that offers the deep but subtle encouragement of the spiritual path. Emotional weakness as well as vulnerability to glamour and illusion also serve to block the manifestation of the natural wisdom of the soul. Through prudence in its natural (intuitive) form is subtle and valuable, like all other spiritual qualities and experience, the price must be paid.

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 194 - HABIT

The human personality is an instrument that can be fairly easily programmed on its various levels. As the physical body is developed early in each incarnation, various habits are established through conscious and unconscious learning. Similarly, as the emotional and mental bodies are developed, various habits or patterns are easily established as a result of experience (learning) and repetition of action (feeling)(thinking). Each habit is a consistent or recurring disposition or tendency to act (react)(respond) in a certain way, usually acquired by frequent or timely repetition (association) and conscious or unconscious programming (intention). Thus, many patterns of behavior, feeling, and thinking are established in the personality instrument throughout the incarnation (and especially during the early years). The establishment of various habits in the personality may be the result of hereditary and environmental conditioning (learning) (karma) as well as conscious (deliberate and intentional) programming.

Habits tend to be rather strong due to the nature of material existence. Physical, emotional, and mental habits are actual patterns programmed in physical, emotional, and mental matter. Through repetition or intensity each habit is imprinted (established) in form, and that form is naturally resistant to change due to the inherent inertia of matter. Habits can vary in intensity due to the degree or strength (consistency) of programming. Once an action (feeling)(thought) has been performed (experienced) it is (usually) easier to perform it again because of the pattern or path that has been created by the action. As the action is repeated, the momentum of the pattern is increased to the extent that the practice or action becomes more or less involuntary, being almost entirely dependent on the triggering mechanism. A reproduction of (similar) circumstances may be all that is necessary to trigger the programmed response.

Given that the personality is a programmable instrument, and given that a great deal of programming takes place unconsciously, the spiritual student should be aware of the problems of unwanted (and unrealized) habits and the opportunity for conscious reprogramming. The student should endeavor to recognize the habits already established and selectively reprogram (cultivate) the personality according to the needs and intentions of the spiritual path. For the experienced and mentally-polarized student (having a fully integrated personality), such programming (and reprogramming) is a simple matter of minor mental adjustment (by consciously establishing a pattern of cause and effect within the personality). Vulnerabilities can be eliminated; awareness of certain experience can be programmed; and constructive habits (patterns)(meditation, study, right thinking and feeling, the virtues, etc.) can be established.

Even beliefs and subconscious habits can be reprogrammed for increased effectiveness and realization (consciousness). Throughout the incarnation the student is surrounded by mental and emotional patterns of glamour and illusion. Mostly through subconscious habit, these unfortunate patterns are incorporated (assimilated) into the personality instrument. Habits (acceptance) of glamour and illusion simply sustain their existence (in form). The spiritual student must endeavor to bring the truth (reality) of higher existence into the lower self so that the habits of illusion (the distortion or exaggeration of truth) may be eliminated. The student should be quite careful to be accurate and truthful in all things, for patterns of thinking (feeling)(speaking) are involved which may be sustained unconsciously. With wisdom and discretion, the student can experience the incarnation more effectively, with a combination of positive programming and creative (dynamic)(intuitive) interaction.

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 195 - THE RAYS OF MIND

The rays of mind are the Third Ray of active intelligence and the Fifth Ray of concrete knowledge. These two rays dominate the qualification of the mental (manasic) plane of consciousness. In ascending order, the mental plane is the third plane of consciousness (following the physical and emotional planes), but in descending order the mental plane is the fifth plane of consciousness. Thus both the Third Ray and its objective reflection (the Fifth Ray) lay claim to the mental plane and to mental processes.

The mental plane proper is divided naturally into two regions. The higher mental sub-planes constitute a region of abstract mind, whereas the lower mental sub-planes constitute a region of concrete mind. The Third Ray predominates in the abstract region while the Fifth Ray especially qualifies the lower, concrete region. Since the two rays are closely related (esoterically and via reflection), the two regions of the mental plane are also closely related. The two rays provide the basis of human mental processes, as the lower mind (of the personality) is qualified primarily by the Fifth Ray, and as the higher mind (of the soul) is qualified primarily by the Third Ray.

The lower (personal) mind is the highest aspect of the personality. It is the instrument of rational, objective thinking. The focus of the concrete mind is relatively narrow, being concerned with the particulars and details of objective experience. The lower mind is analytical by nature, and is the primary instrument of science. In contrast, the higher (impersonal) mind is the lowest aspect of the soul. It is the instrument of subjective (intuitive) thinking. The focus of the abstract mind is relatively broad (inclusive), being concerned with the generalities of objective and subjective experience. The higher mind is synthetic by nature (being concerned with the correlation and broad unification of experience) and is the primary instrument of philosophy. Both the Third Ray and the Fifth Ray are involved with truth, knowledge, and understanding; but the focus and emphasis of the two rays are complementary.

The study of effects (appearance) and the human (objective) worlds of experience falls within the Fifth Ray domain while the study of causes (reality) and the world of subjective experience falls within the Third Ray domain. Where the Third Ray is concerned with creative activity (ideation)(theory)(insight), the Fifth Ray is concerned with the means of accomplishment (practice) and the application of insight. The scientific methods of the Fifth Ray (concrete mind) involve concentration and analysis, the study of processes themselves. The philosophical methods of the Third Ray (abstract mind) involve contemplation, reflection, and interpretation (implication). The Fifth Ray produces the keen, analytical thinker, the experimenter and the tactician; the Third Ray produces the deeper, contemplative thinker, the theoretician and the strategist.

Of considerable significance is the contribution to human (and individual) progress of these two rays properly aligned and interactive. The concrete mind is essentially a personality function while the abstract mind is essentially a soul function. As the two are properly linked, each provides the means of completion for the other. The abstract mind (and the intuition) provide the inspiration and guidance of the soul, while the concrete mind provides the application of higher energies to the immediate, objective experience (and the purposes of incarnation). The spiritual student who has sufficiently developed and balanced both the abstract and concrete mental capacities has far greater insight and understanding, as well as greater potency for constructive experience and creative expression in the lower worlds.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 196 - THE FUTURE

The past is the time that has been experienced (individually or collectively), a specific and well-defined history subject only to memory, perception, and interpretation. The present is the time that is being experienced, the normal focus of the waking-consciousness in the objective world. But the future is the time that is to come, the frontier of anticipated experience. The future is inextricably related to the past and the present, for karma (creative impulse)(archetypal reality) is a thread that binds all causes and effects (consequences) together throughout (and beyond) the domain of time.

The past and the present are essentially singular, being extremely well-defined. The present exists as a point of convergence. On the one side, the past is a multidimensional field of certainties. On the other side, the future exists as a divergent field (mixture) of probabilities and inevitabilities, of certainties and uncertainties. As the student projects his vision further and further along the forward (future) timestream, the more divergent it becomes. Specific events in time and space become less and less well-defined (less certain), while significant generalities become (esoterically) more certain. The reason for this apparent paradox lies in the reality and supremacy of the divine evolutionary plan and the basic fallacy of time and space.

The evolutionary plan exists outside of time and space and determines the entire structure (intention)(framework)(foundation) of manifestation, in general terms. The evolutionary plan takes into consideration karma (on cosmic, solar, and planetary levels) and creative ideation (purpose). That plan precipitates certain forces (energies) in time and space which serve as guidelines, to keep the evolutionary lives within the boundaries of intended experience. Those forces take the form of lifewaves, laws, and other principles of manifestation. The boundaries of intended experience provide sufficient room for experimentation and creativity within the scope of the general evolutionary plan.

But it is the individual lives within each planetary scheme and within each lifewave that provide the details (karma) of experience. The future thus becomes an interaction between the evolutionary plan and the karma (freedom)(destiny) of all of the lesser lives. Events (details)(actions) in the past and present are projected along the forward timestream to precipitate effects (consequences)(lessons). Individual forces (causes) are inextricably related to all other (localized) forces in time and space, as well as to the plan itself. Even the individual soul projects its plans into the future to guide and develop the experience of the incarnated life. Thus the future remains a dynamic mixture of certainties and uncertainties, of particular and inevitable events within the freedom and flexibility of the creative individual (and group).

The future is essentially a tentative and creative realm of consequences. Past and present (and future) experience creates dynamic probabilities (experience) to be faced (usually) at variable times and circumstances in the future. The perception of future events is filled with uncertainties. The details of future experience are continually being revised by the dynamic present. The perception of the future is a cause in itself. And it is extremely difficult (if not impossible) for the untrained to discern between imagination (and psychic or astral impressions) and the future field. As always, the personal energy involves a distortion of perception. Fortunately, the spiritual student is hardly concerned about future events; the spiritual student is primarily concerned with the work at hand, and to a certain extent, with the principles of life and the generalities of the evolutionary plan.

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 197 - THE FIRST ENNEAD (7)

The seventh tractate (commentary) of the First Ennead is entitled the Primal Good and Secondary Forms of Good. Considered is the basic nature of the good as a perlude (afterthought) to a discussion of the nature and source of evil. The primal good is seen to be the unmoved (immutable)(implacable) essence of the central life, that to which all is bound, yet that which remains unbound (as the light of the sun is bound by the sun, but as the sun is not bound by its light). In the limited (human) sense, the primal good is the spiritual monad which remains (esoterically) detached from its incarnations (reflections)(soul and personality).

In a greater sense it is the Solar Logos of which the solar system is but a distant reflection (of the central sun). In an even greater sense, the primal good is some absolute good, a principle of cosmic existence. That primal good may be possessed (experienced) through approach (likeness)(nearness)(resonance) and through aspiration (realization). And that primal good is evoked as the natural expression of the life (spirit)(energy) of the soul, the manifestation of the goodness (God)(life) within the form, and the corresponding movement (response) of the soul (and its personality) toward the good.

Analogous to the light of the sun, everything in the world (realm) of matter, form, and personality is aligned (directly or otherwise) toward the good by virtue of the inherent relationship of the soul (as all forms are related in some way to a corresponding soul). Likewise the soul (consciousness) is directed (directly or otherwise) toward the good (the monad), since it (the soul) is merely a dynamic correspondence of the monad. By the unity of all life (which necessarily pervades all of form and consciousness) everything shares in the image (reflection) of good. But the soul is much nearer to God (the good)(in the sense of quality), and thus, the soul is the link (intermediary) between life (the good) and form, providing the higher energies as needed (and as permitted). As the soul is oriented toward the monad (and as the personality (the form) is oriented toward (aligned with) the soul), the measure of good is shared throughout the spectrum of life. The monad (good) is life in the higher (human) sense. Life on earth is life (expression)(experience) in the lower (objective) sense. Both the soul and the monad freely exist beyond life and death in the lower worlds. Only the personality relates to lower existence directly.

But all that lives (in the lower sense) is not aligned directly with the source. Wherever barriers (ignorance) exist between life and form, evil is said to exist, as the obstruction of truth (reality)(goodness). And that obstruction (resistance)(evil) is inherent within form itself, through the design of manifestation. Thus opposition provides stability and balance (in the abstract sense). In a stronger sense, evil cannot reach the soul that is free from attachments in the lower worlds. Life (experience) on physical, emotional, and mental levels is a calculated investment, a temporary and necessary time (risk) of (relative) distraction in support of evolutionary purposes. Life in the lower worlds is, then, of itself, an evil (in the abstract sense of identification or involvement with matter), but the soul persists on its own level, free to participate in the primal good, without concern for objective or subjective existence. Life in the lower worlds is good in the sense that it serves constructive spiritual purpose (the evolution of consciousness). Life in the higher worlds is seen to be good in the sense that it permits far greater freedom and realization (understanding) unbound by the limitations of objective existence, and in the sense that life in the higher worlds is closer to the source (reality).

One of the most potent of lessons to be learned in the lower worlds is that of personal (individual) responsibility. Every human being is responsible for the consequences of his own behavior, whether those consequences are perceived as such or not. Every waking moment is a consequence (effect) related to action (performance)(causes), personally evoked through the law of karma by virtue of thinking, feeling, and behavior. The first lesson of personal responsibility is accountability, and as the student realizes his own accountability he takes a major step forward along the evolutionary path. But the conscious acceptance of responsibility for one's own actions is not such an easy step to take.

The acceptance of personal responsibility is simply the conscious acknowledgement of the fact (of action and consequence), but it also leads the student a step closer to truth (and reality), for the student can no longer blame other persons or even circumstances for the experience that is faced. It is a difficult lesson to learn because it challenges the natural (selfish) human vanity, and because the inherent justice (balance of merit) of life is not easy to perceive. One must simply accept the reality of karma and the reality of personal accountability, and make the best of every situation and experience. As long as vanity persists, and as long as the individual is bound (limited) by desires, this lesson will be a painful one.

The spiritual student should always accept every situation as a consequence, not necessarily as a condition or circumstance that cannot be changed or improved. Actually, a significant part of personal responsibility involves the acceptance and improvement of circumstances. By improvement is meant the adaptation for constructive and meaningful purposes, as lessons are learned and work (dharma) is performed. The student must accept that which cannot or should not be changed and accept and improve that which can and should be changed. In each case, the student should accept each waking moment (and associated circumstances) as a merited consequence.

There is another dimension to personal responsibility that must likewise be accepted, but it is not as simple as personal accountability. That dimension is one of group accountability and group consequence. The karmic force of the individual is necessarily complicated by that of each group to which the individual belongs. Such groups include the family, the community, the race, the country, humanity, the rays, the planet, etc., as well as strictly esoteric relationships. Even the karma of form is taken into consideration, for the personality instrument (form) is made up of atoms of elementary lives on physical, emotional (astral), and mental levels. One cannot escape the consequences of any karma, whether it be individual or group karma. Furthermore, no one is an exception (in spite of the glamour of exception); each must face all of the circumstances of life in the lower worlds, realistically (through the conscious acceptance of personal responsibility) or otherwise (by denial or self-deception, and the co-extensive consequences of denial or self-deception (ignorance)(fear)).

In addition to consequence and accountability, the spiritual student shares the specific responsibilities associated with his place upon the path (as well as those associated with merely being human). The student is responsible for his share of the needed activity. The spiritual student is actually responsible for evolutionary progress, to the extent that realization (higher consciousness and understanding) is achieved. In simple terms, the student is directly responsible for his own health, for his own growth, for the quality of his relationships with other lives, and for his contribution to the group (service).

## A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 199 - ASHRAMS

Exoterically, an ashram is a group of people who are affiliated for religious or spiritual purposes. The place or center of such a group may also be referred to as an ashram. An ashram is usually a retreat of some sort, a place of withdrawal from mundane or worldly activities; for prayer, meditation, and study. An ashram (in this lower sense) is the community or fellowship of an exoteric group. The membership of such a group is based almost entirely on personality relationships. A constructive rapport between the personalities usually exists either along karmic lines or along ray lines (or some combination). The duration of an (exoteric) ashram is measured in human terms (years), but the useful and spiritual work of a sincerely constituted ashram is timeless. Many of the ideas associated with ashrams in the higher (esoteric) sense can be applied somewhat to exoteric groups as well. These ashrams are, to some extent, attempts to externalize spiritual principles and energies. Furthermore, some ashrams are linked in various ways to esoteric groups (groups based on soul relationships and functioning on soul levels).

Esoterically, there are ashrams associated with esoteric groups and there are ashrams associated with more abstract lives (and principles). An esoteric group is a group of souls (not personalities) bound together for spiritual (evolutionary) purposes. It is usually organized (subjectively) along ray lines (being qualified by one or another (or particular combination) of the seven rays). Such groups exist beyond temporal space and beyond the levels of personality existence. The existence of an esoteric group depends on the continuous telepathic rapport of highly developed and fully conscious souls. There may be karmic ties between the various souls, but such ties would be of a high order (beyond limitation). The duration of an esoteric group is more or less indefinite and on the order of the duration of the soul itself.

An ashram (in the esoteric sense) is simply the energy center of an esoteric group. Each esoteric group is essentially an energy field having a certain and distinct quality and character of energy. The ashram is the inner circle (center) of selected (particularly qualified) souls who embody the particular energy of the group and transmit that energy radially outward to the much larger periphery (the esoteric group proper) for distribution and ultimate externalization. Those members of the group who have achieved the requisite alignment and development of soul and personality (and whose souls are functional on group levels) may draw upon the energies of the ashram (group) for constructive purposes.

There may actually be a wide variety of grades within an esoteric group. Some groups are organized vertically and have members at practically every stage of (advanced) human evolution. Other groups (the majority) are organized more horizontally (within their ray) and have members at a few closely related grades. Thus, there is usually a progression of groups (and ashrams) within each ray structure. The members of each ashram are usually in contact with members of allied ashrams (both vertically and horizontally). Consequently, there exists a highly developed energy structure that relates all of the esoteric groups (and their ashrams) together in consciousness (and beyond consciousness).

Each successively larger group exists with its own ashram. The spiritual hierarchy of the planet can be considered an ashram of considerable significance. Humanity itself (and every lifewave) exists in the ashramic sense. Each of the seven ray groups within humanity forms an ashram (each having detailed ashramic structure). And each logos on its level (and each of the seven cosmic ray lives) functions as an ashram of very high order.

Three of the seven rays are considered to be mystical rays (rather than occult rays). These three heart-centered rays (the Second Ray, the Fourth Ray, and the Sixth Ray) constitute a special and potent group. That group is actually a mystical (and synthetic) triangle (2:4:6) of heart-centered energies. All three elements find their origin in the second aspect of the Trinity (the Second Ray on higher levels), although two of the three (the Fourth Ray and the Sixth Ray) find their expression through the third aspect of the Trinity.

Esoterically, the Fourth Ray and the Sixth Ray are expressions of the manifested Second Ray. Each contributes to the development of the Second Ray, and each draws considerable inner strength from that primary ray (and through the synthetic relationship of (2:4:6)). The Second Ray of love-wisdom provides the essential (heart-centered) quality of impersonal (mature) love, love energy in the inclusive and universal sense. The Second Ray also provides the aspect of consciousness. The Fourth Ray and the Sixth Ray provide more objective energies, energies that are basically more involved with manifestation. The Fourth Ray of harmony through conflict provides an essential balance between the Second Ray and its reflection (the Sixth Ray). The Sixth Ray externalizes the heart-centered energies through love in its more personal forms; through devotion, aspiration, and idealism.

While the occult (odd-numbered)(head-centered) rays provide the bulk of the work of manifestation, the heart-centered rays provide the balance and the moderation of the work of manifestation, and the assimilation (in consciousness) of experience. The Second Ray moderates the first and third aspects through the synthetic triangle (1:2:3). The Sixth Ray moderates the reflection of that primary (basic) triplicity, through (5:6:7). The Fourth Ray moderates all of the reflected rays, through (1:4:7), (2:4:6), and (3:4:5). Thus, the mystical rays complement the occult rays in virtually every aspect of manifestation.

The mystical rays are to the occult rays what the deva (angelic) lifewave is to the human lifewave. Throughout manifestation, the fabric or structure is essentially binary (polarized into two modes of expression). These two modes (positive and negative) alternate throughout septenary manifestation. The odd-numbered domains (planes of consciousness, lifewaves, kingdoms, cycles, etc.) are polarized in the positive (male)(active) sense, analogous to the occult or head-centered rays. The even-numbered domains are polarized in the negative (female) (passive) sense, analogous to the mystical or heart-centered rays. The human lifewave is head-centered; the deva (angelic) lifewave is heart-centered. There are many correlations between the various domains which involve the distinction of polarity.

In the world of human experience the mystical rays provide many heart-centered energies. Emotional experience (the astral plane, the emotional body, etc.) is qualified primarily by the Sixth Ray. Intuitive experience (the soul, the buddhic plane, etc.) is qualified by the Second Ray and the Fourth Ray. The Fourth Ray also provides the link between abstract mental experience and concrete mental experience. The mystical rays are involved in sensitivity, perception, awareness, and consciousness. They are also quite evident in the realm of culture, art, religion, teaching, and healing. Wherever there are heart-centered activities or experience, the mystical rays are present in various degrees to provide the essential heart-centered energies. Without the stabilizing and moderating force of the mystical rays, there would be no coherent field of human experience, nor any coherent field of universal manifestation.