



THE UPPER TRIAD

SET NUMBER 12

Commentaries on the Esoteric Philosophy

- No. 221 - Priorities
- No. 222 - The Second Ennead (3)
- No. 223 - Abstract Thinking
- No. 224 - Momentum in Meditation
- No. 225 - Seven Supreme Virtues
- No. 226 - The Sea of Resistance
- No. 227 - The Second Ennead (4)
- No. 228 - Speech and the Throat Center
- No. 229 - Concentration
- No. 230 - The Extroverted Personality
- No. 231 - Respect
- No. 232 - The Second Ennead (5)
- No. 233 - Organization
- No. 234 - Autobiographical Study
- No. 235 - The Introverted Personality
- No. 236 - Spiritual Practice
- No. 237 - The Second Ennead (6)
- No. 238 - Mental Organization
- No. 239 - Human Energy Balance
- No. 240 - The Objective Work

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. 221 - PRIORITIES

The spiritual student finds himself in a rather unique situation with respect to his personal values and the priorities of his life, when compared to the bulk of humanity. The values and priorities of most of humanity are determined by karma and the mundane conditions of life in the lower world. But the spiritual student recognizes higher values and comes to realize greater responsibilities than most of humanity. These responsibilities (and corresponding priorities) may be difficult to resolve, and quite likely misunderstood by most of humanity. But for the spiritual student to live an effective and useful life in the lower worlds of activity, it can be quite helpful to recognize and understand an order of priorities as a form of guidance.

The highest priority in the life and consciousness of the serious spiritual student can be associated with God and the spiritual path itself. God is the Logos on whatever levels are meaningful to the consciousness of the student. God is life in the highest sense, and as the highest aspect of conceived existence, it must necessarily receive the highest priority, subjective and elusive as it may be to most of humanity. To the esoteric student, this priority is quite real, if not the most real. And the spiritual path itself is the most practical aspect of God with respect to the spiritual student. When the soul makes its commitment to the spiritual path, it is a solemn and serious realization of this first and highest priority.

The next lower level or priority for the spiritual student is relatively broad, encompassing the soul, esoteric group relationships (on soul levels, not on personality levels), humanity, and the various lifewaves. Again these are mostly subjective priorities, yet nevertheless real and meaningful to the spiritually polarized student. The student must ultimately recognize and accept his responsibility to (as) the soul to be greater than anything of mundane significance. As the spiritual student becomes firmly committed to the path and to the soul, all other matters are subordinated and placed into proper perspective in relation to these higher priorities.

The next lower level (priority) for the spiritual student encompasses the realm of ordinary responsibilities: domestic, professional, and personal. Once the higher priorities are recognized and accepted, all of the domestic, professional, and personal priorities should fall nicely into place. Even though far higher priorities (responsibilities)(obligations) exist, they are usually no excuse for neglecting or ignoring the lower responsibilities. In fact, one of the nice things about the spiritual path and all of the implied obligations is that this entire hierarchy of priorities is self-consistent, and usually without conflict (provided a commitment has been made to the path). Apparent conflicts can be resolved, with common-sense (wisdom), hopefully without recourse to an independent or separative mind (personality).

National and racial concerns are not incorporated into this hierarchy of priorities for the spiritual student. Humanity has reached the point where these national and racial responsibilities are not merited for the spiritual student. There may still be problems for humanity regarding nation-states and the various racial expressions, but these are dealt with as problems of the lifewave, not as responsibilities of the particular spiritual student. But the priorities of the spiritual student can change temporarily with particular (precential) needs and circumstances, but for the most part, the esoteric student is concerned with the broader perspective, which leads ever back to the highest priority, to God and to the spiritual path.

The third tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled 'Are the Stars Causes?' In the third tractate, Plotinus considers the science (and myths) of astrology. Many of the popular misconceptions and misunderstandings concerning astrology are clarified. Many people find popular astrology to be appealing because it seems to allow them to avoid the responsibility for their own actions. But in truth, each person is fully responsible for his own actions and their consequences. Astrological forces work in complete harmony with karma to impel (not compel), and the recipient of those forces is quite fully responsible for his responses.

Plotinus affirms that the passages of the heavenly bodies (lives) indicate definite influences, but without being direct causes. Each of the heavenly lives has an associated position, motion, and (stable) character. But the energy (forces)(radiation)(communication) from those lives is modified by static and dynamic relationships and the medium through which it passes. The resultant blend of energies works upon the material (physical, emotional, and mental) nature of the personality, depending primarily on the quality of the individual's consciousness. The soul is the real (direct) cause of energy for the personality, but if the personality is not responsive to the soul, then it is necessarily responsive and vulnerable to the external forces (karma through astrological force). In the enlightened personality, the soul provides the needed guidance directly, and the individual becomes much less responsive to external forces.

It would be very wrong to associate human characteristics with the various heavenly bodies; from their point of view, their effects on humanity are quite incidental, and certainly those effects on the human personality are dependent entirely on the individual's human nature, the original energy itself being far removed from human consideration. Thus astrology is really a science which studies the effects on human (personality) levels of external (non-human) energies. Consequently, Plotinus does not challenge the ancient science (astrology) itself, but he does rightfully challenge the popular misconceptions and misinterpretations. It would simply be too easy (and wrong) to blame external forces for earned consequences.

Divination is explained by the unification and relatedness of all things within one whole, from the macrocosmic to the microscopic. The soul is actually an intermediary between the lower and higher domains, and functions (analogously to the heavenly lives) as an independent (interdependent)(individual) source of motion (energy)(influence). Along with the soul, karma provides another common thread which ties all of life and consciousness (experience) together. The law of justice (karma) actually relates every action in the universe, however significant. Through karma, virtues (blessings) are considered as gifts of the soul (based on experience) and vices (difficulties) result from absorption in outer (mundane) matters (which are also based on experience).

While the relatively unevolved (working on personality levels) are impelled (influenced) somewhat by external forces, the relatively evolved cooperate with those available energies for constructive purposes. The material forms of the personality are recognized as useful instruments for higher purpose, naturally impelled by (vulnerable to) external forces (a contributory environment). But as the soul's energy begins to play upon the lower forms, the energy (guidance) of the soul predominates. Human conditions are then (still) determined entirely by karma, as (through) a blend of external forces and the interaction of free-will with those forces; but the creative soul becomes supreme, and the external (astrological) forces are utilized intelligently, as needed.

Though the spiritual student is usually and rightfully concerned with practical philosophical and spiritual matters, there remains considerable value in the exercise of abstract thinking, provided that the concrete or lower mind has been sufficiently developed. Most of humanity are presently concerned with emotional control and concrete mental development, while the spiritual student is more concerned with personality integration and the alignment of personality with the soul. One of the values (merits) of abstract thinking is that it contributes substantially to the alignment of soul and personality and the consequential flow of soul energies into the lower self. But this all supposes that the concrete mind is properly developed and responsive to the soul. If the lower mind is not sufficiently developed, abstract thinking may even be counterproductive since it may discourage the concrete mental training. But if the concrete mind is already reasonably developed, then the exercise of abstract thinking will naturally complement and encourage a more responsive concrete mental development, especially where spiritual motives prevail.

The primary value of abstract thinking is in the training of the concrete mind to work in close and responsive cooperation with the abstract mind. This activity generates a number of helpful byproducts in addition to the mental training itself. The development of a number of useful qualities is quite naturally encouraged by abstract mental efforts; qualities such as broadmindedness, inclusiveness, tolerance, reasonableness, creativeness, and understanding. Abstract thinking leads to an expansion of the focus of the mind such that the resulting perspective is broad enough and inclusive enough to allow the recognition of relationships and concepts (truths) otherwise impossible. Thus, abstract thinking leads to a greater awareness and a deeper understanding of life and consciousness (experience).

Desires prevent the recognition of truth, but in abstract (impersonal) thinking the mind rises beyond desire (and beyond critical thought) into a realm of unimpeded and undistorted truth. The mind can then stand clear from the senses, and realization can prevail. The exercise of abstract thinking itself is a function of buddhi-manas, a linking of the spiritual intuition and the enlightened mind. So the exercise itself also fosters the manifestation of the intuition through a trained and responsive mind. In fact, the intuition cannot work properly unless the mind is suitably developed. Likewise, the understanding or realization achieved on abstract levels cannot be properly brought down to the levels of brain-consciousness unless the concrete mind is properly aligned and free from personal energies. For the concrete mind must be trained to interpret the higher energies properly, to translate those higher (formless) thoughts into the accurate concrete thoughts (thought-forms) needed by the responsive personality.

There are many (impersonal) human studies which can lead to the proper exercise of abstract thinking: studies such as mathematics, theoretical physics, abstract philosophy, art (in its various forms) and symbolism; and any meaningful form of imagination, visualization, conceptualization, or creative ideation. Some powerful objects of contemplation and abstract thinking include the nature of time, the reality of God, the nature of impersonal love, the purpose of life, the meaning of truth, the significance of consciousness, etc. Through abstract thinking the reality of principles and concepts can be experienced, through the knowledge (realization) of participation in the energies themselves. If the soul is characterized as the deepest ocean, it is the abstract mind that can penetrate the depths, while the concrete mind is forced to remain at the surface.

Considerable effort is usually required to bring about momentum in meditation, but once established, that momentum makes meditation virtually effortless and helps to deepen the quality of meditation and consequently the quality of its effects in the outer life. But before a proper momentum can be established, two prerequisites must be fulfilled; the proper integration of the personality and the personal stability that implies self-control and (especially) the proper control of any sensitivities or vulnerabilities. Otherwise, momentum in meditation would be difficult to achieve, and if achieved would be quite dangerous due to the increased potency of energies received. Before the spiritual student endeavors to build any appreciable momentum in meditation, he is urged to turn his attention (in meditation) to the integration of the personality and the achievement of mental and emotional stability.

Once the prerequisites are fulfilled, the student can properly address the patterns for meditation and the cultivation of the needed momentum. The intended momentum of meditation is a constructive habit of effective meditation. Probably the most important factor (aside from sincerity and purpose) in building momentum is predetermination. If the student is predetermined to meditate regularly and effectively, then that effort of will will actually create the needed patterns and momentum, and at the same time condition the personality for serious meditation. A proper predetermination may consist of a consciously created and sustained thought-form of the intention and determination to meditate regularly and effectively. But care must be taken to seriously fulfill these intentions; otherwise the created thought-form will lose its credibility and potency.

With proper predetermination, a regular pattern of meditation can be established. Two simple but potent factors are the times and place of the regular daily meditations. Since the outer, mundane world is so distracting, the spiritual student needs regular, daily periods of meditation to renew his alignment with the soul and to shake off the casual effects of that mundane world. A regular, daily pattern of serious meditation is more important than the particular times and place (and duration) of meditation. The student must endeavor to maintain consistency over a relatively long period of time if truly meaningful results are to be expected. Thus, once the times and place (and approximate duration) are determined, the student should endeavor to maintain that pattern.

The spiritual student should meditate seriously at least once per day, though two or three times per day is preferable. Favored times include early morning (shortly upon rising from sleep), sunrise, noon, late afternoon (5 o'clock), sunset, and in the evening (shortly before retirement). But consistency is more important than the particular times chosen. If possible, a particular place or room should be qualified (dedicated) exclusively for meditation, to further enhance and sustain the pattern and momentum. The duration of meditation is usually determined by availability, but 20 to 40 minutes per meditation period is a reasonable goal. Care should be taken not to force meditation beyond what is reasonable. Any extreme is to be avoided.

Once the patterns of meditation are determined, the momentum should build naturally as the patterns are fulfilled. The times and quality of each meditation period should be anticipated, to further the responsiveness of the personality to meditation. While consistency of the overall pattern of meditation is important, a variety of forms for meditation may be employed. And as all these matters pertaining to momentum in meditation are fulfilled, the student can expect the depth and quality of his spiritual experience to increase.

One significant aspect of the seven rays is their contribution to human development through the cultivation and refinement of the human personality. In this human sense, each ray provides a particular domain for human experience. Each ray is a field of energy qualified with a certain (particular) character. Each ray can be described in terms of qualities (virtues) and weaknesses; each ray brings with it certain tendencies and opportunities for evolution. As the various weaknesses of a ray are overcome and transformed into the qualities of the particular ray (which provides its potency), the resultant overall character can be described in terms of a supreme (representative) virtue. Each supreme virtue represents the entire contribution of the ray to human development, and implies the achievement of the entire character and maturity of the ray.

The supreme virtue associated with the First Ray is humility. The ray itself leads the spiritual student toward strength and self-reliance, but this tends to inflate the ego and its natural self-centeredness. But through this weakness (and paradox) comes finally the supreme contribution of the First Ray to human development: a spiritual humility born of strength and a deep respect for others. Similarly, the supreme virtue associated with the Second Ray is compassion. The Second Ray leads the student from the personal to the impersonal, from indifference to others to a compassion born of spiritual maturity, showing the way toward union with the greater life.

The supreme virtue associated with the Third Ray is goodwill. The Third Ray develops the intelligence and brings understanding, but with understanding comes a necessary and useful discrimination. And that discrimination can lead to separateness. Goodwill is the synthetic quality that overcomes separateness and allows the active energies of the Third Ray to flow properly and purposefully. The problem of the Fourth Ray is that of extravagance, glamour (deception), and instability. As this Fourth Ray works upon the human temperament, it offers the ultimate quality (supreme virtue) of moderation, leading to synthesis. In harmony and spiritual poise comes the moderation needed to free the student from the attachments and distractions of the lower life.

The supreme virtue associated with the Fifth Ray is honesty, leading to truth. Along Fifth Ray lines is found the pursuit of knowledge, but that pursuit tends to be narrowminded and without realization of higher (broader) purpose. The critical Fifth Ray nature is ultimately transformed as higher truths are recognized and as self-honesty prevails. And honesty in this higher sense is necessary to the realization of truth. So too, is impersonality necessary to the highest contribution of the Sixth Ray. The Sixth Ray teaches aspiration, devotion, reverence, and idealism; but with these qualities comes the tendency toward personality-centeredness (glamour) and decision-making based on appeal rather than merit. But the secret (supreme virtue) of the Sixth Ray (impersonality) lifts these qualities to more meaningful levels of experience; glamour is overcome, and blind devotion to personalities is replaced by higher realization.

The Seventh Ray experience leads to organization and effective structure (law and order), but through that experience it is easy to lose sight of the underlying purpose. The student tends to be absorbed by the means as an end in itself. So the highest (human) contribution of the Seventh Ray is its supreme virtue: a sense of purpose, which brings understanding to the laws and order of manifestation, leading to unity. Likewise, the seven representative virtues lead to the ultimate human synthesis: a relative perfection, as the student completes his mastery of all seven streams of qualified energy. May each be fulfilled.

To the spiritual student, seeking to find and develop the inner consciousness, the outer world of physical incarnation may appear to be a sea of resistance to the path of spiritual enfoldment (unfoldment). The outer world of conditions, circumstances, and forces may be considered as a sea in the sense that it is a dynamic, ever changing, flowing field of experience and activity. It is a necessary field of experience because it provides the opportunities for karmic fulfilment and the development of the fundamental personality characteristics. But it is also an absorbing field, for those who function on personality levels (as most everyone does) are consequently absorbed by this mundane field.

This is fine for those upon the gradual path of evolution, and even for those upon the approaches to the hastened path (the spiritual path proper), for the needed conditions are provided and the higher consciousness is not needed. But for those who are committed to conscious evolution, the sea of experience and activity is also a sea of resistance, for it provides a considerable force of inertia to impede the spiritual development and the activity of enlightened, spiritual consciousness through a cultivated and responsive personality. This, too, is by design, for this sea of resistance forces the spiritual student to overcome that inertia. Thus, in paradox, the very resistance to spiritual consciousness provides the conditions necessary for spiritual enlightenment.

But it is an almost monumental task for the spiritual student to conquer this sea of resistance (which is also to conquer the outer, lower self). First of all, the spiritual student begins the quest completely imbedded and absorbed in the sea of mundane existence. The student must therefore be responsive somehow to the need for liberation, and the student must then struggle at great length (years, possibly lifetimes) to achieve some degree of freedom. And in that extent of freedom is found the key (encouragement and guidance) to further progress and refinement (and spiritual enfoldment). And even with some great measure of understanding (and even some degree of freedom), the spiritual student must continue to resist the almost overwhelming nature of the mundane world (by eliminating all resistance to the higher consciousness).

Any form of involvement in the outer world contributes to the distraction of the spiritual student (and encourages his absorption in the mundane experience), yet some involvement is necessary and unavoidable. The spiritual student usually lives and works in the mundane world, carrying with him as much of his spiritual consciousness as possible. And even those who live in spiritual communities can be distracted by the mundane aspects of their community. So the student must strive to remain ever awake and responsive to the inner spiritual guidance (consciousness) regardless of the demands and distractions of outer involvement. The student must refuse to become completely involved or absorbed in the outer, personality life, regardless even of the demands of those who are naturally absorbed in the outer world themselves.

The spiritual student must strive not to flow with the mundane patterns and lines of force, but rather to flow with the inner, greater patterns and lines of force of spiritual purpose and enlightenment. The vast majority of humanity (and to a certain extent most spiritual students) are sheep with respect to this sea of resistance. The unconscious and inherent pressure of mundane (personality) experience is quite considerable. But as the God-within unfolds more and more, the alienness of the outer life is placed into proper perspective, and the liberated student can increasingly serve humanity with spiritual purpose, as the sea of resistance is fully overcome in the spiritual potency of the God-self.

The fourth tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled 'Matter,' wherein Plotinus reveals his reasoning leading ultimately to the confession that matter is nonexistent. In the popular sense, matter refers to anything within the domain of material existence, i.e. to forms, bodies, things, etc., while Plotinus defines matter in a much more particular fashion as the ultimate base of material existence (through which the various forms are created). As an ultimate base, matter is the recipient of ideas (with respect to forms or archetypes) resulting in material manifestation. For some, matter is the only reality, for its results (as form) are tangible and objective, while the world of concepts is too remote from sense impression to have any real (material) existence. For others, matter is the illusion, for its appearance is merely temporary, and without having any subjective reality, being only the most distant reflection of spirit.

But regardless of perspective, matter appears to exist as the irreducible, simplistic base from which all forms are derived (with the help of determination (creative thought)). Plotinus discriminates sharply between matter (the base) and (derived) forms. Matter (in the ultimate, basic sense) is eternal, immutable, indeterminate, continuous, indefinite, sizeless, invisible, boundless, and evil (in the sense of being empty of life or consciousness). Matter can be impressed upon and compounded into atoms, elements, and greater forms. Matter can be differentiated and it can exist on the various levels of consciousness. Furthermore, matter accepts shape and other attributes, without those qualities or attributes being associated with matter itself (the qualities can only be associated with the forms impressed or created in matter). Matter (darkness) is the object of determination (reason)(light). Idea is the outside power which brings all that even appears upon matter.

Forms or bodies on the other hand (matter in the more general sense) are reducible, compound, having attributes (such as magnitude, shape, color, etc.), and some relative existence. But primordial matter constitutes a void of non-being, existence without magnitude or direction, existence without quality, the recipient of spatial extension, an illusion common to all elements, and an existence without stability (in the sense that matter is always available, responsive, driven by positive force), ceaselessly changing its form. Primordial matter is related to space, but only esoterically does matter experience anything beyond the void (space is not a void, but a living entity). The primordial matter is an absence of life and can therefore only be construed in a negative (empty)(null) sense. While ordinary matter has been impressed by vibration (life) and has some primitive consciousness (light). Primordial matter may be conceived as an energy field which is displaced in some way to permit the existence of material forms, and in that displacement lies the key to the mystery of matter.

In its absence of life, matter (in the primal sense) causes the soul (consciousness) to recoil, and from this interaction (the communication of soul with matter) arises the sense of evil (ignorance) and destitution. While basic to all forms, matter introduces its unredeemed evil (emptiness)(lack of being), and of its own kind naturally opposes reason. Yet consciousness must deal with this indefinite, undelimited factor of evil (darkness) in all forms. Furthermore, this material factor underlies action, since it supplies the natural base. The inescapable conclusion then, is that matter in the primal sense does not exist, yet remains a factor to be reckoned with. In the privation of matter lies the key to reality and the eternal struggle of life (consciousness)(being)(existence) with non-being (the void).

Speech is one of the human activities associated with the throat chakram. The spiritual student is not so much interested in the basic principles of speech as in the appropriate development, control, and utilization of the throat center, and in the magnetic and superphysical effects of speech. Some of the essential variables or dimensions of speech and the throat chakram are intensity, quality, magnetism, effectiveness, focus, and creativity.

The intensity of the throat center is an indication of the magnitude of its development (not necessarily its quality) and its apparent potency. The outgoing, head-centered person usually has a reasonably well-developed throat chakram, with an intensity or forcefulness of projected energy (speech), and a corresponding impact upon the immediate environment. The quality of the throat center activity is determined by the purity or coherence of the basic intensity (magnitude)(vibration). A high quality of speech (in the metaphysical sense) requires both some intensity and coherence. This coherence is an indication of the ease or natural flowing of thought energies and their transformation through the throat chakram into projected speech patterns. Regardless of intensity, the person who speaks well extemporaneously is one who has developed a requisite coherence in the development of the throat center.

The magnetism of the throat center determines the extent to which an audience responds to the speaker. In the outer world, a speaker needs considerable intensity, coherence, and a particular magnetic rapport with the audience, so that the audience will pay attention and respond to his expression. But such activity (through a well-developed throat center) need have no relationship to higher consciousness. For the higher consciousness to come into play, a different type of magnetism is required, one that rejects the mundane lines of attention and draws forth the attention of the audience along more intelligent lines. This magnetic rapport is more discriminating and less hypnotic. The minds of the listeners should be stimulated rather than dominated, and therefore no considerable intensity is required; in fact, the intensity associated with the well-developed throat center is transformed along more magnetic (and spiritual) lines (without appeal to the personality).

The most important dimension is effectiveness, and effectiveness in speaking depends almost entirely on the quality of consciousness (and how well it can be related through the magnitude and coherence of the throat center). With higher quality of consciousness comes the most meaningful (and conservative) utilization of speech as a channel for spiritual energies (encouragement). The activity or role of the throat center is essentially the transformation of thought energies into speech energies and their projection. With proper consciousness (and understanding) those energies are projected quite effectively and constructively, without interference and with discretion (wisdom).

Effectiveness in speech is also related to the proper focus of the throat chakram. If the center is not properly focused, the corresponding energies will be weakened and scattered. The focus of the center is also related to the inherent creativity of the Third Ray (throat) center. For that focus is involved with creative energies that are projected as speech (creative invocation, evocation, communication) as well as those which do not involve speech. The throat center is an important center for the speaker, the teacher, the healer, and the artist (and the spiritual student), who function creatively. But the spiritual student ever needs to exercise discretion in its use, for it is a difficult center to control effectively (and without exaggerating the personality).

An important prerequisite to effective meditation is the ability to properly concentrate. Much of the cultivation implied by the spiritual path involves mental training and discipline, and much of the service required of the spiritual student involves exercising the mind that has been properly prepared. Thus the ability to properly concentrate is central to both development (cultivation)(refinement)(progress) and service (sharing)(expression).

Concentration usually refers to the focus of the waking-consciousness, specifically to the gathering or direction of consciousness (attention)(awareness) to a single and well-defined point of tension. That point of tension is simply the object of concentration. The object may be a symbol, a keyword, a tone or concept, a visualized or perceived object, or anything that the mind can be concentrated upon. The act of concentration should be useful and constructive, i.e. the act or object should have some meaning.

Concentration is characteristically an occult exercise, involving (primarily) the various odd-numbered rays. There are many outer (mundane) world activities (governed by the occult rays) which involve concentration and strict mental discipline. These outer world activities are quite useful in the sense that they prepare the mind of the student for the rigorous mental training implied by the intermediate reaches of the spiritual path. Those who have followed primarily mystical approaches are particularly encouraged to exercise the mind through concentration as a form of meditation. And those who have followed the more occult (head-centered) approaches need the meditative discipline as well, so that the process of concentration can be removed from its attachment to outer world objects and effectively applied to more useful spiritual purposes.

The real key to concentration (for the spiritual student) is the ability to concentrate the mind without recourse to an object. The intention of concentration as a (spiritual) meditative discipline, is the development of the ability to hold the mind steady (with considerable poise and detachment) and focused for a considerable period of time, for the student to actually become mentally absorbed in the object or act of concentration. The ultimate intention is concentration upon the focal point (of concentration) itself. With an object of concentration, the concrete mind usually predominates and the higher mind (of the soul) need not be present (active, albeit subjectively). But if the object of concentration is relatively abstract, or if no object save the point of focus is present, then the higher mind (and intuition) can be brought into play.

One of the benefits of concentration is the ability to properly and effectively focus the mind during meditation. Though meditation itself need not utilize concentration in any formal sense, the focused mind leads to a much more effective interaction with the energies of meditation. A properly focused mind leads to understanding and increased awareness (consciousness) and a more enlightened direction of metaphysical energies. The minds of the majority of humanity are not focused; they are more or less passive centers of scattered (relatively incoherent) mental endeavor. Without a properly focused mind, it is not possible to achieve liberation from the glammers and illusions of the lower life.

The spiritual student must be able to think independently (from the lower form of mass-consciousness)(by virtue of an intelligently focused mind) and at the same time remain responsive to higher impression (guidance). With the ability of the enlightened and responsive spiritual student to hold the mind steady in the light comes considerable freedom from mundane forces (distraction) and considerable momentum for further progress and meaningful service.

Most human personalities can be generally categorized as being either introverted or extroverted, according to the extent of apparent interest in and interaction with the objective, outer world of ordinary human experience. The extroverted personality is usually quite easily absorbed by (in) the outer world and is therefore rather interactive with mundane conditions (with a tendency toward being reactionary). The extroverted personality tends toward communicativeness, talkativeness, sociability, outspokenness, unreserve, and unrestraint. The extroverted personality lends itself to personal expression, to activity, involvement, accomplishment, and the exaggeration of the personal self (ego).

The primary advantages of the extroverted personality (so far as the spiritual student is concerned) are accomplishment, acceptability, active experience, and expression (the development of needed abilities and the expression of appropriate energies). But the disadvantages of extroversion, though quite insubstantial to those who are not upon the path, are considerable for those who are upon the spiritual path, for the extroverted personality is so easily absorbed (deceived) (distracted)(corrupted) by mundane experience. Certainly the extroverted experience accomplishes a great deal in the basic development of the human personality, but usually at the expense of sacrificing the inner life and quality.

The extroverted personality may be viewed as a stage through which each person must pass, to develop the needed abilities (and to learn how to express those abilities) and strengths, as a prerequisite for further development and refinement along more introspective lines. Extroversion is defined as the habit (process)(pattern) of directing the attention (the waking-consciousness) toward and obtaining gratification from the external world (of things and objective experience)(from what is outside the self). Extroversion, as a necessary stage of experience, is implied in the obligatory pilgrimage into matter. Through that pilgrimage, self-consciousness is achieved and development along personality lines is completed. But continued extroversion (without moderation) is merely the exaggeration of self-consciousness (the exaggeration of the personality) and the denial of the inner life (reality) in the illusion of objective experience.

But this is not to say that there is no place for extroverted experience or expression in the life of the relatively mature spiritual student. There may be times and circumstances which appropriately call forth the spiritual student into particular and deliberate involvement in the external world, but always (hopefully) with inner guidance and outer restraint, as the external involvement is properly tempered by the inner rapport and wisdom. The spiritual student is (relatively) welcome to play whatever useful role is called for in the external world, provided that such a role can be played honestly, without compromising the spiritual integrity, and without leading the student to any substantial absorption in mundane or personality matters.

The spiritual student who finds himself blessed with a well-developed extroverted personality would do well to channel his energies more through creative meditation than external involvement and to abstain from idle speech (even from sociable but petty conversation) in order to place his abilities in perspective. Absorption by personality-centered conversation leads frequently to the demise of the extroverted personality (the rendering of the personality virtually useless with respect to spiritual awareness and higher consciousness). Such is the danger of involvement in matters of personal (personality) interest, a danger that encourages the student toward self-mastery and freedom from the concentration upon the worldly values and objective experience.

The spiritual student (and especially the disciple) is expected to demonstrate (at least subjectively, if not outwardly) respect and consideration toward all other lives. Any form of disrespect or discourtesy is an indication of failure to achieve or exercise that natural disposition of poise and equilibrium intended for all whose lives belong on the path of unification. And yet the cultivation of respect (consideration) is usually quite difficult because it involves a measure of humility and a dampening (refinement) of the ego. It is especially difficult for those upon the First Ray, the Fifth Ray, and the Sixth Ray, and for the strong head-centered individual in general.

The concept of respect (in its metaphysical or spiritual context) is quite broad, but basically it refers to the recognition of the worth of a person (or life), regardless of appearance. This is justly due on the basis of the soul itself which is common to all lives and indicates the inherent nobility and divinity present within all, however manifest (or lacking in appearance or expression). This concept indicates the need for respect for others' values, methods, consciousness, experience, preferences, and perspectives. In short, it means the acceptance of others and the recognition of their divine right to self-determination. It means the elimination of criticism and the elimination of imposition (not to mention self-centeredness).

The spiritual student who has developed the mental abilities and who has gained some (possibly considerable) insight into the nature of life, may also develop the tendency to view his own perspective as superior to that of others, but that kind of determination is invalid at best, since his perspective is only meaningful to his own consciousness. It cannot be completely valid for any other, and to suppose that it is is a matter of disrespect (narrowmindedness)(self-centeredness). If even the enlightened student feels he knows what is best for another, then he has overextended himself and has constituted a violation of rights. For others necessarily have different needs, different values, different standards, different experience, even different paths.

So it is well for the student to mind his own business, to help where help is called for (in the form of discreet encouragement), but to refrain from imposition or interference, even mentally. It is not the role of the student (enlightened or otherwise) to judge others or their actions and experience. The spiritual student needs to express sincere compassion and understanding and respect for the life, disposition, and experience of all others. This respect does not necessarily mean admiration or even liking (the student might do well not to like or dislike), but it does mean the expression of love in a very mature, impersonal form. In fact, respect might even be considered (in some ways) the head-centered analogue to love, or at least a manifestation thereof.

This concept of respect has other implications, including self-respect and respect in a group context. Self-respect is a necessary and proper respect for oneself as a human being (as a soul) and a modest regard for one's own position. Respect in a group context is broader, more complicated, but nevertheless a vital parallel to the respect of one life for another. Groups frequently acquire characteristics analogous to those of people, and therefore due respect should be afforded by the spiritual student in the regard of any group of people. Groups likewise need to exercise consideration for individuals, whether or not present in the group. And groups need to exercise a healthy regard (reticence) for other groups, regardless of temperament, methods, or values; for each contributes to the whole in its own (meaningful) way.

The fifth tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled 'Potentiality and Actuality.' Actuality means the quality or state of being real, active, or existing in fact and not merely potentially. Potentiality indicates the ability to develop or come into existence (actuality). But Plotinus considered these terms as abstract entities as well as practical ones. A sharp distinction is made between actually existing things and potentially existing things (or more correctly, things existing potentially). Actuality indicates a really existent entity (depending on reality), while potentiality exists as a mere pattern (impulse)(intention)(archetype) for some subsequent (future) existence.

Actuality is prevalent on higher levels of consciousness and to a certain extent on ordinary levels (depending on perspective). But potentiality does not refer to the higher order of things in Plotinus' view, for the higher order exists in actuality (in being), while the process of becoming is restricted to the lower order. And this is quite true for the lower order with respect to the higher. From the lower perspective, the higher realm is entirely subjective, and existence in that higher realm even resists actualization (since time-dependent processes are precluded)(on that level). The higher order therefore depends upon the lower for the development of potentiality into actuality (the development of matter into form), and that higher order (the realm of the soul) actually (subjectively) impels the lower order toward its fulfilment.

Potentiality is specifically related to the proposed or intended actuality. It refers to the present existence (the base or prior form) and to the intentional conclusion of its becoming. Becoming refers to the relative acceptance of change (growth)(fulfilment), while potentiality indicates a capacity for change. According to Plotinus, whatever has a potentiality must first have a definite character of its own. Its potentiality will then consist in its having a reach beyond that character to some other. This is the entire basis of evolution (epigenesis). The cosmic powers are merely evolutionary (productive) forces involved in the (never-ending) process of achievement of potentiality. Potentiality however, is not the power itself. Potentiality indicates actuality, while the power of potentiality (a reality) leads to actualization.

Potentiality and actuality are analagous to matter and form, respectively. An actualized entity is a combination of matter (potentiality) and the impression of idea upon matter, but a clear distinction must still remain between actualization (the process) and actuality (the abstract). Matter serves as a potentiality (non-being in itself, but a necessary ingredient in the actualization process). Thus matter is not of the order of the form it is to become. In this strict sense matter is not the form, but the potentiality of everything, and therefore the actuality of non-existence. Anything that has a potentiality is actually something else. But these matters are occluded by time-dependence.

With time-dependence, the potentially educated person is not the same person fully (actually) educated. In any discrete (objective) view, they would appear to be the same life at different levels of experience, the latter having actuality while the former exists no longer (except conceptually). But it is a greater reality, that life is an integration of all existence (past, present, and future). In time-dependence, things are seldom as true as appearance would indicate. Without recourse to time, the mind exists as a potentiality through which a person becomes knowledgeable. But potential is led into realization by an external (internal, but superior) force. The soul (not being a potentiality) is that force or power toward actualization.

One of the great marvels of nature is found in the sweeping patterns of organization that are present throughout manifestation. This teleological universe is filled with meaningful patterns and structure to support the expansion and assimilation of consciousness through experience and expression (intelligent activity). The magnitude and interdependence of universal organization is staggering to the ordinary mind, yet that pattern of organization is vital, necessary, and natural to the entire grand scheme of evolution. Universal manifestation is keyed to the interaction (communication) of forces; of spirit (life), consciousness (quality), and matter (appearance). Any manifestation requires some sustaining structure (pattern)(organization) for continuity and endurance. Universal manifestation is no exception (with its great magnitude, diversity, complexity (simplicity), and multiple purpose) and therefore the evolutionary patterns (and underlying organization) provide the framework for all that exists.

But that greater organization has a number of pertinent qualities and attributes worthy of reflection and incorporation on more human levels. That organization is streamlined, efficient, and natural. There is no unnecessary organization or structure to burden the evolutionary processes. In fact, the various patterns of organization are relatively time-dependent and encoded with purpose. These patterns come into play when needed and for the appropriate (intended) duration. When a particular purpose has been accomplished, the supporting patterns are fulfilled and withdrawn. Thus there is always just enough organization or structure to support and ensure the objective, but not too much. And these various patterns or organization all fall into place naturally; there is nothing arbitrary in the divine evolutionary plan; everything fits together, each in its own place for its own experience, yet naturally contributing to the greater whole. Or in other words, the intended perfection of universal manifestation is reflected in its natural order.

One of the main keys to evolution is the expansion of consciousness, and although consciousness is veritably subjective, there is still some fine, delicate structure implied. Furthermore, the expansion of consciousness requires a flexible and responsive structure to support and sustain it, for the sake of coherence and relative containment. Without any subtle structure, consciousness would diffuse and scatter without meaning and without any relatedness. With too much structure, consciousness would be limited and unnecessarily bound. For evolutionary purposes, consciousness needs to grow and expand, naturally and effectively, with some reasonable degree of control (direction)(purpose) by the overshadowing life. Loosened consciousness is irretrievable. Tightened consciousness is ineffective and useless. Thus moderation and balance are implied in organization (as in all spiritual disciplines).

Organization is not only a binding force holding all of the various parts and aspects together, but it is a relating force as well, for the structure and patterns of organization relate the diversity of elements and constituents together in meaningful (evolutionary) ways. The universe is organized to a large extent by reflection, association, and correspondence. Macrocosmic structure is reflected onto microcosmic levels. All of the elements are associated one with another, each to a certain extent, and rules of correspondence actually govern (dominate) the evolutionary scheme (timing and structure). The coherent unity of all life, consciousness, and form easily demonstrates the natural integration of the Logos and its natural creation. And it is the organization that provides this needed interdependence.

Ever needing to understand himself and his experience, the spiritual student is encouraged to implement a conscientious discipline of daily retrospection, in which all of the daily events are reviewed for their significance. The purpose of retrospection is to aid in the assimilation of experience, self-understanding, and the cultivation (refinement) of the personality-instrument. But it is also quite helpful to periodically review the events of the entire (present) lifetime in a similarly retrospective fashion. This review should be performed periodically (perhaps every year or so), as there may be many lessons (and aspects) that are missed by the waking-consciousness at the time, and as the student grows and deepens himself, his perspective changes (broadens)(deepens) and his consciousness improves (expands) so that previous experience can be studied with greater potency (insight).

As an aid to this intention, it may be helpful for the student to develop a formal autobiographical sketch, to be revised and expanded at each subsequent (periodic) review. The student should be careful not to become absorbed in this study, as it must be kept in its proper perspective as a learning tool, rather than a self-centered exercise. Placed in its proper perspective (with a nominal investment of time, energy, and attention), the autobiographical study should prove meaningful, especially to those who have not developed the eidetic memory with a corresponding fully programmable mental interface.

The autobiographical sketch should be as detailed as is reasonable and prudent, as some details may be later realized as more significant. The student might begin by finding a suitable pattern of organization and then writing an overview or summary of each period of time to be considered. Then the details can be filled in as time and study (and periodic review) permit. Suitable patterns might be geographical, residential, educational, professional, or family-oriented. The intention is to divide up the lifetime into natural, logical periods of time which can be analyzed separately (and tied together) as needed. Or if no apparent (natural) pattern emerges, the student might use (almost arbitrary) three or seven year periods. A new chapter or division should begin at each logical or natural phase point (that indicates a change or commencement of activity, consciousness, etc.). A relatively discrete method should be employed to permit ease of revision and expansion.

An introductory chapter might include an astrological (natal) study, consideration of hereditary and environmental factors, etc. as a prelude to the actual incarnation. Consideration to past lives is not encouraged, as the primary focus of the current incarnation is (or should be) on the present experience and contributing factors. As each period is developed, attention should be given to the growth and development of the physical, emotional, and mental natures; to relationships with persons; to personal philosophy, values, and temperament; to crises and problems; and to any particular experiences that can be recalled. Some effort should be expended to draw forth memories of any blank periods to help the overall sketch (and avoid missing any substantial lessons of experience). Attention also should be placed on motives and decisions.

Throughout the study, the overall purpose of the endeavor should be kept in mind, that the reviewed experience might be properly assimilated and therefore contribute to the growth of understanding and consciousness. The student might also begin a diary of the daily experience, to assist in subsequent review and assimilation. Provided this entire process of autobiographical study is not overdone (or underdone), the effort expended should prove most worthy,

Though the extroverted personality constitutes a broad stage of experience and development (from the undeveloped and unevolved person to one who stands at the threshold of the spiritual path proper), the introverted personality is usually found in two relatively narrow stages: one at the threshold of externalized experience and one at the relative conclusion of externalized experience.

The first type of introverted personality is relatively undeveloped (at least with respect to the immediate experience, though it may unfold rapidly) and is often unaccustomed to life in the outer, objective world. It is characterized (generally) as relatively shy, withdrawn, (almost) childlike, oblivious to external experience. Such an introverted person usually lives in his own self-centered, almost dream-like world, full of imagination, but with no real interest in or involvement with the world of ordinary experience.

This first kind of introverted personality can come about through several very different ways. A soul unaccustomed to incarnation may find life in the lower worlds to be quite alien, and will therefore protect or mask the personality until it has time to develop and adjust to its new experience. Some personality patterns may have psychological problems (from previous experience) (or defective equipment) that result in an introverted personality, at least until the problem or deficiency is overcome. Also (in contrast), very highly evolved souls often prefer the introverted personality (of the first type), for awhile at least, to keep it from being easily absorbed by mundane experience, and until the soul can establish the needed rapport with its instrument. Thus, the first type may or may not have an inherent, developed consciousness, but if it has, that consciousness is not being fully expressed or exercised.

The second type of introverted personality characterizes the relatively advanced soul who has already experienced and mastered the extroverted experience. Such a personality has most of the advantages of the extroverted personality with virtually none of the disadvantages, plus considerable advantages inherent in the (well-developed) introverted personality itself. Where the extroverted personality is an exercise in objective, outgoing concrete mental and emotional experience, the mature somewhat introverted personality is an exercise in greater consciousness and the refinement of a highly poised and effective instrument. Such a person is usually quite aware of both external and internal experience; being a highly trained observer with full faculties of assessment and understanding (and creative interaction). Among the important characteristics usually present in addition to spiritual poise, are a contemplative (introspective) nature, self-sufficiency, detachment (freedom and potency), impersonality, humility, modesty, moderation, self-control, respect for others, peacefulness (gentleness), wisdom (discretion), and (inner) strength.

In general, it is this (second type) somewhat introverted personality that is used to bridge between the two worlds (between the external world of ordinary experience and the internal, subjective world of the soul). The self-contained (self-fulfilled) individual turns naturally inward to the soul (through meditation and contemplation). The reserved, contemplative disposition and temperament are very well-suited to the discreet expression of the higher (spiritual) energies to benefit the various evolving lives. The reticence of the spiritual student is vital to the maintenance of freedom from absorption, yet that same reticence need not impair the quiet and meaningful expression of both love and light energies. The student is certainly interested in the outer world of (meaningful) human experience, but that interest is demonstrated qualitatively, without drama.

There is an intrinsic condition implied throughout the esoteric philosophy, and that is the obligation of the spiritual student (and to a certain extent, ordinary humanity) to externalize the teachings wherever practicable (or practical). It is not enough for the student to merely read or study the philosophy; it is not enough to be a spiritual student or even a scholar. If the student expects to progress and to fulfil his dharma, he must actually put into practice whatever aspects and elements of the philosophy (the spiritual way of life) that are understood, accepted, and applicable.

This spiritual practice means the consistent application of ethical philosophy and spiritual principles, the application of meditation as a serious spiritual discipline, the application of right human relations and goodwill, and the right (sincere)(appropriate) expression of the various qualities and virtues, not merely their study or development. This entire process begins with the study and consideration of the various teachings. Sincere study leads (eventually) to understanding or realization (whether rational or intuitive). Once an understanding has been reached, there is the important matter of acceptance. If the student accepts a particular teaching, there is implied the responsibility to incorporate the teaching wherever possible in the daily life (or consciousness). The failure to accept a valid (meaningful or appropriate to the particular student) teaching carries with it its own practical consequences (in the form of encouragement).

The incorporation of the teachings depends on their practicality. The higher (greater)(more abstract) lessons (principles) can only be incorporated subjectively (in consciousness), while the lower (more practical (useful)) lessons must be objectively incorporated to the extent possible (and reasonable). What is practical is what is capable of being put into purposeful practice. Spiritual practice implies the actual performance or application of principles in the daily life, through relationships with other persons, through the mental and emotional life (activity within the aura and the projection (sharing) of meaningful energies), and through the exercise of personal (spiritual) values.

Before any spiritual teaching or principle (or virtue) can be truly assimilated (resulting in permanent retention and potency), it must be incorporated or externalized properly. Externalization suggests manifestation (expression) or embodiment. The teachings must actually be embodied within the life and consciousness of the student if substantial progress is expected. Such embodiment (assimilation) is mostly a matter of consciousness, and the continuous exercise of the spiritual values wherever possible (appropriate). The actual process of study, consideration, understanding, acceptance, and application should be quite continuous (with possibly many lessons being integrated simultaneously).

Spiritual practice itself is a considerable and meaningful learning experience. The spiritual student should be a trained observer, expressing the philosophy with discretion, noting the effects (if any are immediately realizable), and adjusting the approach appropriately. This implies flexibility and adaptability in the reasonable and intelligent application of spiritual principles. And the student should keep in mind that this practice is a personal (individual) exercise, according to individual needs (and consciousness) and experience, and not something to be advertized or imposed upon others. The student who sincerely applies the practical spiritual teachings (and incorporates into consciousness virtually all of the exposed teachings, practical or otherwise) soon becomes proficient and therefore contributes more effectively to the overall purpose of life (evolution in group formation).

The sixth tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled 'Quality.' In the highest sense, quality correlates directly with consciousness (as a principle) and with the soul (as an aspect). But Plotinus uses quality in its ordinary sense (as an attribute, characteristic, property) and in a higher correspondence to that ordinary sense, rather than in the sense of aspectual consciousness. In Plotinus' terminology, qualities are considered in two orders: a higher order in which qualities are real (subjective)(in the realm of the soul) and indicate character (principles)(abstracts)(archetypes), and a lower order in which qualities are merely apparent (in the sense of attributes and characteristics). Of the qualities in the lower order, some are derived from the higher order (and are therefore constitutive) while others are not (and are therefore incidental).

Reality is considered to be the universal fabric (not the material base) in which a number of highly meaningful constituents are present (such as being, movement, identity, consciousness, etc.). Reality is essential to the higher order, but has existence in the lower (only) by reflection. The higher order is a reality because all things are one, while the lower order is merely a sphere of images whose separation produces grades of difference. It just happens that it is this lower order of existence by reflection that is the mundane (objective) (external) world of ordinary human experience. Thus, distinct (separated) human existence is not authentic; it is simply a consequence of descent into the lesser realms.

Plotinus draws a considerable distinction between the two types of qualities in the lower order of differentiated existence. Whenever the quality can be derived directly from the higher order, that quality is said to be constitutive rather than incidental. The incidental (accidental) qualities relate mostly to superficial appearance, and are not needed for the sake of reality. Thus constitutive qualities constitute needed qualifications. There are certain (constitutive) characteristics (for example) which contribute to a person's humanity, and other (incidental) characteristics which do not so contribute.

In a reality possessing a determined quality, the reality and the essence precede the qualified reality. Quality (in the lower sense of attribute) is a condition added to a reality whose existence does not depend on it. Such a quality (qualification) may be a later acquirement or an original accompaniment. In the absence of quality (in the lower sense), the reality would persist. Qualities in the higher order are more substantial (subjective)(each having an energy existence of its own) than particularities in the lower order. Qualities in the lower order (the sensible realm) do not indicate the very nature of the reality, while the archetypes of such qualities are of a much higher order.

The key to all this rests in the consideration of reality, as existent within the principle or abstraction, not in its practical derivation. For example, fire as a principle has a greater reality than the fire of material phenomena. Until this realization is made and accepted (that conceptual realities are far greater than tangible realities), confusion (illusion) will persist. Real existence is limited to the realm of principles and beyond (to the soul and higher orders); everything of a lesser order (such as the personality) is (at best) merely qualified in some way by the higher. The great error (illusion) of humanity is the attachment to qualities (in the lower sense) while losing sight of quality (reality) in the higher sense; the (improper)(invalid) association of reality with things in the realm of sense impression rather than the (valid) association of reality with the quality of consciousness.

One of the challenges to developing humanity (and to a greater degree to the spiritual student) is the effective organization of the mind. As a physical instrument (of the mind) the brain is very highly developed and organized with a considerable and effective internal structure; yet the brain remains underutilized in almost every case. The mind, on the other hand, is not as well-developed nor as well organized as the brain. As is the normal case in development, the mental body is more of a sheath than a well-defined instrument. Most of humanity have not achieved mental polarization and consequently the mind (and its mental body) of the ordinary person is relatively vague and lacking in organization.

As humanity overcomes the emotional polarization and (Atlantean) consciousness, so will the mind become better organized and a much more effective (potent) instrument. But one of the tasks of the spiritual student today is the conscious cultivation, discipline, and application of the mind along useful, spiritually meaningful lines, well in advance of ordinary humanity. Not only must the mind be developed through proper exercise, but the student must gain conscious control of the mind and qualify it directly with the spiritual purpose of the soul. Otherwise there may be considerable danger in having an overdeveloped (and therefore relatively uncontrollable) concrete mind. So the mental development must be balanced properly with the natural (mature) development of the heart.

One of the keys to this mental development is the conscious organization and utilization of the mind. The mind should be trained as a servant of higher purpose, as an organized, effective, and responsive instrument of the soul (rather than the self-centered instrument of the personality). Mental organization begins with mental discipline: through the study of appropriately disciplined subjects; through the exercise of concentration, meditation, and contemplation; through continued personality cultivation and refinement using the mind as an instrument of integration, alignment, and self-control; through the discrete exercise of the student as an observer (with subsequent evaluation and assimilation); and through the purposeful (and reasonable) organization of the daily life for more effective use of the time and energies available (remaining ever flexible and responsive to inner (higher) guidance and outer circumstances).

The training of the mind (toward more effective organization) should continue by the conscious and deliberate exercise of association and correspondence. This is a very important aspect of philosophical development (leading to deeper understanding and realization), for the fabric (pattern) of evolution (manifestation) is fraught with correspondence and interrelatedness. Therefore it is important for the mind to be trained (properly organized) to study and assimilate patterns of association and correspondence, for those patterns (and their mental analogues) provide the mind with the power of relating elements of experience (observation, study, realization), and thereby integrating (assimilating)(synthesizing) the experience into a unified (interdependent)(and expansive) whole.

If the mind is properly organized (disciplined)(trained)(cultivated), it will be a much more potent force for understanding. But the mind will also be a much more potent instrument of experience and expression, for it will easily be programmable by the waking-consciousness (and more easily qualified by the soul). The practical object of mental organization is therefore the ability of the student to consciously and effectively program the mind as a powerful and responsive instrument (of study, understanding, application, and service). The well-organized mind can be a potent instrument of subjective analysis and for the helpful application of spiritual energies.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 239 - HUMAN ENERGY BALANCE

The human being in physical incarnation is a rather complex and enlivened mechanism dealing continuously with energy and energy processes. The character and quality of the waking-consciousness has much to do with the overall effectiveness of the entire mechanism. The sources of energy for (individual) human use are varied. On physical levels, the human being receives (and expends) energy in the form of food and drink, air, light and heat, and (primarily) vital (etheric) forces. On emotional (astral) and mental levels there can be a direct energy interaction with the immediate (astral and mental) environment. On mental levels the student also has an interaction with the soul through which may flow a considerable amount of higher energy (encouragement), from both internal sources (from the soul itself) and from external sources (by way of the soul).

The human being is capable of energy reception (input) and expression (output), as well as transformation, assimilation, and accumulation (on each or between each of the various levels). In the reception and acceptance of any form of energy is implied the responsibility for its efficient and effective (constructive) use. On physical levels, the student is urged to eat and drink only in the amounts and qualities necessary or appropriate to the effective use of the physical form. Eating too much causes an unnecessary accumulation (waste) of energy which burdens the physical instrument. Eating too little tends to drain the vital (etheric) body of its natural energies. Thus a balance (and moderation) is implied on every level. Any form of physical, emotional, or mental activity actually expends energy, so the student is encouraged to express himself properly in every way. Some sleep is usually required in order for the vital processes to renew the energy balance of the entire mechanism (due to the expenditure of energy during the waking hours at a greater rate than received).

On etheric, emotional, and mental levels, the energy balance is particularly important because the aura can be highly interactive with its environment. The etheric body is renewed primarily through external (etheric) processes (primarily related to air and sunlight). The etheric body is vital to the health and maintenance of the physical form, so the student should be careful to allow no unconscious (accidental) etheric depletion. Certain superphysical experiences (such as hypnotism) can be very dangerous since they may involve etheric depletion or otherwise interfere with the normal functioning of the vital body. The same holds true (to a certain extent) for emotional and mental processes.

Wherever negative energy is encountered (through the acceptance or expression of negative emotions or thought-forms) there is a considerable depletion incurred (a loss of energy that would otherwise be available for constructive purposes). So the student is encouraged to maintain his composure and self-control (aura containment). If the aura is properly balanced and maintained, external energies of a negative character will have little or no effect. It is also much easier to express the more positive energies (thoughts and feelings) through a balanced (healthy) aura (and disposition).

With a healthy mind and healthy (quiet and controlled) emotions (and with some physical discretion) the student should easily be able to maintain the proper energy balance, and therefore be able to express himself in service along any appropriate lines. In the field of proper service (that which is not self-centered or involved with glamour), there is a special form of energy renewal, in which no (net) energy loss is acquired, no matter how great the amount of (meaningful) energy shared. So it is that the spiritual student (with an intelligently controlled and balanced aura) becomes a considerable instrument of service.

The spiritual work of the serious spiritual student falls naturally into two aspects: objective work that is performed in the external world (on primarily objective levels) and subjective work that is performed internally (within consciousness)(on primarily subjective levels). Work suggests activities in which energy or effort is expended for some useful (spiritual) purpose. Spiritual students may work primarily with some aspect of human evolution, or they may work primarily with the animal kingdom or the plant kingdom. Some may even cooperate consciously with the deva lives, though that usually involves more subjective work. The opportunities throughout the evolutionary kingdoms for practical (objective) service are plentiful (many and varied), provided the student is willing and responsive to the opportunities.

Virtually every form of professional work has its opportunities for collateral or incidental spiritual service, though the apparent magnitude of the actual service may be small, nevertheless the expended (sincere) effort along constructive lines may be quite meaningful. The student who is employed professionally should look for meaningful opportunities to express some form of spiritual energy (mental or otherwise) in his work or through his working environment. Though spiritual service (proper) is more a state of consciousness than an actual endeavor, the student should respond easily to even incidental opportunities for useful work. The student may also be able to work with or through one or more of the various nonprofit organizations (full-time or part-time)(along religious, educational, philosophical, metaphysical, or humanitarian lines).

The objective work may take any or several of many forms, from actual physical labor for a worthy cause, to objective meditation work to qualify the energies shared in some externalized effort. It may involve the sharing of energy through useful publications, or through teaching, public speaking, counseling, or sharing. It may simply involve the expression of good thoughts and feelings toward all. It may involve financial support of worthy projects (also with discretion)(spiritual students usually live below their means in order to liberate funds to sustain the objective (spiritual) work). It may involve the expression of kindness toward other lives (human, animal, and plant), or it may involve simply the conscious projection of healing energies (impersonally) during meditation. There is really no limit to the ways and means of useful, practical effort along spiritual lines.

There is also spiritual work implied in almost every aspect of the ordinary (daily) life, through relationships with other persons, or through contact with animal or plant lives. The proper attitude of service (in the sense of spiritual work) is an attitude of helpfulness, even in the smallest of ways, and without self-consciousness. The student should not be concerned with the magnitude (importance) of the task, nor with any credit or recognition of his work, nor even with seeing the fruits of his labors. To some are given the opportunity of planting seeds; to others are given the opportunity of cultivation and encouragement. The spiritual student should not be attached to his activities, no matter how worthy they might appear. And as the spiritual values (energies) are properly embodied (incorporated in the spiritual lifestyle (disposition)), so shall the opportunity for useful (objective) work be more easily recognized and more effectively accomplished, without any personal consideration. Fortunately, the spiritual student usually has considerable control over his involvement in the outer work, but the student must still cultivate the willingness and the responsiveness, and the idea of impersonal service in every aspect of the daily life.