



THE UPPER TRIAD

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Commentaries on the Esoteric Philosophy

- No. 261 - The Human Evolution
- No. 262 - The Third Ennead (3)
- No. 263 - Food and Energy
- No. 264 - Magic
- No. 265 - The Deva Evolution
- No. 266 - The Third Ennead (4)
- No. 267 - Black Magic and White Magic (1)
- No. 268 - Black Magic and White Magic (2)
- No. 269 - The Seven Ray Methods
- No. 270 - The Third Ennead (5)
- No. 271 - Ceremonial Magic
- No. 272 - The Quality of Food
- No. 273 - The Human Perspective
- No. 274 - The Third Ennead (6)
- No. 275 - Magic and Religion
- No. 276 - First Ray Methods
- No. 277 - Paths of Intelligence
- No. 278 - The Third Ennead (7)
- No. 279 - Truth and Uncertainty
- No. 280 - Second Ray Methods

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. 261 - THE HUMAN EVOLUTION

The human race is a lifewave of approximately sixty-three billion souls (only a small portion of which are in incarnation at any one time), a particular (historical) lifewave that just happens to inhabit the human kingdom at the present time. The human kingdom is a stage of experience that the lifewave passes through. The present humanity is one lifewave within a chain of lifewaves which pass (at some time or another) through the human kingdom on their way to (relative) perfection. That chain of lifewaves is a thread (continuity) that extends all the way from the most elementary (involutionary) lifewaves, through the mineral, plant, animal, and human kingdoms; to the superhuman realm (and the progressing lifewaves which have already completed the human experience). That entire chain constitutes the human evolution, an evolutionary scheme with particular purposes, constraints, guidance, and objectives.

The polarity of the human evolution is positive (masculine)(active), particularly so during the passage through the human kingdom where objective experience and positive activity is emphasized. Though the human soul may incarnate through male (positive) or female (negative) personalities (bodies), the polarity of the female personality can be overcome by the developing consciousness. The female personality serves (to a certain extent) as a check and balance upon the momentum and activity of the predominantly positive human experience. This (overall) positive polarity qualifies practically every aspect of human experience.

Another characteristic of the human evolution is brain consciousness. The brain is a rather peculiar physical instrument utilized by the mind for physical experience and expression. Though human experience relies upon the brain consciousness, other types of physical plane experience (evolution) can proceed without any form of brain consciousness. Even self-consciousness is no prerequisite for meaningful experience, though self-consciousness is one of the characteristics of human experience. It is an important distinction, however, since self-consciousness is naturally separative. But self-consciousness carries with it other merits, and even the fully self-conscious human being is ultimately absorbed by group consciousness.

The overwhelming characteristic of the human evolution is the (occult) experience of manipulating form by consciousness. This is primarily a function of polarity, aided by self-consciousness and the various positive (head-centered) (occult) talents. Humanity (by definition and design) works directly with the form side of nature, building and utilizing forms for further evolutionary experience. The human experience is therefore basically a creative one, and the contributions of the lifewave are predominantly (relatively) original (within the overall guidelines and intentions of the higher life). Thus (from a higher perspective) the human experience is somewhat a creative experiment. Basic guidelines are established (and enforced by natural laws) and humanity is granted the freedom and opportunity to progress within those intentions.

Certainly the human evolution is not the only evolution, not even the only evolution on earth, for coexisting with the human evolution (on earth) is at least one other major evolution as well as several minor ones. The potential of the human evolutionary experience is quite considerable in relation to the others due to the creative potency of the head-centered (externalized)(objective) experience. But all of nature is necessarily interrelated, and as humanity progresses so do the other lifewaves benefit and progress also as a consequence. Moreover, humanity could not progress without the considerable cooperation and support of the other (greater, lesser, and parallel) lifewaves.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 262 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (3)

The third tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'Providence: Second Treatise,' where again Plotinus considers the nature of providence and its relation to humanity in particular. The human being is considered a complex organism having both spiritual and material aspects. The individual human being is considered sovereign, capable of making decisions affecting his immediate experience and his existence in general. But even though man is sovereign, having some degree of free will (according to his particular capacity for free will), each decision is made subject to the guidelines of the grand (providential) plan. Those guidelines may be relatively general (as is usual) or relatively specific (where particular karma is involved). The decision of the individual is not determined by the plan, but the decision (and its consequences) must necessarily (somehow) fit into the scheme of things.

Providence therefore plays a role in man's interaction with his experience, at least with regard to free will. But the role of providence extends far beyond mere decision-making. Providence is also an illumination of consciousness, the illumination of the higher (life)(principles) upon the lower. As a multiple organism, the human being embodies a number of principles subject to illumination (stimulation)(encouragement) along evolutionary lines. The highest of human principles is presently beyond the capability of exercise for virtually all of the lifewave. The lowest of human principles is exercised almost continuously, though unconsciously. The lower principles are essentially those of material substance, far removed (in this perspective) from the illumination of higher principles. Yet man (the indwelling consciousness) is expected to respond to the higher principles (encouragement) and deal appropriately with the lower.

Though the various principles are ever present (and subject to illumination), it is up to the individual to properly exercise them. The basic human (multiplex) principle is greater than that of the animal, since the human principle carries with it self-consciousness and concomitant self-responsibility (and accountability). The animal is governed by group instincts and is not accountable for its actions, yet the human being inhabits an animal (material) form and is responsible for the conquest of its own (coarse) material constitution, such constitution being relatively far removed from the illumination of spiritual existence.

Providence is clearly not a uniform (equally distributed) function, but is properly proportioned according to need and merit (taking all things into consideration). There is a universal equality in the sense that each species, individual member, category, aspect, etc. (regardless of order of apparent magnitude) is equally relevant and valuable to the overall whole, but certainly there is no equivalence or equality in every respect. The elements (members) of any category (species) are actually unequal in the sense that each is different (relatively unique but certainly not critically so) and in the sense that the capabilities (experiences) of each are different. Providence (in this sense) serves also as karma (or at least is irreconcilably interrelated with karma), a force of evolutionary encouragement and a force of restoration.

Since providence embraces a universal, compound, self-interactive living being, providence is impossible to discriminate with any real accuracy. The act of discrimination (observation, interpretation, evaluation, realization, conclusion, prediction, etc.) even affects the overall system and the observation (and overall process) is necessarily limited by the quality of the instrument and the imperfection of its consciousness. Thus the discrimination of providence deals with probabilities and possibilities rather than certainties.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 263 - FOOD AND ENERGY

Food is material substance (in solid or liquid form) that is usually ingested to provide energy for the physical body. Food is actually energy in the form of carbohydrates, fats, proteins, minerals, etc., that is converted within the physical body into the particular forms (of energy) needed to sustain growth, repair, and vital processes. Physical food also carries with it some energy on vital or etheric levels. The consciousness and vitality of the food therefore have some (possibly considerable) impact in terms of quality.

Aside from its constituents, food may take various forms and be prepared in various ways. Cooking food tends to reduce its inherent vitality. The form of the food is usually not as relevant as its constituents and overall quality. The purpose of food is quite simple: to provide sustenance and energy. For the spiritual student, food should provide little more than to serve this basic purpose. Food (eating) may be a pleasant experience, but for the most part, those who particularly enjoy eating are needlessly distracted from other, more pertinent matters. The spiritual student is concerned about the quality of food and its effects on his body and consciousness, but once the student has achieved the proper diet and discipline, he is no longer distracted by undue attention to diet.

In order to achieve that proper diet and self-discipline, however, and in order to make the most constructive use of the available energies, the student studies the effects of food on his consciousness, and adapts his program appropriately. The effects of food on the physical body are relatively well-known (in the superficial sense), but the effects on consciousness are not so well-known, because higher (superphysical) energy processes are involved and because the effects of food are different depending on the consciousness of the individual. The effects of eating meat, for example, upon the undeveloped consciousness are almost incidental (negligible), while the effects upon the developing consciousness may be quite considerable.

There are a number of factors involved (with regard to consciousness), but primarily it is a matter of the quality of food, the amount of food, and the quality of consciousness. Nutritional factors are important but not particularly so, since the (potent) spiritual student can compensate for nutritional deficiencies. For a given quality (consciousness) of food, the effects of quantity are remarkable. Too little food simply provides too little energy and the student (who can) is forced to compensate by drawing more directly (but inefficiently) on etheric energies. Too much food is a burden, energy-wise, and the excess is either stored internally or ineffectively released. Excess internal storage (fat) drains the vitality of the physical form and also impairs the consciousness. Eating food, in general, stimulates the vitality of the form, but eating too much (at once, or in general) burdens and dulls both form and consciousness.

The spiritual student is urged to eat sparingly (more frequently, if necessary) especially since there is a time factor in digestion (and corresponding effects). A large intake of food will dull the consciousness to a greater extent and for a longer period of time than small quantities (of quality food) taken more frequently (two or three times per day). The spiritual student should consume only enough food to sustain his immediate (physical) needs and no more. His vitality can be enhanced (to a certain extent, in addition to food) with etheric, vital forces without the burden of physical digestion and the distraction of eating. Of course these effects are true for all, but are almost incidental (inconsequential) for those of ordinary consciousness, and much more pronounced (meaningful) for those who aspire to higher consciousness.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 264 - MAGIC

Magic is generally defined as the use of certain means believed to have supernatural power over natural forces. Those means include a very wide range of resources and their associated activities; such as concentration and mental programming, visualization and creative effort, and prayer or invocation. Magic usually involves some sort of formula, whether it is fairly objective in the form of prayer, meditation, symbols, mantrams, etc., or fairly subjective in the form of abstract mental exercises. True magic involves the use of force on some level of consciousness to accomplish some purpose, creative or otherwise.

The magical forces are not really supernatural; they are actually quite natural, yet drawn from superphysical levels of consciousness. The use of magical forces is traditionally a head-centered experience since the mind is the primary instrument, and therefore magic is rightly considered essentially an occult phenomenon rather than a mystical one. However, there are many aspects of magic which involve mystical or heart-centered experience (and in true, esoteric experience, the occult and mystical forces are perfectly blended). Magical force has both ceremonial (Seventh Ray) and magnetic (Second Ray) aspects, and where magical forces are combined with religious ceremony (personal or otherwise) there arises a distinct mystical (heart-centered) form of magic.

Though magical forces (through invocation and evocation) can be employed on any level, the mature esoteric student works almost entirely on mental levels. Those who are less prepared or untrained work primarily on emotional or etheric levels, consciously or otherwise (for very much of normal, relatively unconscious human experience along mental and/or emotional lines involves magical forces); the difference being that those who are properly trained are potent and use these forces deliberately and purposefully, while the untrained (and unprepared) use (some) magical forces either unconsciously or without proper understanding. Experimentation in magical or psychic matters is discouraged, since these forces can be quite potent and (without understanding) can be quite dangerous.

The basic mechanism of magic is that of energy following thought. As the mind is properly focussed, the thought-forms attract (magical) energies and those energies are then directed or programmed in some fashion. Thus, magical expression is essentially creative. Magical constructs (thought-forms on mental, astral, and/or etheric levels) can exist for considerable lengths of time depending on the potency of their creation. Magical constructs can actually take on a 'life' of their own, interacting with other phenomena according to the deliberate (or careless) rules implied or specified in their creation. Many such constructs are evoked carelessly through intense mental or emotional experience.

Magic can also refer to the powers involved and to the products (constructs) as well. In this sense, magic refers to an extraordinary power or influence (apparently) arising from supernatural sources. A physical object, for example, may be infused with magical potency by deliberate concentration and magnetic induction. Similarly, prayers (mantrams)(combinations or words or sounds) can be magnetically infused. Such products become, in themselves, secondary and tertiary sources of magical energy. Since magic involves creative force, it also interacts with consciousness; in fact, another definition (implication) of magic is enchantment. In this sense, the reactionary minds and emotions of human beings are particularly vulnerable; and the spiritual student is consequently urged to develop self-control (poise) and indifference to imposed (external) forces. In this (rather particular) context, the entire orthodox world-picture is a magical construct (enchantment) (illusion) of tremendous extent and potency.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 265 - THE DEVA EVOLUTION

In parallel with the human evolution is a second, major evolution, one which involves the various deva or angelic kingdoms. The deva evolution extends (as a chain of lifewaves) through a number of kingdoms (fields of experience) that are analogous to the sub-human, human, and super-human kingdoms. But the angelic kingdoms differ widely from the human kingdoms, as the entire purpose and polarity of the deva evolution differs markedly from the human, yet nevertheless remains complementary.

Like the human evolution, the deva evolution is an evolutionary path through various kingdoms of experience and expression, leading ultimately to a synthesis and final assimilation within the greater life. But unlike the human evolution, the deva path is not an objective one; it is almost entirely subjective. The polarity of the deva evolution is negative (feminine)(passive), where there is no conscious separation from divinity and where no objective incarnations are experienced. The devas do not incarnate in the human sense; their periods of (passive) activity are more rightly described as stages or transitions of very gradual transformation. Neither do the devas incarnate in personality-forms, for the forms of the lower deva orders (races) are extensions of the (divine) life-force rather than reflections into matter.

The higher deva orders do not even extend themselves in form, but remain on levels beyond the concrete mental (analogously to the souls of humanity). The lower deva orders (lifewaves)(kingdoms)(races) are the (mostly) superphysical workers who embody the forces of evolution and provide for the maintenance of the various human kingdoms. The devas work with the life side of evolution, while humanity works with the form (material) side. The devas actually have two distinct tasks in the lower worlds; some exist primarily as matter, while others are free to move about in the angelic domain (the superphysical realm) as the dynamic sustaining forces of all of (lower) manifestation. The higher orders have similar tasks, though much greater consciousness is required.

Much closer ties exist between deva (angelic)(archangelic) kingdoms than exist between the various objective kingdoms. The devas of diverse orders work much more closely together, as a conscious extension of a single life (while humanity experiences the illusion of objective separation). Thus the work of the deva evolution is much more obviously cooperative. In fact, the devas work very closely in support of humanity, regardless of the ordinary human insensitivity. Some orders work closely with the plant or animal kingdoms; others work primarily with humanity (as in providing healing (restorative) energies). But it is quite dangerous for unenlightened humanity to approach or work directly with the devas, because the difference in polarity is tremendous.

A great deal of misunderstanding exists concerning the devas or angels. Man has incorrectly assumed the angels to be relatively human, where in fact the angels are altogether different. They have no brain consciousness (except in the very few who have passed through the human kingdom), nor can they communicate in any objective sense. Though the higher orders possess considerable potency and considerable consciousness, they are not self-conscious and do not exhibit objective, human characteristics. The human-like forms sometimes attributed to the angelic beings are simply creations in human perception (attempts to interpret alien energies in more familiar patterns). When the human mind passes beyond personality dependence, then the angelic beings can be recognized as particularly helpful cooperators, brothers (sexless) of light and love who are indispensable to the success of the human experiment.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 266 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (4)

The fourth tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'The Tutelary Spirit.' The tutelary or presiding spirit is that aspect of a person's spiritual existence which guides the experience and expression of the lower, personal self, or that aspect to which the lower self is responsive. In the highest sense, that presiding spirit is the monad, the highest aspect of human existence; in the lowest sense, that spirit is the animal group soul. The presiding spirit is, consequently, dependent on the individual consciousness; the greater the consciousness, the greater is the spiritual influence or guiding spirit.

The character or quality of the waking-consciousness can vary widely. Those who are relatively unevolved, yet human, are guided to a large extent by the animal instincts and urges of the lower vehicles, by the animal group soul and the preponderance of external (circumstantial and karmic) forces. Those who are relatively evolved respond much less to the natural animal forces and much more to the forces of the self-consciousness (the mind of the personality). As the individual continues to progress (evolve), he responds more and more to higher (internal) impression, to the subjective quality of the soul, and ultimately to the vast impersonality of the monad. Throughout these processes (of evolution in consciousness), the higher aspects (the soul and the monad) are for all practical purposes detached from the personality, willing to provide only the broadest (subjective) qualification and encouragement. But as the individual evolves, that subjective quality becomes more and more pertinent.

In a sense, the individual is, according to his character and consciousness. The individual who lives an animalistic life is little better than the animal (in consciousness). The individual who lives the spiritual life of identification with the soul is that soul in manifestation. Man's spiritual existence (as a soul, and as a monad) is related by threads of consciousness (correspondence) to macrocosmic aspects. The process of reincarnation is a progressive evolution leading ultimately to creative (cosmic) existence (divinity). That process includes passage into the next higher kingdom as the individual and group circumstances (and consciousness) warrant. But that process does not allow transmigration into a lower kingdom. An individual may retrogress to a certain extent, even to the point of identification with animal existence, but karmic forces will nevertheless (ultimately) draw the individual onward and upward.

Prior to any incarnation, the tutelary or presiding spirit is the soul which subjectively determines the most appropriate (available) circumstances for birth. But during the early years (childhood) (and even during the early adult years), the individual (waking-consciousness) is not (normally) responsive to higher impression, so that the external forces and family environment prevail. As the individual progresses along spiritual lines, the energies and character of the soul are increasingly reflected into the mind and personality. But a great deal depends on the interest and determination of the lower self to achieve the most noble state. The guiding spirit is not bound up with the lower self, yet it belongs to the individual (or more correctly, vice versa).

If the individual expects more (apparently) favorable circumstances or opportunities (or abilities) in the successive life (incarnation), then the individual must work and progress sufficiently to earn those new circumstances. But the consequences of any particular circumstances depend almost entirely on consciousness and on how the individual responds to the experience (and to the presiding spiritual influence). Or in other words, the enlightened esoteric student is a master of his own consciousness, regardless of circumstances.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 267 - BLACK MAGIC AND WHITE MAGIC (1)

A rather important distinction exists where motives and magical methods are concerned. There are basically two types of magic (from this perspective of motives and methods): black magic and white magic. Black magic is basically self-centered and highly dependent on (predominantly lower) external forces. White magic is basically group-centered (unselfish) and dependent on (predominantly higher) internal forces.

Black magic depends almost entirely on the potency of the concrete mind (personality) and its ability to control external forces. Those external forces are usually the forces of etheric or astral matter (substance) and lower life-forms. Black magic is usually not constructive, since it is (by definition) the magical domain of the potent, predominantly selfish, self-centered, individualistic (separative) personality. Since the motives in black magic are essentially selfish, the black magician is usually not concerned about the effects of his methods or actions upon others, except where the self-interest is served. Or in other words, in black magic there is usually a complete disregard for ethics, morals, or responsibility. The methods and means merely contribute to the desired objective. This is certainly not the case with white magic.

White magic does also depend upon the potency of the mind (personality), but it depends on the potency of the soul as well, and upon the degree of alignment (rapport)(cooperation) that exists between the mind and the soul. White magic therefore depends rather heavily on internal forces (the divine, natural forces of the soul itself, or higher forces drawn by the soul onto mental levels). Those forces are drawn from atmic, buddhic, or manasic (mental) levels, and rarely from lower levels. Those forces may, however, be applied on concrete mental levels and can have substantial effects on lower (astral or even etheric) levels. White magic is (by definition) a constructive, cooperative endeavor, serving group (human or higher) purpose and without regard to personal benefit. Thus the motives involved in white magic are relatively pure, refined, and unselfish; and the methods used are carefully cultivated and utilized for constructive results, as the esoteric student takes into consideration all potential effects of the applied forces. Consequently, with white magic the esoteric student demonstrates a considerable regard for ethics and responsibility. The methods and means must be as appropriate as the intended objective.

Though the basic distinctions between black magic and white magic are relatively clear, in practice there exists a relatively broad, grey area between the extremes (of well-defined black magic or white magic). This problem arises in part from the use of the imperfect but (hopefully) elevated personality in white magic, and in part to the relatively common heritage of black magicians and white magicians. A (true) magician is one who has achieved potency in dealing with occult (magical) forces. The magician must necessarily have a well-integrated personality, dominated by the well-developed mind. The magician must also have a considerable amount (and quality) of training and experience in occult matters. The vast majority of people who invoke magical forces are not magicians, for they lack the proper qualifications. But where the basic qualifications are present, there is little difference between the black magician and the white magician; in fact, most black magicians have received their preliminary training along spiritual lines. The difference arises where the black magician fails to develop heart quality and remains or becomes self-centered, and fails to commit himself to the spiritual path; while the white magician develops the heart quality and remains firmly committed to the spiritual path and to constructive (group) evolution.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 268 - BLACK MAGIC AND WHITE MAGIC (2)

The distinction between the black magician and the white magician is relatively sharp, with the methods and motives relatively well-defined, but the distinction between black magic and white magic is complicated considerably by the large number of people who dabble in magical matters and who have not reached the status or potency of the magician or wizard. Such people generally have little knowledge or training in these matters and simply experiment vainly with forces that they can attract but cannot properly control. Such people usually also fail to discern the significance (effects) of their efforts and fail to exercise ethical discretion. Since most of these people are lacking in spiritual quality, they often fall victim (seriously or incidentally) to the black magician (less likely) or to the vibratory forces of black magic (much more likely).

The black magician usually works alone (meaning that he serves no one beside himself) but manipulates and controls others wherever possible (necessary) to serve his own purposes. He works predominantly with lower (coarse) mental and astral (emotional) matter (forces) and easily draws upon the resources (and vitality) of others. Fortunately, black magicians are very few in number and are, in themselves, relatively insignificant. Karma (in general) discourages the black (left-handed) path and the farther the individual progresses along that path the greater is the karmic force that he must ultimately reckon with. Karma (usually) eventually forces his return to the mainstream of human evolution (and if he has purified himself, he is welcomed without prejudice). In the meantime, the black magician is virtually ignored (treated with detached compassion and understanding) by those who are more enlightened. The true peril of the black magician (and those who dabble) is simply one of selfishness and ignorance.

The dangers inherent in magical/psychic activity are considerable, particularly where spiritual motive (and preparation) is lacking. The majority of those who dabble in occult matters (without any real training or understanding) lack the self-control and integration necessary to reach the spiritual (finer) levels of consciousness, and are therefore (usually) relatively vulnerable along (coarse) astral and mental lines. The problem lies not in falling prey to the black magician, but in falling prey to the (coarse) forces and (lower) superphysical entities that those who dabble deal with (whether or not they are aware of what they are dealing with). To deal with magical forces on lower levels (with an unrefined and undisciplined personality) is to attract relatively potent, sub-human entities (as well as ignorant, earthbound, disincarnated human beings). These entities often develop a compelling influence over those who dabble (again, whether the victim realizes what is happening or not). Also, without proper training, the magical (magnetic) forces evoked by the untrained may be much more potent than can be handled. These forces are (potentially)(on psychical levels) as destructive (or constructive) as the forces of the physical atom. It is mostly a matter of proper knowledge and understanding. Those who play with fire usually fail to recognize these dangers.

However, the spiritual student (an apprentice of white magic) concentrates on personality cultivation (refinement) and self-discipline, learning gradually how to deal properly (safely) with these (potent) superphysical forces. The spiritual student requires considerable patience, for these lessons come slowly, and the spiritual potency is acquired only where all prerequisites are properly met and the student can be trusted to work responsibly with the magical forces, selflessly and impersonally, for the good of the group and ever in accordance (cooperation) with the divine evolutionary plan.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 269 - THE SEVEN RAY METHODS

Each of the seven rays is a qualification of energy. Each such qualification is a domain of experience and expression, and each domain has its characteristic methods for experience, expression, and accomplishment. Those characteristic methods are potentially available to anyone, regardless of the individual's personality and soul rays, though an individual who has mastered a particular ray will obviously have a greater understanding of its methods and be able to apply those methods more easily and effectively.

The energy or qualification of any of the rays can be evoked by the student and applied to any constructive purpose, depending on the student's ability and understanding, and depending to a certain extent on the student's particular combination of rays. But each of the rays has its own method of evocation that can be applied to the energy of any of the seven rays. A Seventh Ray method, for example, might be used to evoke Fourth Ray energy; that Fourth Ray energy might then (for example) be applied with Fifth Ray methods. Obviously, an intelligent prerequisite to such evocation and application is a proper study of the seven rays, their energies and methods, and a thorough study and cultivation of the individual's own consciousness and temperament.

Of particular interest to the aspirant and probationary disciple are the methods of personality cultivation, integration, and alignment associated with each of the seven rays. The student whose personality is properly cultivated (purified, disciplined, and qualified) and integrated into a single, stable, and coherent instrument should be far more effective in spiritual work. The proper preparation and integration are necessary to any true alignment of the personality and the soul, or of the individual with any group of souls. Each of the seven rays provides methods of cultivation, integration, and alignment which the individual (student) can apply according to his circumstances. And each of the seven ray combinations (of a personality ray and a soul ray) may be approached with any of the seven ray methods (some more successfully or appropriately than others, according to the ray relationships involved).

The evolutionary intention for humanity is for each person (individuality) (soul) to (ultimately) achieve a relatively high degree of mastery along each (all) of the seven ray lines. Consequently, an individual gradually accumulates experience in each of the seven domains, usually in accordance with the personality ray chosen for a particular incarnation. Any given personality (for incarnation) may or may not be one with which the individual is experienced, and in either case, it takes time for the waking-consciousness to develop (in each lifetime) the needed (relative) maturity and control of the personality. Thus an individual may need to conquer an unfamiliar personality-instrument or reconquer one that is relatively familiar. Depending on the situation, the individual may need to evoke and utilize certain ray energies and/or certain ray methods.

As the student progresses, he achieves a greater degree of control (and understanding) of each of the seven rays. That progress is hastened when the individual achieves proper alignment (of soul and personality). The advanced soul who has mastered all of the rays can easily apply any of the ray methods with confidence, potency, understanding, and wisdom. But long before a soul has (completely) mastered a particular ray, that soul can work with those ray energies intelligently, through its reflection (the personality), to the extent that the personality is properly integrated and aligned. These processes occur quite naturally depending on the experience of the individual, without there necessarily being any formal understanding of the seven rays.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 270 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (5)

The fifth tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'love.' Plotinus draws upon the philosophical writings of Plato and some of the characters of Greek mythology to clarify the quality or nature of love. Considered are both human and divine aspects, and the relationship between the two.

Love is first considered as a state of consciousness or character. In human (personality) terms, love is an experience (interaction) on emotional and/or mental levels. In the lower human sense, love is a very personal or personality-centered experience related to desire and some degree of selfishness. In the higher human sense, love is more impersonal and related to divine recollection or realization (the recollection or realization of divine beauty (truth)(goodness)). In either case, love is related to beauty and depends on the object of devotion or aspiration. In the lower sense it is a matter of ego and/or related directly to sense-impression. In the higher sense it is the love of beauty (truth)(goodness) itself.

In the human sense, the primary source of love is found in the tendency or character of the soul towards pure beauty (perfection)(unity). Such love is related to the harmony aspect of God (ordered manifestation)(the unity of all life and consciousness)(the balance of evolutionary forces). In this sense, love is concerned with absolute things (wholes) rather than partials, with ideals and archetypes rather than images and reflections. Those who know not the beauty of higher existence are content with the images and reflections of mistaken reality. But the beauty of earthly things may lead ultimately to the beauty of reality (the world of archetypes)(divine beauty) as the consciousness is gradually improved. That beauty represents immortality, the eternal principle (the divine urge toward perfection).

Love is essentially an attractive force (if not the force of attraction), the underlying qualification of all existence which interrelates the entire ordered whole (as a coherent unity). As the character of the soul, the love principle draws the consciousness toward beauty, toward truth (reality), and toward goodness. The rising of the mental state is an attraction of the lesser self toward the resident divinity (the soul itself). Pure love seeks beauty (truth)(goodness) alone, without desire; but that (pure) love is indwelling, the spirit within all. In the relatively impersonal, abstract form, love is a universal principle, embodied within (through) the Logos. In this sense, the soul (the aspect of consciousness) is the love principle, a reflection of the cosmos.

As an attractive, unifying force there is the (impersonal) love of God for its creation, a bond or relationship that, in turn, leads to the conscious love of creation for its God. In this latter sense, love is manifested as the energy of aspiration, of striving onward and upward toward divinity. Love is the act of a soul seeking good. Love is a vertical mechanism linking the mind with its soul, and the soul with its divine monad. Love is also a horizontal mechanism, a celestial spirit linking all in oneness.

Thus love is seen to be much more than a state of consciousness or an act of experience. It is a divine principle and a spirit-being of very high order, whose character is reflected into the lesser realms, through a continuous spectrum. That spectrum extends from the dispassionate existence (love) of God, through successive stages, to the more human forms of love (enchantment). As an evolutionary force, love leads from the random attraction (of lesser things)(of images and reflections) to the absolute and authentic good (the greater ideas and archetypes)(reality).

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 271 - CEREMONIAL MAGIC

Magic in the more esoteric (subjective) sense is properly the domain of the First Ray (will) and the Second Ray (wisdom). But magic in the more exoteric (objective) sense is properly the domain of the remaining rays, and particularly that of the Seventh Ray. It is the Seventh Ray which encompasses the most objective field of magic, that of ceremonial magic. In ceremonial magic are found a wide variety of magical forms and methods, particularly objective, and dealing predominantly with physical and etheric forces.

To properly understand ceremonial magic, the student should first understand the Seventh Ray domain and all of the implications and correlations of the Seventh Ray. In one sense, the physical plane (the Seventh Ray domain) is a reflection onto objective levels of the other six rays; or in other words, each of the (other) six rays contribute in some fashion to the most highly manifested (differentiated) plane of consciousness. Consequently, ceremonial magic is linked in various ways to all of the seven rays, though the Seventh Ray provides the basic qualification and the domain of expression.

Ceremonial magic is that aspect of magic that is most involved with the form or method of creation. The procedures of ceremonial magic were well-known in the ancient mystery schools and were actually introduced to the novice or apprentice in order to demonstrate the utilization of the involved forces. But as the mind of the student is properly developed, these (ceremonial) methods are no longer necessary, since the same effects can be more properly evoked or created using simpler, internal methods. The student begins with ceremonial methods because no special training is needed; anyone can follow an objective, ceremonial procedure to unveil or release magical forces; but only with proper training can the student acquire the proper control and understanding of the evoked forces. In other words it takes a great deal more than mere ceremony or invocation to safely control and apply the magical forces. Thus the ceremonial methods were intended only as a preliminary step, until the student could develop the proper faculties under supervised training.

The basic problem of ceremonial magic is two-fold: the dependence on external forces and the dependence on the ceremonial form. With emphasis on the form, the form itself may become a distraction and lose its potency and/or meaning. Thus, care should be taken in any ceremonial effort to maintain the significance (purpose) of the activity in mind, at least until the objectives have been accomplished or the effort is no longer warranted. Ceremonial magic is essentially a creative effort that depends on the instrumentality of some form of ceremony or ritual and the forces attracted by that ritual. The ceremony itself involves both mental and physical procedures, usually including a series of mantrams or words of power (invocation). Sometimes words are not even needed, for the physical procedure may suffice to attract the desired forces.

The ceremonial methods are actually quite straight-forward, in principle. The actual method must first be associated with the invocation of a particular force. Through that association or correspondence, the procedure transmits the will to the necessary forces and draws them into manifestation. Through considerable repetition and practice, patterns are established on subtle levels so that the form (ritual) alone can be used to draw upon the associated forces. But there are usually few, if any, safeguards built into the ceremonial forms. The methods can be quite potent and the forces unmanageable. Thus, purely ceremonial or psychic methods are discouraged, as the student learns to utilize the higher, internal faculties (that are more easily controlled).

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 272 - THE QUALITY OF FOOD

The quality of food has particular effects on the form (body) and consciousness. The quality of consciousness of the individual is usually reflected in the quality (consciousness) of the food that is consumed (and vice versa). Even the physical body is an energy (vibratory) form (aura) that interacts with the relative consciousness of the food that is ingested. High quality foods (in nominal quantities) support, sustain, and encourage a higher quality of consciousness and limit the independent vibratory activity of the personality.

The effects of the quality of food on physical levels are not as pronounced as on astral (emotional) levels (and similarly, not as pronounced as on mental levels), particularly in the case of the spiritual student (less pronounced in the case of other persons). The quality of food can be broadly categorized as having mineral, plant, and animal elements. Certain minerals (in small quantities) have moderately positive effects upon the physical body, but very little (if any) effect on higher levels. Plant foods (vegetables, fruits, nuts, etc.) (in modest quantities) have rather positive effects on both physical, emotional, and mental levels. Plant foods provide more essential vitality than other foods (mineral or animal) and are much more efficient as far as the physical body (digestive processes) is concerned.

Plant foods tend to increase the sensitivity of the student on both emotional and mental levels, and for this reason it is important to avoid extreme (sudden) changes in diet and to cultivate emotional sublimation (control). Emotional sensitivity, however induced, is worth very little unless the student can properly control it. The sensitivity provided by plant foods (a vegetarian or meatless diet) merely provides the opportunity; it is up to the student to utilize that opportunity through mental and spiritual exercise. The vegetarian diet alone has naught to do with spirituality, though spirituality (if present) is enhanced by a (proper) meatless diet (and conversely impaired by a diet of animal food).

The simplicity and natural vitality of plant foods (in moderation) provide most efficient and effective means of properly sustaining the physical form and its associated consciousness, minimizing the burden of digestion and being more easily (readily) converted into the needed internal forms. Conversely, the complexity and naturally coarse vibration of animal foods (flesh)(meat)(fish) provide the least effective means of sustaining the physical form. Moreover, animal foods in particular dull the consciousness of the individual for extended periods of time (if not indefinitely). This effect is quite compatible with ordinary consciousness, which is not that far above the animal consciousness. But in the case of the spiritual student seeking to control and uplift his natural (historical) (hereditary)(animal) instincts, the animal food diet is a particularly burdensome adversary. The basic problem is two-fold: overcoming the animal consciousness of the physical body (which is necessarily (in fact) an animal body), and overcoming the consciousness of the food that is ingested.

In the case of plant foods, it is a relatively simple matter of overcoming the (relatively weak) plant consciousness. In the case of animal foods, it is a more difficult task (requiring more energy and attention) of overcoming the relatively strong animal consciousness of the food, which, at the same time, stimulates the animal consciousness of the physical body (and the emotions). Thus eating animal foods is counterproductive (at least for the spiritual student who is concerned about his own consciousness and his contribution to the spiritual path). Much of the struggle of the spiritual student with his own lower nature is won when the student achieves a well-disciplined diet of quality (plant) food.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 273 - THE HUMAN PERSPECTIVE

One of the perils of the human experience is the tendency of the human perspective to be centered on the objective human experience, which is necessarily misleading with respect to any greater (broader)(deeper) experience (life)(reality). Through the natural course of human development and evolution, the human being becomes self-centered (self-conscious in the lower sense) and becomes distracted by (entangled in) the illusions of separate (discrete) existence.

This has some rather definite consequences in terms of individual human viewpoints, particularly in the unenlightened. The vision and current experience of the individual is necessarily perceived and interpreted in accordance with the self-centered consciousness and the limited, past experience of the individual. That limited experience and narrow, self-centered perspective is further complicated (reinforced) by the mass objective illusion and the prevailing beliefs in the exclusive reality (?) of the human perspective. Consequently, the individual tends to understand only to the extent of his own experience and beliefs. The individual may have difficulty in understanding foreign experience (impression) since it may not correlate directly with his own. The individual will (usually) interpret all sense impression in accordance with his own familiar experience, even where such interpretation may require transformation (distortion) into more familiar terms (forms). An even greater peril (for the spiritual student) exists when that interpretation (misinterpretation) is performed unconsciously.

The spiritual student is ever urged to overcome self-centeredness and to broaden (extend)(deepen) the perspective (awareness) to understand matters in more universal (real) terms. The natural arrogance (illusion) of self-centered consciousness must be overcome if the student is to understand the greater truths and recognize the place of all things in a greater context. As the student progresses, it becomes increasingly important for the student to understand and discern (recognize) relevance; for personal matters (the lessons or values of self-centered existence) become less relevant and impersonal matters (the interrelatedness of the whole) become more and more relevant.

The problems of the human perspective with regard to individual consciousness are similarly existent for the human consciousness in general. Humanity has evolved through countless years of self-centered and human-centered experience. Consequently, any experience is interpreted (or misinterpreted) in predominantly human terms. Ordinary human experience merely sustains the illusions of human-centered existence; but extraordinary human experience is even more unfortunately interpreted in human terms by the self-centered. Thus the misunderstanding (conceit) of humanity is considerable, as the normal vision of humanity is centered on humanity rather than the whole of which humanity is merely a part. The tendency of humans to anthropomorphize or humanize the perception (or conception) of God, devas, etc. is one of many common problems in human perspective that create or sustain misunderstanding.

This problem of the human-centered perspective is basically one of wrong assumption. Man assumes self-importance and interprets his experience as if his is the only way to experience. Man assumes a great deal about his life and experience without any real basis in truth; he tends to oversimplify his experience in familiar human (misleading) terms (in his limited (narrow) perspective). The natural remedy comes with some degree of humility (self-honesty) and the consideration of alternate possibilities. With a broader, impersonal perspective, the student is more likely to learn the truth about existence and overcome the petty glammers and prevalent illusions of the self-centered (human) perspective.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 274 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (6)

The sixth tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'the Impassivity of the Unembodied.' Plotinus discusses the relationship of matter to material existence and the relationship of the soul to the personality and its material existence. In Plotinus' terminology, the soul may refer either to the higher (abstract) mind of the soul itself, or to the lower (concrete) mind of the (involved) personality. Also in Plotinus' terminology, matter refers to the base of material existence, not to material substance. A parallel is shown for the soul (spirit) and its personality (form), where the personality is impressed (reflected into) matter. Thus the lessons of either (personality or form) can be related to the other. But an inverse (double) parallel is also shown, for the soul is impassive with regard to the personality, while matter (the base) is impassive with regard to any form.

The soul is considered virtually immune from personal energy, while its reflection becomes involved in personality matters. The soul views objective experience impersonally and subjectively, in consciousness. Feeling and thinking are considered actions upon experience, rather than states of consciousness, and are attributed to the lower self (personality) rather than the soul. As the lower self proceeds from latency to actuality (as it approaches the soul in consciousness and contributes to the quality of the soul), that personality (mind) simply achieves the intention of its nature. In that course (sojourn), the personality may experience (develop) virtue, a reasonable harmony (natural concordance) with the true (higher) self, drawing upon the higher faculties and consciousness. Conversely, the lesser self may experience vice (the breach of harmony)(discord), through the disregard of the higher faculties (through the natural distraction of the independent (extended)(objective) experience).

Likes and dislikes, pleasure and pain, all of the personal feelings and emotions, opinions, etc. are attributed to the lower self; whereas steady aspiration and spiritual strength (mature detachment) are attributed to the personality that is able to draw upon the quality of the higher self. The (impassive) soul constitutes a much higher awareness, without participation on lower levels. But the personality is subject to direct experience and disturbance, since only material substance can be disturbed. Disturbance (modification)(interaction) lies within the domain of illusion (the pretense of matter). Modification (change) arises from difference (opposition)(contrast). Matter (the base) cannot be destroyed or dissolved, but the form can be modified.

When Plotinus speaks of matter, he speaks of the nature of matter, as matter, not as form (thus are discerned matter from form and matter (form) from archetype). Matter is the receptive (not reactive) base, accepting the presence (shape)(character) of form. Modification implies acquisition or release and holds for form, not matter. Forms are compounds of matter (patterns impressed upon matter)(the impressions of ideals (archetypes)). Thus matter participates in form but remains unaffected. Material (objective) existence would be impossible without matter (the substratum), since it is the character of reflection (as is all of material existence) to appear in something not itself. The base is a mirror (a repercussive surface), the extreme (immutable) boundary of the sphere of manifestation. Spirit is the other extreme (boundary)(while consciousness is interactive).

The lower self is a form impressed in matter and subject to the limitations and distractions (modifications) of material existence, such as resistance (inertia), glamour (illusion), absorption, and modification. In understanding matter (form), the indwelling consciousness can ultimately conquer the material existence and achieve an elevated state.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 275 - MAGIC AND RELIGION

The domain of religion is qualified primarily by the Sixth Ray, though other ray elements are usually present. The ceremonial element (via the Seventh Ray) plays a major supporting role, but it is the Sixth Ray energy proper (and its analog in the Second Ray) that provides the basis of any religion. The type of religion is determined primarily by the particular ray through which it is developed and qualified. A Seventh Ray religion, for example, will normally emphasize the ceremonial aspects, while a First Ray religion will normally emphasize First Ray elements.

Where the Seventh Ray influence provides the ceremonial aspects and associated magical forces, the Sixth Ray influence (basic qualification) provides magical forces of a different order. Seventh Ray magic is largely ceremonial and deals primarily with physical (etheric) forces; Sixth Ray magic is largely personality-centered and deals primarily with emotional (astral) forces. Magic along Sixth Ray lines is particularly potent due to the coincidence of magnetic (astral)(personal) forces. Those magnetic forces are particularly useful in any religious movement from the standpoint of impelling influence. There are, of course, advantages (merit) and disadvantages (defects) to magnetic methods. The primary advantage is the ease with which the religious movement can become influential, particularly as the movement grows in scope and potency, and as adherents are attracted and influenced (hopefully) along positive (constructive) lines. The primary disadvantages are the tendency toward the extreme (including imposition), and the undermining of free will as adherents are cultivated.

Sixth Ray magic is probably most obvious in the religious leaders who have cultivated a strong personal magnetism and who are usually quite potent along magical (magnetic)(emotional) lines, particularly with those who do not really think for themselves (and who are therefore easily influenced). This is a natural and almost necessary step at some point in the evolution of human consciousness; but, the hypnotic element of any movement that draws upon the emotions and the mind can be easily misused as beliefs or values are imposed rather than presented for consideration. As humanity evolves, so does religion evolve, so that a wide spectrum of influential religions exists, including some which have a mature character and cultivate the intelligence of adherents, and others which are less mature and merely impose values.

The cultivated image of the founder or central figure can easily exceed the potency of the individual, as magical forces are used to sustain or enhance a powerful thought-form (on concrete mental and astral levels). As more adherents are attracted, the central image is strengthened (unconsciously) even to the extent that the psychic image can interact directly and actively with anyone who visualizes the image or calls upon its influence by name or ceremony. A particularly potent religious movement can be sustained for thousands of years, but the character and temperament is likely to change (gradually)(continuously) according to the mass consciousness of the adherents.

The practical basis of any religion is usually centered in its idealism. Through magical forces, that idealism can be a potent and constructive influence for human progress (culturally, morally, and spiritually), particularly where the individual consciously and intelligently chooses to cooperate. But the dangers of extreme idealism should be tempered or discouraged by moderation and balance. Spiritual students of all faiths are encouraged to work within the domain of popular religion wherever they are comfortable, as the (broader-minded) spiritual students actually serve as a moderating evolutionary force.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 276 - FIRST RAY METHODS

First Ray methods are particularly potent since the First Ray provides the power aspect; consequently, First Ray methods are relatively drastic and require a considerable self-mastery in order to properly handle the evoked energies. Development along First Ray lines is somewhat of a paradox, as the intended qualities are inherently needed in order to properly wield the evoked energies. But, nevertheless, the willing aspirant can evoke First Ray energies, and, if the aspirant is sufficiently strong, the aspirant can grow rather rapidly. Otherwise, the First Ray methods may prove rather difficult and self-defeating.

First Ray methods require a certain degree of will and determination, for the energies come quickly and forcefully, with relatively immediate success or failure; there is little, if any, quarter (middle ground). The First Ray methods depend heavily on the self-reliance of the student; the student is often exiled, to stand alone and achieve through self-determination, only to return a stronger, healthier contributor and cooperator. The basic method of achievement (along First Ray lines) is the concentration of the will, to overpower any obstacle and to conquer any and all circumstances. The (pure) First Ray method of overcoming desire, for example, would be complete (total)(immediate) abstinence, without prelude or gradual cultivation. In a sense, the First Ray method is the most direct path, calling for a maximum effort over a short period of time. It is the way of intensity and supreme self-discipline.

Through the concentration of will (force), First Ray energies are easily evoked and (if the individual is prepared) applied to the purpose in mind. The First Ray method of integration, for example, is the imposition of will upon the entire lower self (personality), forcing the physical (etheric) body, the emotional (astral) body, and the mind into a fully integrated state. Where there is resistance, that aspect of the lower self is either destroyed or overpowered (overwhelmed) by the intensity of will. The problem is one of sustaining integration (or alignment), which requires a more subtle (complete)(deeper) superposition of force. But with preparation (wisdom) comes the ability and understanding to effect permanent results.

One of the basic problems of the First Ray arises with the application of First Ray methods to external objects. The ethics of self-imposition are unquestionable, but the ethics of external imposition are another matter entirely. The student has the undeniable right to self-determination (insofar as karma permits), but where the rights of others are concerned, the student using First Ray methods should be very careful. A (lower) First Ray tendency is to dominate others, while another (higher) First Ray tendency is to encourage others (by example) toward self-reliance. Throughout there exists a drive toward unification, forcefully (in the lower sense) or otherwise (in the higher sense). The supreme achievement (greatest accomplishment) along First Ray lines is that of selfless, effortless will, which, in the higher (group) sense, is the self-realized unification (synthesis) of consciousness. But such unification must be imposed from within (as a cooperative achievement), never (effectively) from without (where higher intelligence is concerned).

In one sense, all of humanity experience along First Ray lines, since each incarnation is a self-imposed exile (from the spiritual rapport of the soul) for needed experience. The First Ray experience certainly cultivates the powers (attributes) of the individual, but with increasing maturity, the First Ray experience is tempered by wisdom (love) and a growing humility (rapport with the greater life which embraces all).

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 277 - PATHS OF INTELLIGENCE

There are numerous lifewaves within each planetary scheme, and each lifewave creates and sustains its own path of progression from lower consciousness to higher consciousness (with sufficient encouragement and guidance). As the evolution proceeds, the intelligence of the various lives is increased and expanded, along the particular lines of development intended for the lifewave. There are many paths, and each path has its characteristic methods and goals, varying widely one from another. Ultimately, those paths of intelligence converge as the lives (lifewaves) are blended and as the contributions of each are assimilated into the greater life.

Intelligence is defined in various ways, according to perspective. In general, intelligence refers to the power or capacity for understanding; that power or capacity depends to some extent on the mental faculties that have been developed, and/or upon the mental resources that can be drawn upon. Human intelligence, in particular, is the product of a path through individualization (the development of self-consciousness)(and the development of brain-consciousness), a path that leads to a highly developed (and structured) mind having a predominantly objective perspective. But human intelligence is only one of many forms of intelligence (described by various paths), and human intelligence (and the corresponding path) differs markedly from other forms.

Many other (major) paths to intelligence do not require the development of brain-consciousness or even the relatively objective, externalized experience that is so characteristic of the human path. Many other paths lead quite easily and effectively to various forms of penetrating (and non-penetrating) subjective intelligence, while some paths lead to far more objective forms than even the human path. But the type of understanding realized depends a great deal upon the type of path (which in turn depends on the degree of objectivity (subjectivity), the degree of externalization, the plane(s) of consciousness involved, the degree of self-consciousness (group-consciousness), etc.).

The human path (somewhat objective, somewhat externalized, involving (primarily) the lower three planes of consciousness (physical, emotional, and mental), and involving considerable self-consciousness) is not particularly common (nor is it particularly rare) but it does afford some interesting experience not generally shared by other paths. The (positive) human path involves a great deal of contrast and illusion; other paths generally offer less contrast and less illusion. The angelic path, for example, is more subjective, is also somewhat externalized, involves (approximately) the same planes of consciousness, but cultivates group consciousness and realization rather than self-consciousness and rational processes. Angelic beings (devas) need no brain-consciousness, for their form of intelligence is developed along entirely different lines altogether. They pass through a kingdom slightly analogous to the human, but without any real contrast. That semi-human experience occurs much earlier in their evolution than the human experience that the current (human) lifewave is passing through.

The understanding achieved by these two paths (human and angelic) differs significantly, yet, the human path leads ultimately to an understanding relatively similar to that of the deva evolution, but at a much later point in (relative) evolution. The pioneers of humanity, for example, deal more with the subjective consciousness and work with group energies (and pass beyond individual consciousness). But the devas are far better equipped to understand the other paths of intelligence than the (ordinary) human, since subjective consciousness predominates through the later stages of (virtually) every known path.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 278 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (7)

The seventh tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'Time and Eternity.' Plotinus considers the nature of time and eternity and the relationship that exists between these two concepts. Eternity is considered to be a concept quite superior to time, yet related to time through various processes of manifestation. Eternity is closely related to being, while time relates more closely with the realm of process. Time is thus considered a representation in image; in a sense, a reflection into lower-dimensional existence.

Eternity is considered to be much more august. As the divine envelops its parts, so does eternity embrace its content as a whole, rather than as a dimensional extension of time (multi-dimensional existence approaches non-dimensional (timeless) existence)(the other extreme is one-dimensional existence). Eternity requires repose and a unity that excludes interval (duration). Consequently, perpetuity in the time-order does not constitute eternity. Eternity participates in being (subject), movement (life), and repose (self-identity). Eternity embraces a concentrated diversity, 'a life changelessly motionless,' 'a consummation without part or interval.' Eternity is the announcement of divine identity, 'which characterizes what has no futurity but eternally is.'

Engendered things (such as personality) exist in time from some beginning (creation)(emergence) to some end (dissolution)(obscuration)(being amenable to futurity), while unengendered things (such as the soul) exist beyond time. This unengendered existence (eternity) is beyond even perpetual existence (which is merely an extension of time rather than a quality of being). Eternity is considered God made manifest in the sense of the whole (a plurality of lives, limitless, self-possessed) of manifestation rather than any objective perspective (dependent on derived manifestation). Thus eternity may be considered the aura of the One, the imperishable being, without regard to process (interval)(term). The everlasting (unbroken continuity) implies duration (time-dependence), where duration in a stream (flow) of time (space)(energy). But eternity is a multi-dimensional whole (field), beyond duration (having no time-dependence).

Sequential existence describes things and beings in the time-order (being bound in time), while eternity exists as partlessness, complete without sequence. Time is related to movement, though movement can be intermittent while time is (ever) continuous. Time is an attribute or characteristic of externalized existence, distinct from any temporal measurement; time is endless, independent of any measure. Eternity is described as 'unwavering life, undivided totality, limitless, knowing no divagation, at rest in unity and intent upon it,' while time is described as a derived quality, a product of the processes of manifestation, contained within (dependent upon) differentiation. Thus, engendered (sequential) (spacial) existence sustains the appearance of time (and space) and the perspective of diversity (differentiation)(dimensionality), while unengendered existence remains free from the bonds (processes) of time and space and constitutes a perspective of unity (non-dimensionality)(timelessness)(non-sequential, limitless coexistence).

Time flows with the ceaseless forward movement of life in manifestation. Time may be viewed as the life of the soul in reflection, as it progresses through (objective) experience; thus (objective) time is a product of perception (or is at least dependent upon perception). Time is a product of the outgoing (personal) phase of the soul. The internal phase of the soul knows only eternity. As the student progresses the consciousness from objective time-perception through subjective time, the student is led ever closer to eternity and the One.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 279 - TRUTH AND UNCERTAINTY

One of the inherent problems of truth (knowledge)(understanding) in philosophy (religion)(science) is the paradox of certainty (uncertainty). Due to the conditional nature of manifestation and the inherent limitations (imperfections) of differentiated existence, an uncertainty principle governs any approach to truth such that no apparent truth can be known with (absolute) certainty. The appearance of (belief in) some absolute certainty suggests a lack of true (spiritual) humility (which in turn suggests some degree of personal glamour and/or illusion). The spiritual student must be satisfied with relative truth, understanding in accordance with his consciousness, experience, and temperament. As consciousness increases, so does the capacity for understanding. But consciousness is ever relative, and the human experience is ever within the domain of limitation, subject to the necessary illusions of manifested existence.

Even if the individual consciousness is able to reach (true) transcendental (impersonal) levels, the realization obtained cannot be brought into the realm of conscious human understanding without being constrained somewhat. With a depth of intuition and a considerable capacity for correlation, discretion, and understanding, it is possible to embrace a great deal of knowledge with a considerable confidence which approaches certainty. But in wisdom, the esoteric student (scholar) recognizes the futility of absolute certainty, and remains relatively detached from even the most firm of his beliefs (realization).

Every presentation of truth (however highly inspired) remains an assertion, albeit founded in the greatest of minds and the greatest of consciousness. Every (perceived)(realized) truth constitutes (corresponds to) a belief, which may very well approach a very high degree of accuracy, but in the final analysis, it remains a belief regardless of its foundation. The greater truths are relatively free from personal energy (distortion), yet nevertheless incomplete and dependent on human means for communication. The human (objective) world merely complicates matters, for it is a world of appearance (reflection)(shadows), where every apparent thing or being (or experience) is a matter of necessarily limited perception (perspective). If some object is viewed in the most narrow way practicable, the knowledge realized will be incomplete (less than absolute), if only due to its lack of correlation with a greater scheme of things. And even if some object is viewed in the broadest sense practicable, the knowledge gained (realized) will likewise remain incomplete, however universal, if only due to its lack of definition (specificity).

The spiritual student is urged to consider truth (knowledge)(understanding) in the context of a working body of knowledge (beliefs) well-founded in (inner) (sanctioned) experience and verified by consciousness (the enlightened union of mind and heart). But that body of knowledge (accumulation or system of beliefs) must remain relatively flexible (stable but not implacable); the student should accept some degree of uncertainty (open-mindedness) and allow his beliefs to deepen (through modification and expansion) in the light of new experience (realization). With relative confidence (discretion)(appropriateness), there can be no polarity (of right or wrong), only the freedom (humility) of consciousness that approaches truth (reality).

Truth is ever relative. Certainty is relatively impossible. The futility of certainty (arrogance) approaches certainty (illusion). Unquestionable proof cannot exist. Truth remains ever an internal experience. Life is filled with one paradox after another. Along the spiritual path, the student is urged to embrace the relativity of all experience and proceed with confidence.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 280 - SECOND RAY METHODS

The various Second Ray methods deal predominantly with consciousness (the second aspect) and can be classified into two groups: the inner methods and the outer methods. The inner methods deal with consciousness directly, through meditation (proper) and alignment (though inner methods may be used in conjunction with First Ray methods (concentration) and Third Ray methods (contemplation)). The outer methods deal with consciousness less directly, through activity and association with others on objective levels.

The inner methods involve a conscious identification with the soul and the evocation of soul energies along two lines: internally as the mind (and personality) is irradiated, and externally as the individual is linked with other souls. The proper evocation of Second Ray energy requires some degree of impersonality and a relatively well-developed (and mature) heart quality. The mystical experience proper is primarily a Second Ray experience, although some degree of Sixth Ray energy is usually incorporated in the method. The mystical method properly calls for the impersonal aspiration that so characterizes the enlightened Second Ray student. The inner methods depend primarily on the buddhic (intuitional) faculties of the soul, as it is along Second Ray lines that the intuition is unveiled and drawn into the responsive mind. The inner methods generally involve the pursuit of wisdom (rather than knowledge) and the concomitant sharing of heart-centered energies (as encouragement).

The outer methods include a number of characteristic activities, most of which are service-oriented. The general activity is sharing, though it may take the form of healing or teaching (or on higher levels, illumination through magnetic rapport). The healing (teaching)(sharing) methods call for the establishment of the inner alignment followed by an outpouring of Second Ray energies. Having achieved some degree of alignment, the student directs the consciousness outward to humanity, as the inclusive Second Ray energies are allowed to flow unobstructed by the personality-instrument. The teacher-student relationship (along Second Ray lines) involves mutual respect (and impersonal love), a sharing of the path and a spirit of cooperation. But the student is not allowed to become dependent (as is often the case along Sixth Ray lines); nor is the student directed. The student is simply encouraged in accordance with the capacity and responsiveness of his consciousness. As the loyalty of the student grows (based upon mutual respect and understanding), so does the student contribute more and more to the group endeavor.

The Second Ray method of achievement involves self-sacrifice, service, and sharing (which leads incidentally to intuitive insight, perception, and self-illumination). The student thus progresses to the extent that he is selfless (self-forgetting)(and to the extent that his service is relatively impersonal). Specifically, the Second Ray energies can be used to eliminate impediments and stumbling blocks (to spiritual progress), through non-resistance. The student learns to flow with the stream of (Second Ray) energy, and the struggle per se is one of allowing that energy to flow. The student achieves integration through identification with the integrated state (identification being inherently non-resistive), but the student must also have sufficient awareness and freedom from deception. These Second Ray methods are relatively easy to use, except for those having a preponderance of Fourth Ray or Sixth Ray energy. The problems of the Second Ray methods include impatience, the tendency toward the reformation of others (rather than self-reformation), and the vulnerabilities implied through relationships with the Fourth Ray and the Sixth Ray.