



THE UPPER TRIAD

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THE UPPER TRIAD

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THE UPPER TRIAD

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SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. The Unity of All Life. That there exists one God, both immanent and transcendent, within which are differentiated all lives and all forms.
2. The Purpose of Life. That the purpose of life is the evolution of consciousness through experience and expression. That all life is conditioned by purpose within a grand scheme of progressive cyclic evolution.
3. Reincarnation and Karma. That human evolution proceeds through many progressive incarnations according to a cosmic law of periodicity, ever onward and upward. That life is conditioned by the Great Teacher, the Law of Karma, which yields learning experiences and encourages evolution as a consequence of free will, through every thought, feeling, and action.
4. The Nature of Truth. That truth can be found in philosophy, religion, and science, which are but aspects of one coherent and inclusive truth having no inherent conflict or contradiction. That there are many paths to God, embracing all religions and spiritual philosophy. That truth is relative and can be perceived in many ways and on many levels, according to consciousness.
5. The Problem of Life. That the real problem of life in the lower worlds is the elimination of glamour and illusion. That glamour and illusion can be fully overcome, as the student achieves the alignment of a purified and integrated personality with the soul, through intelligent meditation.
6. Personality and Soul. That the true individuality is the soul which inhabits the personality. That the personality is composed of three interrelated instruments: the physical body, the emotional or astral body, and the lower mind. That the soul is the medium of unity and the essence of the divinity within.
7. The Spiritual Path. That the spiritual path in its many aspects embraces the higher stages of human evolution, as the human soul takes its stand and commits itself to conscious and selfless development. That this process encompasses the development of the inner, latent spirituality and the application of one's faculties in service to God and to humanity.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 281 - PARALLEL EVOLUTION

The evolutionary design for any given planetary scheme usually involves a succession of lifewaves which differentiate in various ways and pass through various stages (kingdoms)(cycles) on their way to fulfilment. Each lifewave may expand horizontally and/or vertically according to the specifics of the plan and the circumstances to be faced. A horizontal expansion suggests further differentiation into parallel vertical streams, while a vertical expansion suggests that some elements (lives) within the lifewave may progress at different rates, some faster and some slower. As the lifewave spreads out through vertical expansion, it may even overlap the preceding and/or succeeding lifewaves.

The evolutionary design normally emphasizes horizontal expansion, as the lifewave is differentiated into smaller streams for the purpose of balance and diversification. Examples of diversification can be found throughout the various kingdoms. Humanity is differentiated into various ray types as well as various races. The animal lifewave is clearly differentiated into various species (each having its own animal group-spirit). This type of differentiation is applied to both forms and the lives within the forms, but not necessarily in the same fashion; i.e., the differentiation of forms may be relatively independent from the differentiation of lives. Each stream that is so differentiated (diversified) provides multiple paths (possibilities) for the evolving life. Each path offers new (or different) opportunities, and each such path contributes in some way to the greater life (lifewave).

Differentiation for balance has an entirely different aim from that of differentiation for diversity (short-term). Differentiation for balance (polarity) provides a much more fundamental framework for evolution, affecting the entire scheme and having implications far beyond that of the relatively short-term experience. In the Earth planetary scheme, for example, the primary stream of evolutionary life has been branched into two (major) secondary streams: the human evolution and the deva evolution. The two branches share a common origin, but diverged very early in their history into two great parallel streams, each having a distinct polarity. The human evolution passes through the various kingdoms (mineral, plant, animal, human) in a positively (actively) polarized fashion, while the deva evolution passes through analogous kingdoms in a negatively (passively) polarized fashion. Each is essential to the overall plan, but the experience and contributions of each are markedly different. There is some overlap between the two paths, primarily in the sub-human kingdoms and (ultimately) far beyond the human kingdom where the two paths eventually merge and their respective distinctive experiences are integrated.

Parallel evolution in the case of differentiation for diversity is essentially supplementary (merely additional), while parallel evolution in the case of differentiation for balance is essentially complementary (serving some major deficiency or incompleteness)(contrast for gain). Though analogous in some respects, the sexual differentiation of the human form differs markedly from that of parallel evolution in other respects. Sexual differentiation is a very short-term phenomena as far as the individual is concerned, and only involves the form (personality), not the soul (which remains sexless). The differentiation into deva and human paths is a very long-term experience which wholly involves the soul aspect. For all practical purposes, a soul is confined to one path or the other for the duration of evolution; while in the case of sexual distinction, the soul experiences both male and female incarnations throughout the relatively brief period form polarity.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 282 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (8)

The eighth tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'Nature, Contemplation, and the One.' Nature is the underlying creative and controlling force for the manifested world. Nature is by its own nature a contemplative act, a guiding force distinct from its works. Nature is an intelligent intermediary mechanism, filled with (related to) sweeping lives and forms, a creative mechanism bridging between the creator (logos) and the field (of nature). Nature possesses an indwelling effectiveness, creativity as a consequence of contemplation. Nature is simultaneously an act and an object of contemplation.

Nature is an instrument of evolution, of the same order as karma (and irretrievably merged with karmic processes), an intelligence that has no apparent (objective) evolutionary tendency in its own right (yet the manifold lives which form its activity and mechanism are certainly inherently evolutionary). As an intelligence, nature possesses a vast subjective knowledge and understanding, but has no objective faculties of its own. Nature is simply a synthesis of force serving as the agent of archetypal existence. The production of nature is an externalization of the archetype, yet much more complex, as it interacts with externalized phenomena. As an agent, nature participates in creative processes and is governed by various (natural) laws and principles (conditions).

The cause and effect relationship of manifestation is related to a broad, unified chain of contemplative experience. The creator (creative being)(a logos on some level) contemplates some objective. Intermediaries (lives)(laws)(principles) come into being and are impelled or conditioned toward bringing about the objective. The intelligent intermediaries further contemplate their own experience as they participate in the magnetic (creative) vortex of the original (sustained) (overshadowing) contemplation. The immediate general objective is brought into manifestation via a succession of intelligent lives (actors)(agents)(participants) as nature (karma) continues to sustain manifestation (being energized by the original momentum (contemplation)) and the more specific (cultivated) purposes of manifestation are worked out. As the ultimate object is fulfilled, the sustaining forces are withdrawn and the universe gradually dissolves into obscurity (as the lives pass into chaos to await a new beginning), the wisdom of the experience being incorporated in the higher, contemplative life (logos).

All of this grand process involves a chain of contemplation, from the precursor (logos) to the elementary lives of manifested form. The elementary lives are actually more aware of their own contemplation than the majority of human personalities, who, in their extreme condition of apparent separation, remain asleep with regard to their true, inner nature. That (inner) soul principle extends throughout the universe in a succession of lives within lives, each succeeding from its prior and being different though related and an extension of the contemplation of the prior. The relative strength of the soul varies according to the particulars, but all are encompassed within the greater vision. Thus, action is the result of contemplation and leads to contemplation. Activity springs from incompleteness, as each is incomplete with respect to its prior. As the soul achieves relative completion (with regard to the present opportunity) it gradually withdraws its instrument from the lower activities and maintains its repose.

All springs from vision. Every life is a form of thought, an emanation more complex than its source. Contemplation is ultimately one with its object; it is only left for the student to achieve such a realization. It is the advancing conscious contemplation of the student that leads to that (divine)(inner)(limitless) union.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 283 - SOLITUDE

The sojourn or pilgrimage of the soul into the external world of the personality (incarnation) involves eventually facing the encumbering glammers and illusions of ordinary (mundane) human experience and reconciling the apparent separation of the lower self from its higher counterpart (and the apparent separation of individuals from the group consciousness). The vast majority of humanity are so enchanted by ordinary experience (illusion) that they are unaware of their absorption in mundane affairs and are unaware of their true spiritual self. But the spiritual student becomes so increasingly aware of the true state of his experience that a dilemma is faced with regard to action and involvement.

On the one hand the student is drawn to humanity through the love aspect, the impulse to serve, and the natural tendency to be absorbed in the mundane world. On the other hand the student is drawn away from humanity as he seeks the internal balance (self-realization) and feels more and more alien to the mundane world of ordinary humanity. As spiritual values and spiritual consciousness are brought more into focus within the mind and life of the spiritual student, the contrast increases, and the tendency to withdraw from worldly experience may very well predominate. The student is forced to reject many of the ordinary values and as much of the glamour and illusion as can be realized. At this stage the student must also struggle to avoid absorption in the outer world through increased detachment and impersonality (leading to greater freedom of thinking and a deeper rapport with spiritual existence and the common life). This solitude of the student is essential to the ultimate progress, but must usually remain an internal experience, a solitude of inner peace while the student functions (with discretion) in the ordinary world.

The master of solitude is one who has passed through the preliminary stages and who has achieved a state of consciousness in which he is able to live and work in the ordinary world without being absorbed or distracted by mundane concerns. His detachment and impersonality are balanced with wisdom (discretion) and understanding. He refuses to compromise his standards to the extent that his consciousness is affected or to the extent that his ability to serve effectively is impaired. Such a spiritual student places increasing emphasis on subjective work as his abilities and talents are more usefully applied through consciousness. But the student cannot (normally) withdraw completely, for the link with humanity must still be maintained on objective levels (to facilitate the proper passage of spiritual energies). The value of the spiritual student is his place within humanity, for just being among humanity (and being self-realized) is an encouragement to others.

But to master this experience of solitude is not easy. By not accepting normal human values, the student may find himself set apart by others, for he cannot share their mundane rapport and may very much seem an alien. Thus the spiritual student must face that challenge (contrast) as well, while allowing the inner love energies to flow unimpaired by the beliefs or feelings or values of his fellow human beings. The student must accept being misunderstood in numerous (unavoidable) ways, but even that misunderstanding is an encouragement to understand. Many are troubled (consciously or unconsciously) by the presence of the spiritual student and are ultimately encouraged to reconcile their dilemma. Consolation for the spiritual student comes only from within, as the real unity of human life is recognized. The master of solitude remains ever one with humanity where it matters, inwardly, while on external levels remaining detached and free from enchantment.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 284 - THIRD RAY METHODS

The various Third Ray methods deal predominantly with intelligence rather than consciousness, and with the mental principle. While the will is the primary instrument of the First Ray and while the intuition (love) is the primary instrument of the Second Ray, the mind (light) is the major instrument of the Third Ray, with a considerable emphasis on the higher, abstract mind. The inner Third Ray methods deal with intelligence directly, through contemplation, while the outer Third Ray methods deal with various aspects of civilization (active intelligence as a force for evolution and the fulfilment of the purposes of manifestation).

The inner Third Ray methods are initially concerned with understanding the mind and its relationships, then with training the contemplative mental faculties (and cultivating the principle (factor) of intelligence), and finally with applying those faculties in contemplation for greater understanding. Along First Ray lines, internal adjustments are made through the application of the will; along Second Ray lines, internal adjustments are made through the application of consciousness; but along Third Ray lines, internal adjustments are made indirectly (but no less effectively) as a consequence of understanding. The act of understanding (comprehension)(realization) carries with it a flow of energy which qualifies the consciousness and brings about subtle, internal adjustments.

Contemplation can be a potent instrument for understanding, provided the student is properly qualified and responsive. Even contemplation without (preliminary) meditation can be quite helpful, for contemplation (in this lower sense) is a broad-minded consideration (evaluation)(reasoning) that draws the abstract mind into alignment with the concrete mind (of the waking-consciousness). True contemplation (a stage beyond reasoning (beyond the preliminary meditation)) is even more potent for it removes the lower mind (personality) as a hindrance (since the lower mind is brought to a point of responsive tension (perfect quiet)(allegiance)). Third Ray methods (chiefly contemplation and subsequent reasoning (correlation)(creative ideation) are used extensively in philosophical study (and in particular, the study of the plans, purposes, and methods of evolutionary manifestation). These Third Ray methods characterize the spiritual scholar who involves an active intelligence in the pursuit of understanding.

The Third Ray bridges between the (inner) realm of aspect and the (outer) realm of attribute (activity). Scholarly understanding may not lead directly to activity, for the consequential adjustments in consciousness may be sufficient in themselves. But understanding may more often lead to outer constructive activity (the application of outer Third Ray methods). As an active evolutionary force, the Third Ray is involved with change, adaptation, improvement, progress, and development in many aspects of human civilization. The Third Ray is an inherently creative ray, but in a general sense (in contrast with the more specialized creativity of the Fourth Ray and the Seventh Ray). Outer Third Ray methods include or are involved with economic methods, aspects of socialism, diplomacy, various judicial (legal) methods, and various aspects of communication.

The Third Ray approach leans heavily on the contemplative disposition, and involves patience, caution, impartiality (impersonality)(detachment), discrimination (discretion), goodwill, and the concept of right activity. To some extent, the Third Ray methods complement those of the Fifth Ray by emphasizing the abstract, relatively general (universal) principles, concepts, and ideas (while the Fifth Ray emphasizes particulars). Ultimately, the Third Ray is much more actively involved in guiding evolution than the four rays of attribute which provide the specifics of active experience.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 285 - ADVANCEMENT

Every experience in the lower worlds has some relative (large or small) significance for the evolution of human consciousness. The entire realm of human activity is a stage for the experience, expression, and progress of the human being. That progress is based almost entirely on experience and is impelled from within and from without by evolutionary (and karmic) forces. Preliminary advancement comes through the development of various abilities and as a broad spectrum of experience is properly assimilated.

Normal, gradual advancement is impelled primarily by external, karmic forces which bring to the individual the experiences earned by previous activity and needed for individual growth. But for the individual who is conscious of evolutionary purpose and who willingly cooperates with that purpose, the advancement is naturally hastened as internal forces are brought to bear on the individual consciousness. Those internal forces are increasingly derived from the consciousness of the soul, as the soul commits itself by stages to the spiritual path.

Though the accumulation of experience is important (essential) to human progress and though the development of various abilities is similarly important, the true measure of human progress lies in the quality of consciousness, which relies heavily on the assimilation of experience and the reformation of human character. Considerable human evolution cannot occur without a deliberate effort on the part of the spiritual student to reform (improve) his own character, obtain greater self-control and self-discipline, and learn the needed lessons. Much can be learned consciously, from direct experience, observation, and study. Much can also be learned unconsciously, as experience is subjectively assimilated. And in each case where the student is open to his experience (and honest with himself), the progress is hastened. Human advancement naturally accelerates as the consciousness is expanded and qualified.

Perhaps the most significant ingredient to human advancement is selflessness. Though the spiritual student is expected to consciously and effectively assist the process of advancement, the student must also take care to evaluate and reform the motives and expectations concerning his own advancement. Self-centeredness is a major obstruction to human advancement, regardless of ability and experience. Where the student is self-centered (to whatever extent), the student is naturally isolated from the more meaningful adjustments in consciousness which effectively mark the successive progress of the student along the spiritual path. One cannot attain effective (proper) discipleship until considerable progress has been achieved in overcoming the self-centeredness of the human personality. Where the ego is for all practical purposes fully overcome, the student advances quickly and effectively (safely) through discipleship and the more esoteric stages.

A related factor in human advancement is the relationship that exists between the individual and the race, and the balance of individual karma with the karma of humanity. One cannot progress in advance of the race without first contributing to the progress and advancement of the race. Further, one cannot progress at the expense of any other. Self-centered (but apparently selfless) contributions are ineffective due to the lack of sincerity (rapport with humanity). Not only must the student (ultimately) become essentially selfless, but the student must also work within humanity for the sake of humanity, not for the sake of the individual. The greatest contribution of the esoteric student is his quality, in careful alignment with the quality of humanity. Thus, the advancement of humanity is deeply involved with those who pass naturally beyond the consciousness of mundane humanity.

The ninth (last) tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'Detached Considerations.' Therein Plotinus considers a number of ideas concerning the intellectual principle and the intellectual object, analysis and correspondence, the partiality (relativity) of the soul, and the relationship of goodness (as an abstraction) to consciousness.

According to Plotinus, the intellectual principle and the intellectual object are distinct, yet the former is contained within the latter (and conversely). The intellectual object is defined as the intellectual principle in repose, the principle being (in itself) an active manifestation. This leads to a concept of a unity which admits distinction, so that the contemplative being (repose) contains (sees) the intellectual realm within itself. When Plotinus speaks of the intellect, he speaks of a much higher concept than that of the ordinary, brain-dependent intellect. This higher concept involves the third aspect (creative intelligence, manas, manifestation) which holds the separative principle. That separative principle is illustrated by a perspective spectrum of differentiation having an underlying coherent unity. The student may as easily perceive the differentiation (diversity) of life (and form) as the whole, the partials as well as the overwhelming unity, without violating the merit (reality) of either.

A somewhat loosely related concept is the scientific reduction (analysis) of a body of knowledge 'into its separate propositions' without shattering its unity, for 'in each distinct item is latent the entire body of the science.' The analogy for man is similarly relevant, that man as a separate proposition contains inherently within himself the essential nature of the whole, and, similarly, that the principles or character within any person are qualified to some extent by the whole (personal) nature (aura) and to some extent by the overshadowing soul (the higher nature). Thus the highest residual of man offers a link to the divine. Man is a divine microcosm, a potentiality that contains within itself the entire universe (manifestation).

Man's immediate link to divinity and potential universality is the all-soul which does not come and go (as its reflection does). The all-soul remains as being, outside of time and space, or rather, unrelated to the time and space of the partial soul (the reflection) which moves away for incarnation (experience) and returns for fulfilment. The soul is ever one with the all-soul (the universal soul aspect), yet related to its reflection to the extent of its maturity. The universality of the soul aspect achieves multiplicity by its omnipresence (through its (reflected) instruments). Plotinus suggests that 'universality demands a previous unity,' that the unity is greater than the totality of its parts, being both omnipresent and nowhere-present. The (unenergized) parts alone in their totality cannot approach the significance of their unity.

The soul is, on its level, matter with respect to the monad, but spirit with regard to the personality, for matter and spirit are merely the extremes of a continuum, and the soul persists (pervades) a middle ground or region. Or in other words, consciousness gives rise to perception, a relativity of perspectives, equally valid, but dependent on the view and leading to different (related) conclusions. Similarly, potentiality and actuality stand as one in a succession of derived states, where one is an actuality with regard to its successor and (simultaneously) a potentiality with respect to its precursor. As a potentiality it is free to grow; as an actuality it rests in eternity (reality) (in relation to its successor). The source of consciousness lies beyond consciousness, as the source of life lies beyond life.

Sanctuary has been defined (in the orthodox sense) as a most sacred place, a place of refuge and protection, and as an immunity from external influence. In the metaphysical context, sanctuary may refer to a number of concepts, each of which contrasts with the ordinary world and worldly consciousness. Sanctuary may refer to the period between lives when the soul is free from the burden of reflection (and free from the burden of assimilation). Sanctuary may refer to the period of sleep between days of activity in the external world, provided that sleep is a refuge from dreams as well (for dreams are related to external experience). On a larger (planetary, solar, or cosmic) scale, sanctuary may even refer to pralaya, a period of rest between major cycles of activity (manifestation). Or in other words, in general, sanctuary refers to the unmanifested state.

In a much greater sense, sanctuary may be thought of as a circle of impersonal energy. Within that circle is an unstructured communion of all life, human and deva, a oneness that passes beyond consciousness. Sanctuary is not a place or a structure; it is a high degree of being. Within this sanctuary there is no hierarchy of consciousness; there is only an awareness which is non-awareness, the essence of being, far beyond the ego and far beyond self-identification. In one sense sanctuary refers to the soul and to its consciousness, but in the higher sense, even the soul is left behind as sanctuary is embraced properly, beyond even the true self.

Sanctuary is an energy of pure silence and pure stillness, an energy which filters out all of the accumulated distractions, glammers, illusions, and thoughts of activity on personality levels, and to some extent even on soul levels; a silence (stillness) which leaves behind (below) the not-self (the personality)(the ego) and the world of activity. On the first level, all awareness of the objective world ceases; on the second level, all awareness of the individuality ceases; on the third level, all awareness ceases, as the thread (of consciousness)(being) enters the sanctuary of non-activity (non-thinking)(non-awareness). Sanctuary involves a deliberate separation of self from not-self, a qualification of consciousness leading beyond consciousness, an application of will (atma) that allows for the ascension of current being into the sacred circle of impersonal energy that is sanctuary.

In the lesser esoteric sense, sanctuary is the inner circle of the ashram (on the higher levels of the soul); in the greater esoteric sense, sanctuary lies even further, beyond ashramic existence, a sacred circle at the end of the path (though the individual may exist far from that ultimate goal). Human terms can no more describe this sanctuary than the being of the soul, yet a correspondence does exist, linking sanctuary with love in its highest, impersonal sense, with healing in its highest, esoteric sense (perfection), and with service (in its highest sense). Sanctuary lies toward the end of the path, as a magic circle, toward the end of a path the direction of which is the direction leading from the personality through the soul, beyond being, to the impersonal that lies beyond all.

This sanctuary cannot be obtained through seeking. Sanctuary can be invoked (and properly evoked) only to the extent of earned consciousness (quality) and only to the extent that life in the external world will permit (the esoteric student is not permitted to withdraw from outer responsibilities)(time (?) spent in sanctuary (retreat) must ultimately serve the purpose of the soul). Following sanctuary, the esoteric student must face the return to the world of activity (where the activity of the esoteric student is wisely limited and/or qualified) where work can be accomplished.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 288 - FOURTH RAY METHODS

The Fourth Ray experience is to a large extent common to all of humanity, and particularly to those who are responsive to evolutionary forces (regardless of level or extent of consciousness). That experience involves (primarily) conflict, contrast, and crisis (and resolution), and extends throughout the lower worlds of human experience. In a sense, experience is a Fourth Ray function, as all (lower) experience involves some form of contrast leading ultimately to understanding and the growth of consciousness.

Fourth Ray methods of experience concern the actual resolution of experience, recognizing the contrast (conflict)(crisis), understanding the opposing or contrasting forces (including motives and purpose), and achieving the intended assimilation through reconciliation and/or balance. There are particular Fourth Ray methods which deal with each of these actions as well as general Fourth Ray methods (such as holding the mind steady) which can be applied to any of these actions. Reconciliation proper may not be appropriate, provided that the proper understanding is achieved (even unilaterally). All of life's experience in the lower worlds can be viewed in Fourth Ray terms, though energy associated with each of the seven rays may as well be appropriate.

Fourth Ray methods of expression deal primarily with artistic expression and/or cultural expression (and the cultivation of culture and cultural progress). The methods of artistic expression deal with communication (via the artistic medium), mediation, and/or interpretation (through balance, contrast, harmony, stability, duality, beauty, relatedness, perception, etc.). Similarly, the methods of cultural expression can be related to purposive human experience and progress (understanding and evolution). Fourth Ray teaching methods in general draw upon relationships with the Second Ray and the Sixth Ray, and to some extent with the Seventh Ray.

Fourth Ray methods may be used to achieve an internal balance (resolution) by bringing contrasting forces into balance with each other. The Fourth Ray method for integrating the personality, for example, involves a subtle blending and balancing of the head and heart. Fourth Ray methods of personality cultivation include methods for personality control (through the dampening of the emotions and their controlled elevation into balance with the mental center) and the achievement of confidence, serenity, stability, and overall poise. There are Fourth Ray methods for balancing each of the various pairs of opposites, the head and the heart, the soul and the personality, the personal and the impersonal, etc., each of which involves some form of blending of forces (with adjustment and polarization). Fourth Ray methods may also be applied to interpersonal relationships, the proper balancing of the individual's life-sphere with others. The burden (responsibility) of discretion and adjustment is ever upon the spiritual student with respect to others, never upon others with respect to oneself.

Fourth Ray methods proper typically involve visualization and/or the evocation of the intuition (the higher human faculty, beyond the rational mental). Visualization is a potent means of concentrating force, but the student should be careful in dealing with indisposed (unenlightened and unqualified) imagination (which often leads to self-deception). Qualified imagination and visualization require the achievement of proper balance and stability prior to evocation. Many specific Fourth Ray methods deal with the various natural cycles (rhythm) and their proper application. Ultimately, Fourth Ray methods lead to the highest experience (along Fourth Ray lines), that of rapport. All in all, the Fourth Ray provides many practical methods for human experience and progress.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 289 - ASCENSION

In the metaphysical context, advancement refers to a progressive upward movement (in consciousness)(along the spiritual path), while ascension refers to the final transition between the human stage and the next higher stage, the culmination of at least several lifetimes of conscious and deliberate evolution. Advancement can be accelerated as the student begins to master his own consciousness, but ascension remains a consequence (of advancement and activity).

Many substantial prerequisites exist that must be fulfilled before ascension can occur, virtually all of which involve quality rather than specific achievements (quality is the integrated result of specific achievements and general accomplishments). All of the various prerequisites are interrelated and are normally fulfilled together, as ascension implies an overall, highly integrated balance of all pertinent forces. One of the most obvious prerequisites for ascension is the attainment of sufficient (earned) objective and subjective experience, both general and particular, and the corequisite karmic fulfillment. All individual karma must be fulfilled (released); ascension is not possible where any karmic ties and responsibilities continue to exist. The student must (ultimately) achieve sufficient detachment (freedom) and a subjective polarization (the esoteric student is increasingly detached from objective involvement as he works more and more on meaningful (subjective) levels.

Another obvious prerequisite is self-mastery (and the mastery of the physical, emotional, and mental planes of consciousness). The candidate for ascension must have developed sufficient (objective and subjective) abilities and talents for working in each of the seven ray domains (and have mastered each of the seven ray energies), and he must have completed certain specialized training (and have successfully passed through several major initiations in consciousness). In addition to potency, the candidate must possess sufficient quality of consciousness. One can master a plane of consciousness with or without the sufficient quality of consciousness and, conversely, one can develop sufficient quality of consciousness with or without sufficient mastery; both quality and mastery are required for ascension. In addition to the complete fulfillment of individual karma, the student must also contribute sufficiently to humanity and the planetary consciousness (he must fulfill substantially more than his share of racial (human) and planetary karma). The fulfillment of group karma in no way implies (or allows) the fulfillment of the individual karma of other persons.

One of the more difficult requirements for ascension is a lack of interest or desire for ascension (coupled with a lack of interest or desire for remaining within the human lifewave and/or lower worlds). This requires the achievement of a very delicate balance of desirelessness with service and a responsible commitment (to humanity and to the spiritual path). Since the student is denied interest in ascension (at least at the level for which ascension is possible), it follows that ascension cannot be evoked consciously by the student. Ascension is, however, an inevitable process that can be neither evoked nor deterred, a necessary product of spiritual momentum.

The role of ascension is to encourage the progress of the entire planetary life. The esoteric student who, fully qualified, withdraws from the world of activity and begins the ascension in consciousness creates a (very potent) magnetic path that embraces probation, discipleship, initiation, and ascension (obscuratation). That magnetic vortex (fully integrated and impersonal) continues as a subtle beacon of encouragement to all who are responsive to the magnetic currents of the esoteric path.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 290 - THE FOURTH ENNEAD (1)(2)

The first and second tractates of the Fourth Ennead are entitled 'On the Essence of the Soul,' (1) and (2) respectively. In these two tractates Plotinus clarifies the existence of the soul; its place, its tendencies, its paradox. Existing in the middle ground (between spirit and matter)(between the monad (its precursor) and the personality (its successor (reflection))), the soul has a dual tendency. On the one hand, the soul is cognizant of unity (reality), responsive to spirit, and (quite) impersonally detached from its reflection (differentiation) (multiplicity). On the other hand, the soul is drawn into (onto) reflection for experience (divisional existence)(succession)(partition) through karma (and higher evolutionary tendencies). The soul is indivisible in its actuality, bound to the supreme (divine), yet nevertheless sends forth its energy for reflection. While the soul itself maintains its higher vision (repose), its reflection tenders experience and expression.

Reflection depends upon a material base. Matter tends toward separation (partition)(disintegration) due to its relationship (identification) with chaos (and the laws of entropy). Each atom of space-time is a point of tension impressed upon the void, a compressed spring held in place (under tension) by the creative (divine) will. The tendency of such a spring is to return to its natural (zero energy) state, but the pressure of higher forces holds the matter in place and permits the manipulation of matter by intelligence. Consequently, organization (the integration of matter on some level) requires a coherent force to balance the otherwise prevailing forces. Reality (real being) is not identified with the lesser forces (of material fabric)(tension) but is identified with the greater (higher) forces of union and synthesis. When the will is withdrawn, the binding forces are dissolved and the fabric of time and space is released into the void from which it came. Standing midway between the will aspect and the material foundation upon which the will operates (via the soul), the soul is merely a qualified intermediary for the force of consciousness.

The reflection of the soul is a diffusion (an impression of energy upon a material base) that must be held properly in place by higher forces. The basic patterns of the reflection (the personality) are held in place on subconscious levels, but the higher (spiritual relevant) patterns require that the personality instrument be responsive far beyond the lesser, sustaining patterns (those which sustain the physical, emotional, and mental form). The higher patterns constitute the inner motivation (the development of consciousness and adherence to the spiritual path)(the will of the soul which can only encourage a responsive instrument). The bridging between the implacable (indivisible) higher nature and the independent (separative) lower nature is accomplished entirely through the second aspect (consciousness).

The paradox of the soul comes from its prismatic stance, reflecting to some extent in both directions. The soul is everywhere, simultaneously partible and impartible. For the reflection, it is the unifying (overriding) consciousness that links the various parts together. The various parts (of the body or personality) are not self-evident nor are they aware of relationships or even of the existence of the other parts to which they are related, yet they exhibit a degree of independence drawn from the material nature and respond to some extent to the unifying force of the integrated personality (consciousness). That personality consciousness may or may not be integrated, though the soul (consciousness) is always integrated on its level. The soul is the instrument of self-consistency and of the higher coherence reflected into the personality.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 291 - JUSTICE

Two ways to consider the concept and processes of justice are from the standpoint of administration (imposition) and from the standpoint of receipt. Ideally, justice is the maintenance or administration of what is just, normally through the proper administration of law and the assignment of merited consequence (rewards or punishment?). The emphasis in justice is upon what is just (morally right) and involves fairness, impartiality, merit, equity, and right action. However, problems arise from personal energy, human attempts at judgement, and the misunderstanding of purpose.

The least merited form of (apparent) justice is that which is imposed on individual or personal levels, involving emotional and/or rational energy. Justice (?) imposed on personal levels (retribution) violates a number of basic principles and leads inevitably to greater karmic entanglement (leading to proper understanding). The karmic dilemma (of deserved imposition versus the right to impose) is resolved albeit with some difficulty: Man has only a limited awareness of reality; he is normally unaware of the cause and effect relationships which underlie and precipitate all experience. Consequently, man has no right of imposing judgement upon others, especially with regard to personal energy. Karma requires that every experience be merited; an individual receiving some sanction must therefore merit such imposition, regardless of the motives or judgement of the person imposing such sanction. The reality (reasons, cause and effect relationships) is almost always far removed from the reasoning or understanding of the instrument. Though the person performing the imposition (knowingly or otherwise) serves a higher purpose, the lack of proper awareness and understanding coupled with the personal motives (energies) constitutes an impropriety (the end does not necessarily justify the means).

An intermediate form of justice is that which is administered through government sanctions. The same considerations apply for the intermediate form as for the more personal form, except that in the intermediate form there is (hopefully) a greater element of reasoning and understanding. Being less personal, the intermediate form of human justice is more likely to be effective (meaningful) and thereby contribute to the purposes of justice. In fact, such human justice is allowed (encouraged) to the extent that it is (nominally) fair and reasonable. The significance of the intermediate form goes far beyond that of the individuals concerned, for it implies a progressive form of group (cultural)(national) learning, as the group attempts equitable and reasonable self-regulation (analogous to the self-control (moderation) of the evolving individual). The entire process of law-making and the administration of human laws is a response of the group to the inner (evolutionary) encouragement, and though imperfect, it contributes nevertheless to the development of the group with which it is applied.

The highest (and only essentially perfect) form of justice is the karma, which underlies and overshadows all lesser forms and all experience in the lower worlds. Karma is flexible in the sense that it involves wisdom and incorporates all pertinent causes throughout the time-stream, but it is also implacable in the sense that it cannot falter. It does involve mitigation (motives, circumstances) but places the greatest emphasis on individual responsibility. An individual is responsible (accountable for every action) regardless of circumstances, though the circumstances (ignorance) will affect the consequences. The essential purpose of karma is the evolution of consciousness; justice is a lesser albeit important concept which supports the general purpose of karma. The essential purpose of justice, perhaps too often overlooked, is to encourage self-reform.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 292 - FIFTH RAY METHODS

The Fifth Ray experience is related directly to the development, training, and application of the lower (concrete)(rational)(objective) mind and is further related to the major goals and qualification of the current (Aryan)(fifth) root-race. The development of the concrete mind proceeds as the mind is properly exercised through focussed observation, concentration, specialization, discretion, structured reasoning, and analysis. Anyone who is emotionally polarized generally has an underdeveloped (unstructured, untrained, vaguely defined) concrete mind and is unable to think freely and effectively. It is the Fifth Ray experience (in its various forms) that leads from the emotional polarization to the fully-developed mental polarization.

Much of the orthodox educational process is related to (designed for) mental development, but the fully-developed mind can only be achieved through continual self-education and mental exercise. This Fifth Ray drive is the thirst for knowledge and understanding, utilizing various methods of study, thinking, seeking, searching, experimenting, and (ultimately) analysis and correlation. The Fifth Ray experience involves meaningful structure, various scientific methods and procedures, and organized, developmental thinking (thinking through various ideas with a consideration of all perceived possible alternatives and implications).

Analysis is the fundamental tool along Fifth Ray lines. Analysis involves the logical, organized, or systematic study and resolution of some relatively complex object or subject into its component parts or constituent elements. As the differentiated parts are understood, and as the relationships between the various elements are realized, a greater understanding of the whole is possible. Complex objects are thus resolved into relatively simple constituents leading (hopefully) to a mastery of the subject. Fifth Ray methods consequently involve clarification and elaboration of details. Accuracy is a particularly important consideration. A Fifth Ray analysis is vastly improved where the intuition can be brought to bear, impersonally, upon the subject.

The Fifth Ray approach is nevertheless not without its difficulties; namely, the tendency toward independence, smallness of vision, narrowmindedness, a critical disposition, etc. Thus the Fifth Ray approach should always be tempered and balanced (with Third Ray energy and with heart-centered energy), and should not be allowed to become an end in itself. When properly applied (with wisdom and discretion), the Fifth Ray approach can be particularly potent in the mental and spiritual development of the individual, but it should also be recognized as a stepping-stone, as development preliminary (and necessary) to the effective union of mental and intuitive faculties. In this respect, meditation (spiritual discipline) plays an important role, in applying Fifth Ray energy to overcome and uplift the emotional nature, in linking the lower (objective) mental with the higher, (subjective)(contemplative) mental, in correlating details with a greater whole.

Specific Fifth Ray methods normally involve formulae of one form or another to accomplish the intended development, training, or application. Such formulae range from simple, self-evident procedures or patterns to highly involved esoteric threads requiring considerable experience and formal training. Fifth Ray methods (proper) utilize (primarily) the ajna chakra, as the energy center for mental focus and concentration of attention (energy). As the esoteric student progresses, he learns to utilize Fifth Ray methods in channeling energy through the various centers (chakras) for specific purposes. Ultimately, the crown chakra is used to overshadow the various Fifth Ray applications, as the proper balance of head and heart is achieved.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 293 - EXPERIENCE

The immediate purpose of life on earth is experience leading to evolutionary development. That purpose is implied in the karma which ultimately draws the soul into incarnation and provides the appropriate environment and circumstances (particulars) for experience. Though karma provides the opportunity and though the momentum of the individual plays a significant role, it is the responsiveness and consciousness (awareness) of the individual that determines the relative success (progress) of any particular experience or duration.

Experience can be realized on conscious and/or unconscious levels. In the early stages of human evolution, experience on physical and emotional levels is designed to lead the individual toward mastery of the physical and emotional environment (and instruments). That preliminary experience is intended to set the stage for later, higher experience. In the middle and later stages of human evolution, the physical and emotional experience is designed to invoke the consciousness by providing a framework for mental assessment and intuitive experience. Through the application of consciousness, the individual learns to perceive, interpret, and evaluate the afforded experience, taking into consideration the various levels upon which it occurs. The more substantial experience (and its assimilation) is realized almost entirely on mental and intuitive levels. Consequently, and quite naturally, the student becomes less involved in physical and emotional experience and more involved in mental and intuitive experience.

The student should learn to discern the real (substantive) opportunities from incidental (needless) experience. An apparent opportunity may be afforded as a test of discretion, and that test may well hold more value than the apparent experience. As the student progresses, the cumulative experience is assimilated and transformed into wisdom (quality), the more so as experience is consciously contemplated and assessed. Merit (karma) will draw whatever experience and conditions are needed; opportunities that remain unfulfilled may slow the individual's progress, depending on the circumstances.

Mental experience may be objective or subjective, and may involve observation, analysis, association (correlation), and contemplation. Intuitive experience (realization) is entirely subjective, but often relates to more objective (mental, rational) experience. Observation is a particularly potent instrument for experience, provided the student makes a conscious effort to assess and evaluate the observed information. It is far easier for the student to progress through observation and analysis than through direct experience (i.e., as an active participant); as an impersonal observer, the student is not entangled in the forces of the experience. Where the student is not responsive to indirect experience, then direct experience may be necessary.

Though individual (and direct) experience is important in the early stages of human evolution, collective (interactive) experience is more important during the later stages. Collective experience includes the assessment of group experience and the experience of the individual in relation to the group (i.e., provided by the interaction). Interactive experience depends on communication, perception, and consciousness. Perception and consciousness are relatively simply factors, at least in the sense that they can (hopefully) be controlled or qualified. Communication (the transference of meaning) is more complicated because the student has only limited control (qualification) of the process and is dependent on the perception and consciousness of the other participants. Interactive experience offers the greater challenge and opportunity for growth, particularly as the process is raised to predominantly mental levels.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 294 - THE FOURTH ENNEAD (3)

The third tractate of the Fourth Ennead is the first of three commentaries entitled 'Problems of the Soul.' Therein Plotinus considers the relationship of the individual soul to the oversoul and the relationship of the soul to its body (personality). Also considered is the manner in which souls originate, but the central question concerns the divisibility and sharing of the oversoul with regard to the particular (individual) soul.

The central conclusion is that the oversoul remains intact and undivided (unparted)(indivisible), yet nonetheless related to the finite number of particular souls. The individual soul may be considered as a localized expression of the oversoul, though the soul knows no spatiality as it deals only with quality. Individual souls are of the same genus as the oversoul and attain to the same objects (i.e., have the same potentiality), yet remain relatively distinct. The soul (on any level) represents quality, and quality cannot be parted, having neither size nor measure. The soul can be differentiated (in terms of quality) but it cannot be divided; though individual souls appear particular (distinct), they remain nonetheless mere extensions or expressions of the oversoul. Therefore souls of particulars exist only incidentally, while the oversoul exists essentially. The soul (oversoul) is a unity everywhere present but with differing functions.

All souls originate from (and return to) the oversoul; on their level all share a common bond; on the level of their reflection (i.e., on the level of the personality), differences prevail. The various souls are equal but different (not identical in character or quality)(due to the differentiation of ray lives). Plotinus adds that 'differences may be induced also by the bodies with which the soul has to do and, even more, by the character and mental operations carried over from the living of previous lives.' The soul reflects its own potentiality into the form (which evolves on its own material level, in later cycles to pass through higher stages); thus, within the form are found many correspondences to the soul and the higher life. Each form is linked with its archetype, and all levels participate in the life of the oversoul (divinity). The soul is the mediation between the monad (intelligence) and the body (form). The monad is not reflected upon matter; the body is a reflection of the reflection of the monad. the influence of the monad is felt only to the extent that the form (mind)(personality) is responsive to the mediation of the soul.

The soul descends without deliberation, creating its instrument and incarnating as a consequence of karmic force (the soul creates its own destiny and then must live in accordance with that which it has created). The creator is bound subjectively to its creation, at least until its destiny (usefulness) is fulfilled, whereupon the creation (in matter) is dissolved and the creator is further liberated. All occurrences in the lesser world are subject to order (enlightenment) and are therefore interrelated. The monad is as a center of light, the soul as a reflector of light, and the personality (mind) as a shadow partially enlightened. The soul (the reflector) does not belong to the body (the personality)(the shadow); the body belongs to the soul. The soul contains the body (but not vice versa) and overshadows the body without spatiality. The body is merely accessory to the principle (the soul). The body resides within the soul, but the soul persists far beyond the personality (as well). The purified (elevated, completed) soul so transcends the personality that it is no longer subject to the attraction of external existence (incarnation) and the personality matrix (archetype) is dissolved.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 295 - MEANING

One of the challenges of the esoteric philosophy is the cultivation of wisdom (understanding)(quality) through the presentation of ideas for consideration and application. The philosophy tends to address the more significant concepts (ideas) (principles)(teachings), which coincidentally tend to be more abstract and less easily conveyed than the relatively mundane (familiar)(more objective)(less significant) aspects. The problem of meaning can arise wherever attempts are made to communicate ideas. The problem of meaning can also arise with respect to the significance of life (experience)(philosophy).

In the communicative process, meaning refers to the idea intended to be conveyed and to the idea actually conveyed or received (understood). The problem arises from limitation, as the intended idea is translated into some symbolic form or message (language) and as the received message is translated into some idea or understanding that the recipient correlates with the intended message. The problem is compounded by perception, prejudiced thinking (narrow-minded or premature assumptions), and selective interpretation based on habit or disposition. Consequently, the esoteric student should exercise considerable care (and/or insight) in communication to ensure (to the extent that it is possible or reasonable) accuracy and proper significance. In addition, the student should evaluate the possible interpretations of the message and consider the responsiveness and background of the recipient. As a recipient, the student should seek clarification of the meaning conveyed and evaluate the message or communication in context.

Context is important because it provides information which may clarify the intended meaning. Character and psychology both contribute to the context or framework of the communication. The words themselves are normally insufficient, because most words have several or more meanings (definitions)(denotations), some common, some not so common. The attachment that people tend to have with regard to particular definitions also contributes to the problem. Misunderstanding often arises from a failure to respect or understand the definitions of others, particularly where the individual (utilizing the concrete mind) associates only his own limited definitions of words (concepts)(actions). This is particularly a problem for spiritual students and for relatively subjective concepts. The concept of impersonality, for example, is frequently misunderstood by spiritual students, and communication often fails to impart the proper meaning. This is due to the limitations of language as well as to common preconceptions and predispositions (based on limited experience or ability).

The esoteric philosophy in a sense embraces a very particular terminology, where ordinary words take on both academic definitions and connotations as well as special (subtle) associations and correspondences, making far greater use of the available language than ordinary communication. Consequently, the student must learn to recognize the context and implications of philosophical writing and pertinent communication. A broad vocabulary and an open mind are essential to the understanding of the various aspects of the esoteric philosophy. The meaning of any idea (concept)(thought) can be properly conveyed, but only where the proper energy (qualification) is present and only where the recipient is responsive. Where serious philosophical writing is read casually (and where ordinary or common meanings are presumed) a great deal of the meaning may not be conveyed. Interactive communication (where feedback is permitted) is preferred, particularly where the interaction is simultaneous. The esoteric student should ultimately be in touch with the energy of the communication so that the entire meaning can be embraced with insight and confidence.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 296 - SIXTH RAY METHODS

The Sixth Ray experience generally embraces idealism, devotion, aspiration, religion, and the probationary path. In the ordinary human sense, Sixth Ray energy provides a potent force of encouragement for the bulk of humanity, as the vast majority of human beings are responsive to Sixth Ray energy in one form or another (i.e., most of humanity are responsive to emotional energy or some form of idealism and/or glamour). Consequently, religion plays a major role in the cultivation and qualification of humanity, at least where religion is responsive to higher guidance. Where religion becomes crystallized and inflexible, its utility for good is impaired. Where religion remains moderate (reasonable), it cultivates a considerable motivation for self-improvement and cooperation. In a broader sense, motivation itself is a derivative of Sixth Ray energy. Where motivation is present without excessive emotion or narrowmindedness, it can be a potent force for good.

Historically, much of the spiritual path has involved Sixth Ray methods, from the intrinsic spiritual motivation of the aspirant to the contemplation of divinity, from the reverence of the spiritual student for life (God) to the dedicated service to humanity of the disciple. But Sixth Ray energy is particularly vulnerable to personal energy; therefore, the spiritual student should exercise considerable care in dealing with Sixth Ray energies (and applying Sixth Ray methods), to avoid the associated glammers and personal distractions. Where Sixth Ray energy is evoked impersonally, it is a particularly potent force for spiritual application. As the spiritual path evolves (as the spiritual path lives), so do the Sixth Ray methods evolve. As the Sixth Ray energy matures, it becomes less personal, less imposing, and more responsive (moderate) to higher impression.

The evolving spiritual student is concerned with the discipline and control of the emotions, while the esoteric student, having conquered the emotional self, is more concerned with the evolution of Sixth Ray energies which are responsive to mental and intuitional guidance. Most of the practical (higher) Sixth Ray methods involve an opening of the heart center and the controlled release of heart-centered energy, qualified as it needs to be by the soul itself. The force (and associated methods) of aspiration is as pertinent to the probationary student as to the experienced disciple. Properly qualified (moderate)(non-reactive) heart energies can be used to strengthen good qualities wherever found, to encourage spiritual progress without imposition, to sharpen awareness and understanding through a mature rapport with humanity, and to elevate the overall consciousness to successively higher levels. Wherever magnetic lines of force are needed, Sixth Ray methods can be applied and utilized.

The real potency of the Sixth Ray is revealed where (when) the mature Sixth Ray energy is blended with the appropriate element of Second Ray energy to produce a high-order reflection (i.e., the reflection of higher-order energy onto lower levels). The actual process of incarnation (externalization) is related to a subtle blend of heart-centered energies (in balance with the blend of head-centered energies required for manifestation). All magnetic processes are qualified by heart-centered energy, involving elements of Second Ray and Sixth Ray energy (while the Fourth Ray provides balance and the head-centered rays provide moderation). In the evocation of Sixth Ray energies, the esoteric student relies upon the heart center (the Second Ray center) rather than the solar plexus (the Sixth Ray center). The solar plexus (alone) cannot be used to evoke higher energies, as it is aligned predominantly with etheric and astral forces. Where the heart center is properly opened, then the subordinated solar plexus can be used energy-wise to complement the evoked forces.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 297 - MEANING AND EXPERIENCE

There are basically two ways in which an individual evolves through the assimilation (integration)(correlation) of experience. The first method is common to all and involves primarily unconscious, after the fact assimilation of particular experience (usually long after the fact). The bulk of humanity assimilate experience at a far slower rate than the rate of experience accrual. The volume of information is usually too large for the consciousness to process during the lifetime, so a period between incarnations is needed for proper review (assimilation).

The second method is far less common, and is the method used by the esoteric student (and to some extent by anyone who is reasonably intelligent and consciously aware of his experience) to consciously and deliberately assimilate experience (simultaneously as experience is being realized or shortly thereafter). This second method requires some degree of awareness of the situation (context) of the experience and the relationship of the individual to the experience (i.e., an honest assessment of one's own motivation and ability), and the ability to correlate information and discern significance. It is a relatively difficult task for the untrained to discern the meaning of any experience, because (usually) a large number of factors (forces) must be considered, correlated, and evaluated, and that can only properly be accomplished via the abstract mind and the intuition.

One of the problems of discernment occurs when the student makes a judgement (assessment) based on superficial factors and reasoning. Such an oversimplification can easily lead to more erroneous (misleading) conclusions. The other extreme can also be a problem, where the student unnecessarily complicates his assessment by relying too heavily on the rational (concrete) mind. The student is encouraged to remain relatively detached from his experience and form his assessment of meaning, thus precluding either complication. With a balanced (moderate) approach, the student can consider various possibilities and implications without drawing rigid (limiting) conclusions (which impair further understanding). This balanced approach is important because meaning can only be properly realized in a broad context. The forces which combine to produce experience (and which further produce the disposition of the individual with respect to the experience) are necessarily related to other non-apparent factors.

No experience is altogether isolated or independent. Any individual experience is related to the continuity of the individual (with past, present, and future relationships)(and even to preceding and succeeding lifetimes) and to the world context (the relationship of the individual to group karma). Thus, the forces of any experience are related to numerous other factors. It is nevertheless possible to understand some of the meaning intended to be conveyed by experience, particularly as the student is able to correlate diverse factors over a period of time (continual evaluation and reconsideration (meaning that all conclusions are tentative and subject to further experience and consideration)).

In the first method (unconscious assimilation), the student learns more or less unconsciously as more and more experience is considered. Unconsciously, the mind is able to correlate considerable amounts and diverse threads or information, relating them to the consciousness of the individual. The second method (conscious and deliberate assimilation) does not replace the former method entirely; it simply complements the first method as the conscious mind interacts with the normal (and paranormal) abilities of the unconscious (and superconscious) mind. Through deliberate observation, conscious evaluation, contemplation, and alignment with the higher self, the individual can hasten the process of assimilation of experience and interact more effectively with new experience.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 298 - THE FOURTH ENNEAD (4)

The fourth tractate of the Fourth Ennead is the second of three tractates entitled 'Problems of the Soul.' According to Plotinus, the life of the oversoul flows through the lives of the particular souls, being a unity simultaneously present in all things. The oversoul does not abandon its reflections (as the particular soul abandons); the soul (oversoul) is both transcendent (relating to the monad) and immanent (relating to all lesser (internal) lives), ever brooding over its expression, ever at rest (repose) with regard to the objective manifestation. The passions of the soul are its cycles of existence (reflection), fully in accordance with the natural order. The soul possesses an interior disposition and does not reason; it is simply aware (subjectively)(on its own level); only the lesser self (the personality) is drawn to reasoning (until the intuition or realization of the soul can be evoked). All knowledge exists and can be accessed, and in this sense, the soul embraces an integrated memory in addition to its own recollectedness, but that memory involves the assimilation of energy patterns (realization) rather than specifics.

The consciousness of the soul on its own level is the contemplation of the order of its own level. The soul has no knowledge (memory) of earthly experience, only quality. The contemplation of the soul involves no discursive thought or reasoning, since the (contemplative) intuition enfolds the entire subject and its inherent (internal) correlations without recourse to analysis. In contemplative vision there is no awareness of the personality (or anything ordered in space-time), only an identity of essence. However, if the focus of consciousness is perfectly balanced between the abstract mind of the soul and the concrete mind of the personality, then the vision can extend to some extent in both directions (simultaneously). The memory of the personality is temporary (transient) and involves specifics, while the memory of the soul is long-lived and involves quality (character). There is a mechanism of recognition between souls regardless of form that passes beyond the short-lived memory and involves a rapport based upon the quality embraced by the souls themselves. Such a rapport need not be related to any historical significance.

The soul is a participant (directly or indirectly depending on the level or quality achieved) in the ordering of the universe (by higher impression). Such ordering is not by direct manipulation of specific affairs, but by the adjustment (qualification)(conditioning) of energy fields which impart their adjustments (character) upon the fabric (domain) of manifestation. The leading principle (order) is unity; thus the administration of the universe proceeds as action determined internally, according to natural law. Wisdom (peace) on any level is far superior to reasoning (a struggle). Reasoning (perplexity)(memory) pertains to the lower order; wisdom (peace)(quality)(knowledge in repose) pertains to the higher order. Nature is a consequence of wisdom. Wisdom transcends time; that which is imbedded in time (the medium of diversity)(i.e., the human personality) is of an order less than that of time itself.

All events in time and space (and all non-events) exist simultaneously; it is only to the lesser (partial)(time-dependent and/or space-dependent) vision that specific (uncorrelated)(distinct) existence can be perceived. Within the one vision, all events in time and/or space appear interrelated one with another, and the only reality is that which embraces all. Sense-impression occurs only in the (lesser) domain of partials (what need would a totality have of such impressions?). An enlinking exists between all lives which is an instrument of the (universal) oversoul. Unbound life is not possible.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 299 - HUMAN SEXUALITY

Sexuality refers to the quality (condition) of being sexual (or bisexual) in contrast to being nonsexual, and in the human sense, refers to the condition of the personality instrument. The soul is nonsexual, without regard to either sex, but able to integrate both male and female forces (principles). Consequently, the human personality matrix (from which the human personality is created or evoked into incarnation) is bisexual (hermaphroditic)(androgynous).

Though the personality matrix (archetype) is bisexual, the actual (manifested) personality (form)(body) is either male or female, as one or the other of the two sexual principles dominates the form. When a soul incarnates (as the soul is drawn into incarnation by karmic forces), it chooses the sex of its physical instrument depending on cultural conditions (opportunities), the need for particular experience (male or female), and proper karmic consideration. The soul incarnates (alternately or as needed) a sufficient number of times as a male personality to properly develop the male principles (and male character) and a sufficient number of times as a female personality to properly develop the female principles (and female character), in a balanced way so that ultimately the male and female principles can be fully integrated within the personality form.

Every human form has both a male and female potentiality within itself, but (generally) only one or the other is developed in any one lifetime. A male personality is designed for the male experience (and conversely, the female personality is designed for the female experience), even though female (male) characteristics (principles) are potentially available. The soul, being impersonal with respect to the personality, does not identify with either male or female, but the personality that is properly formed and balanced will naturally identify with the (physical) sexual nature, either male or female as the case may be. With regard to consciousness, however, the spiritual student should accept the basic male or female personality as an instrument (of the soul) and identify with the soul nature rather than the nature of the personality form.

The natural (normal) human (personality) condition (orientation) is heterosexual, but due to the complicated (bisexual) nature of the personality matrix, it is possible for the personality form to have (potentially) homosexual preferences. This can result from a lack of balance between the intended predominant male (female) nature and its subtle counterpart, or simply from strong personal affections (with regard to particular persons (due to previous experiences (in earlier lifetimes) where the sexual orientation (relationships) may have been quite different)). It is quite natural for individuals to experience a deep affection (brotherhood) for others without regard to sexual orientation, but the spiritual student should not be confused or distracted by any (strong) identification with the physical form, regardless of the sexual orientation.

Any substantial sexual urge (desire), heterosexual or otherwise, is an indication of identification with the physical and emotional nature of the (lower self) personality rather than with the mental and spiritual nature. When the student is mentally or spiritually polarized (and where the lower nature has been properly qualified, the student is no longer vulnerable to physical and/or emotional distraction. Human sexual distinction is designed for the purpose of creation, both procreation (propagation) and the upliftment of creative (sexual) force into mental and spiritual abilities (creative potential on mental and spiritual levels). As the male and female creative forces are properly uplifted and balanced, the individual becomes a potent creator in mental, astral, and etheric matter (without regard to the particular sexual nature of the personality form).

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 300 - SEVENTH RAY METHODS

Though the First Ray properly contains the overall plan for manifestation and the evolution of consciousness, it is the Seventh Ray which provides the basic framework and specific methodology (organization) for manifestation. The various Seventh Ray methods all relate in some way to the creation (building) or manipulation (differentiation)(integration)(ordering) of matter (energy patterns), and usually involve the systematic integration of constituents to form some greater or more useful configuration.

Seventh Ray methods include ceremony, ritual, invocation (evocation), prayer, construction, organization, etc., including most methods associated with magic. Many occult orders incorporate Seventh Ray methods which establish and strengthen various energy patterns which in turn provide a framework for operation (application of energy). Much of the ritual and ceremonial forms found in occult orders (and in the various churches and religious orders) involves Seventh Ray energy. Each time a prayer or invocation is repeated (for example)(or each time a ritual is followed), an energy pattern is evoked and sustained which (structurally) relates the individual (participant) or group to the associated energy (or threads of energy). Each symbol utilized relates the participant to the knowledge (energy) held within the symbol (via threads or patterns of energy), depending on the quality and coherence (and strength) of the association and depending on the responsiveness of the participant.

The building process is inherently a Seventh Ray process, as building is basically associative and constructive (where building can refer as well to physical matter as to character building and the formation of subtle structures in consciousness). Most esoteric orders (and many exoteric metaphysical orders) involve meaningful (practical) structure and various Seventh Ray methods in support of their (particular) primary ray association. This is particularly so in the case of Seventh Ray orders (such as Masonry).

The most fundamental of the Seventh Ray methods involve occult chemistry and a deep understanding of the material (atomic and molecular) structure underlying manifestation. Matter on various levels can be qualified and utilized (formed or reformed)(manipulated), at least to the extent that the individual understands matter (energy) and the various direct methods of working with matter. The resort to ritual (ceremony)(invocation) involves less direct methods. In either case, the energies are associative and results depend on the ability of the individual and the suitability of the effort. The human creative potency increases dramatically as the abstract mind is used in conjunction with the concrete mind (as multiple correlations and subtle programming becomes possible). Esoteric students along each of the seven ray lines are trained in various direct Seventh Ray methods so that creative potencies may be properly applied (with discretion) to constructive purposes.

One of the keys to the Seventh Ray methods involves understanding the natural order of manifestation (and recognizing the natural place of any or all things). Where this understanding is achieved, the student can apply the various Seventh Ray methods with wisdom, maintaining the natural order yet at the same time contributing to the natural development of manifestation. Another of the keys involves the relationship of devas (angelic or magnetic beings) to matter (and to energy qualification). The various orders of devas each have particular roles to play in the various processes of manifestation, and considerable cooperation (albeit subjective) of the devas is implied in the application of Seventh Ray methods (creative forces).