

The Upper Triad Material

Commentaries XV

Edited by Peter Hamilton

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Commentaries XV

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The Upper Triad Association is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit educational organization established in 1974 and devoted to the study and practice of various principles leading to personal and spiritual growth.

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The Full List of Upper Triad Books:

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The Upper Triad Material 3rd Edition

Articles	3 volumes
Commentaries	15 volumes
Miscellany	2 volumes

The Upper Triad Material 4th Edition

Introduction
1 Purpose
2 Consciousness
3 Truth and Reality
4 Karma
5 Knowledge
6 Religion
7 Manifestation

A Personal Journey 4th Edition

Through the Grace of God 1st Edition

Preface

The Upper Triad Association is a non-profit educational organization, formed in 1973 and formally organized in 1974 by a small group of Christian students dedicated to spiritual growth through the study and practice of various ethical, metaphysical, spiritual, and theosophical principles.

The Upper Triad Material is a collection of over 1,500 articles and commentaries, plus various prayers, mantras, meditation outlines, quotations, synthetic triangles, and keywords relating to various aspects of metaphysics, religion, philosophy, psychology, and theosophy.

Since 1974, the Upper Triad Material has been published and distributed incrementally through the sometimes monthly, sometimes bi-monthly Upper Triad Journal, and has been reprinted as needed in various forms, most recently in a series of topical issues that cover the entire range of material and through the Association's website.

The Upper Triad Material is written by members of the Upper Triad Association. There is generally no author attribution, as most of the material is evoked through prayer and meditation, and the writers have no need of recognition. The material is augmented by a number of articles written by and attributed to associate members, e.g., two series of articles by K.M.P. Mohamed Cassim and an article by Robert L. Moore.

The various articles are relatively easy to read. The various commentaries are relatively more technical and not as easy to read due to the style of writing and the numerous correlations suggested via parentheses. This style of writing is not contrived. Commentaries are simply written according to the flow of consciousness of the writer.

The commentaries are not intended for the casual reader, but for the more serious student who is willing to invest the time and attention to understand both the semantic context and meditative import. Neither articles nor commentaries are intended to be read in any intellectual sense. Many of the

commentaries are incidentally intended to discourage casual reading and to encourage a more deliberate-but-non-linear approach that allows and stimulates a more intuitive reading.

The Upper Triad Material is not prescriptive, but it is suggestive. It is what we understand, at the moment it is written. It is intended to stimulate constructive thinking and foster spiritual growth. Each thought may be accepted, deferred, or rejected, in whole or in part, according to the framework, perspective, values, and consciousness of the reader. The challenge is for the student to read the material meditatively and intuitively rather than intellectually. We believe that self-realization occurs not through any rational or intellectual process, but rather through grace and through the meditative quality of higher consciousness. In the final analysis, it is up to the reader to discern the truth, according to his or her own consciousness.

Third Edition

This third edition is organized functionally and chronologically, in three titles, namely *Articles*, *Commentaries*, and *Miscellany*. The articles are written without much regard for format or length. Commentaries are naturally constrained to one page as originally published. The miscellaneous material is fairly diverse, but complements the various articles and commentaries.

In this third edition, the material is presented with articles and commentaries numbered according to their original sequence, except in the case of some series, where there are intervening articles or commentaries that would disrupt the series, in which case the series of articles and commentaries are presented in their more natural order.

Notes

To the best of the editor's recollection, all of the material in Commentaries XV was written by Upper Triad staff members.

More information on the Upper Triad Association and a complete index of the Upper Triad Material are provided in the Miscellany volume of this third edition and in the Introductory volume of the fourth edition.

Additional Caveat

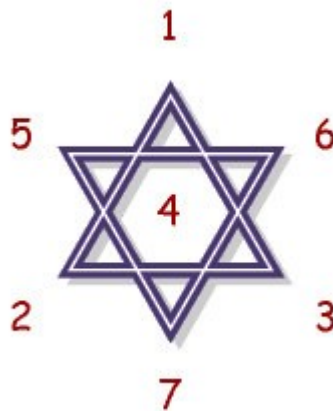
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There is a place, deep within the heart, where we touch God, and where God touches us, where human hearts achieve communion, with God, and with one another, there being no difference, no space between us.

The challenge, for human beings, is to find our way to that place. There are signs along the way, left by those who have passed this way and found that place.

In that place, there is no having, no doing, there is only being. What we have, thus has no hold upon us. And what we do, likewise. As stewards we have things. As servants we do things. But in God we are simply being.



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Astrology 1

There are a number of dimensions to astrology. One dimension is that of impersonal and personal elements. There are many impersonal elements, including the zodiacal signs or backgrounds, the rotation of the heavens (zodiac) relative to the observer (which determine the location and relative significance of the various houses), the various planets that move against that background and through the various houses, the various aspects between planets, the relationships between the various planets and signs and between planets and houses, that are formed and unformed as planets move through the heavens relative to the observer. The deterministic personal elements are simply those natal details or circumstances (the date, time, and place, with precision) that are necessary in order to calculate or determine what external influences are (were) present at birth and the comparable details of a person's present (progressed) circumstances.

Another dimension or cross-cut is that of objective astrology in contrast to subjective astrology. Objective astrology is the underlying science of astrology, the science of astrological dynamics, calculating the various positions and places and perspectives of the various planets (and aspects) in the context of the background (signs and houses). Objective astrology is very precise, and although there are a number of "systems" objective astrology is not really subject to interpretation. It is simply a matter of doing the calculations correctly, according to the preferred system.

Subjective astrology, on the other hand, is the art of astrology. Given the objective "information" one then needs to interpret or otherwise sense the significance and import of that information. Objective astrology is the easy part, as long as one is competent and conscientious. Subjective astrology is more difficult, especially if the mind is actively engaged in the process. The lowest and most limiting form of subjective astrology is intellectual interpretation, while the highest and least limiting form of subjective astrology is based entirely in the intuition (buddhi).

Yet another dimension is that of exoteric astrology in contrast with esoteric astrology. Exoteric astrology can be studied intellectually although it is more effective where there is substantial intuition, but esoteric astrology can only (properly) be studied through intuition. Exoteric astrology is the astrology of the personality or form, which is subject to external influence. Esoteric astrology is the astrology of the soul, which is not subject to external (astrological) influence in the same sense that is the personality. Moreover, the spiritual student is generally somewhere in between, having a personality that is only somewhat subject to external influence. Through (progressive) enlightenment, the student becomes less and less subject to exoteric or conventional astrological conditioning.

There is also a psychological dimension to astrology in the sense that some people allow "knowledge" of superficial astrological factors to effect behavior while others are entirely aloof (yet subject to external influence as long as they are living at the personality level). Thus the psychological dimension is the extent to which a person is passive or active in embracing astrological forecasts (horoscopic information) (more broadly in the sense of being effected by generalized horoscopic interpretations or less broadly in the sense of being effected by detailed, more personal interpretations). The degree of passivity (activity) is a factor. The relative validity of the interpretation being embraced is also a factor.

† Commentary No. 1402

Astrology 2

The fundamental issue of astrology, besides the objective framework and the (relative, subjective) interpretation of that framework applied to a person or collective (family, group, organization, country, race), is that of validity. The objective framework is generally valid. It is simply a matter of being trained in the calculational methods of a given system, and of being competent and conscientious. The subjective framework may or may not be valid, and is generally not really (very) valid because most astrologers lack an intuitive basis. Indeed, most astrologers are almost entirely themselves conditioned in their interpretations by and through their own biases and conditioning. And

sometimes even the factual basis is incorrect, yet interpretations “make sense” because they are sufficiently general or because a person wants them to be valid.

But the basics are relatively well-known and their understanding is relatively harmless, i.e., the relative influences and places of signs, houses, planets, aspects, etc. Yet, when all of the (hopefully correct) objective information is gathered together, it is not so easy for the mind to interpret, even without substantial bias or conditioning. There are many established (and different) interpretative systems, each with its own bias and focus or emphasis. But in the final analysis, even within a given system or interpretive framework, the mind generally cannot find all of the (more) meaningful correlations and interpretations, simply because the dimensionality exceeds its capacity (or at least its training).

Validity is compounded by the psychological factor and glamour. The problem is that astrological (external) influences are just that, influences. People are conditioned, at the personal level, by these natal and progressed influences. But people respond to these conditionings in various ways, according to consciousness. Some people are entirely passive with regard to this conditioning, some ignorantly passive, some not-so-ignorantly passive. Others actually think about the perceived (believed) (interpreted) influences and modify their actions or attitudes in some way. The diversity of responsiveness and its transient (dynamic) (changeable) nature further compounds the situation.

Some use astrological “insights” to (self-presumed) advantage, exploiting the various (perceived) influences, others simply realize to some extent that there is an influence in some direction and proceed more naturally (in a less contrived manner). But self-presumed advantages are illusions. A person who believes in something and acts accordingly may conclude that the consequences are thereby evoked through their actions, when in fact those consequences are the result of something very much more cumulative. A person who is living at the (superficial) personality level is living almost entirely within the illusion of the objective world (matter and ego).

A more enlightened person, not living entirely superficially in the world, is simply aware of astrological forces, whether perceived as astrological forces or simply as “energies” perceived in themselves, and in being aware of those forces

or factors, works with them as tendencies or opportunities and not as determinants. If external forces encourage tension a student can balance that tendency through particular meditation. A truly enlightened student would simply be aware of the influence but not be affected. A truly enlightened student would simply work with the energies afforded or external influences presented, in some sense for the benefit of others.

† Commentary No. 1403

Sporting Violence

Another unsavory practice, another dimension of violence, is that of certain so-called sports, like boxing, wrestling, hockey, etc., where there is an obvious if not openly acknowledged intent to harm or injure one's opponent (indeed, even while many proponents say there is no intent to harm, the fact is that these sports are inherently violent, and the fact is that there is an intent to "defeat" one's opponent through violent, and principally harmful means). In addition to the actual harm or injury imparted, there is an even greater concern, namely that these "sports" encourage non-participants to embrace violent expression.

Boxing is considered a "manly" sport and young men (and women) are encouraged to develop the skills of physical self-defense, which in turn encourages "men" to express themselves physically, violently, instead of learning to resolve "differences" in more constructive ways. In fact, "sports" like boxing tend to glorify the physical body and the ability to hurt others (even under the guise of self-defense), thereby strengthening the implied coarseness. Other so-called sports are even more cruel, in the sense that animals are deliberately harmed or injured in the course of sporting "entertainment" such as bull-fighting, cock-fighting, etc. Even "sports" like hunting and fishing are inherently harmful (to the animals hunted, more obviously, but also to those who hunt (in terms of consciousness (coarseness))) and are therefore unsavory in both aspects.

Indeed, people who participate in or promote or enjoy watching these violent "sports" are necessarily of coarse consciousness. More refined people simply cannot comfortably engage in such practices, nor even witness these events. Of course there are degrees of violence, and degrees of cruelty, but all of these

practices are inherently harmful, and inherently violent, and inherently cruel, and require a certain measure of coarseness in consciousness. Moreover, engaging in these practices, or “enjoying” watching them, tends to further deaden the consciousness, and undermine if not preclude any real progress in consciousness.

Worse, there tends to be an implied if not conscious rationalization of the harmlessness of these practices, which is a substantive act of self-delusion, for the simple reason that they are not (at all) harmless. Some hunters rationalize or “justify” their sport for subsistence or “herd management” when in fact there is no righteousness in the practice, regardless of what one wants to believe. To kill in (actual) self-defense is nominally righteous, but one should question why and how one is drawn into such a circumstance in the first place. Those who consider animals to be inferior and therefore “fair game” are also deluded, for animals have as much right to live and express themselves and evolve in this world as does humanity.

The extent to which a society allows these harmful practices is an expression and indication of collective consciousness. Less enlightened societies allow or glorify some of these practices, while in more enlightened societies they are prohibited or discouraged, by degrees (in the sense that some of these practices are relatively more harmful than others (those that are blood-sports, that lead to death or serious injuries, are relatively more harmful than those that are simply violent and sometimes physical injurious)). Yet, in consciousness, all of these practices are harmful. But as a society evolves (collectively) in consciousness, as consciousness becomes more refined, these practices go (first) underground, and eventually disappear entirely.

Integrity and Judgment

Ethics and morals refer to behavioral standards or values, while integrity refers to the actual adherence to subscribed ethics and morals. The relationship between ethics, morals, and integrity on the one hand, and a self-righteous and judgmental nature on the other hand, is naturally anti-correlative and usually requires some not inconsiderable effort in order to achieve the proper balance.

Many who develop a strong sense of ethics, morals, and integrity (righteousness) also tend to be self-righteous and judgmental. But while righteousness is a virtue, self-righteousness is not, and a judgmental nature is decidedly counter-evolutionary (but natural to the material (ego) nature). Similarly (comparably) (conversely), those who do not embrace a strong (healthy) (proper) sense of ethics, i.e., those whose ethics and morals are largely (superficially) self-serving, tend to not be self-righteous or judging, but more accepting of others. But while these correlative tendencies exist for most people, they do not hold true for those who are properly (spiritually) developed.

Thus as the spiritual student embraces the discipline and principles of the path, care must be taken to temper the head-centered (critical, judging) nature to preclude self-righteousness and a judgmental nature. This (need) is especially true for first, third, fifth, and seventh ray personalities, and very especially true for fifth ray personalities. For odd-numbered personalities tend to be more head-centered, more critical, and more judging than comparable even-numbered personalities. Indeed, it is a human (personality) tendency to apply one's standards to others. But one need not, indeed eventually must not, apply one's own standards to others. Each traverses his or her own path, has different experiences, and different needs. What is right for one may not be right for another. And it is not right for anyone to judge another in any personal or self-righteous sense.

Proper ethics and morals (conscience) are (is) driven primarily by the threefold spiritual practice of (and need for) harmlessness, honesty, and humility. Judging others is inherently harmful and egoistic. As one progresses ethically and morally, in terms of conscience and consciousness, in terms of practice and

propensity, one should (properly) temper or balance the tendency to think of oneself as different from others or better than others. Indeed, if the heart is developed sufficiently as the moral and ethical nature is developed then there is no problem, for the heart nature is inherently non-judging and non-separative. But many develop along one line (the head-centered nature) before the other (the heart-centered nature) is properly unfolded (properly, the head-centered nature is developed and the heart-centered nature is unfolded, there being a distinct difference in these two processes (development and unfoldment)).

Much of the challenge for the spiritual student relates to embracing a strong (spiritually-based) sense of one's own ethics and morals (adherence) (integrity), without judging others, and while being surrounded by those whose ethics and morals are much more (albeit necessarily superficially) self-serving (whatever is self-serving is merely superficially so, i.e., illusory, as the "self" is not served by anything that is selfish or self-centered). The ability of the spiritual student to succeed in this endeavor is largely based on how well-centered the student is, i.e., how effectively the student is in touch with, living with, his or her own true (higher) nature.

† Commentary No. 1405

Expiation

Expiation is the act of making atonement and the means by which and through which atonement is made, i.e., amends-making. Atonement suggests active reconciliation or active (willful, deliberate, intentional) restoration of balance. If one has committed a grievous (or not so grievous) offense against another or against society (or against oneself) (or against another lifeform) (all of which are inherently "against" God and one's higher (divine) nature), there is therefore a required restoration of (karmic) balance, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

The underlying purpose in restoration-of-balance (karmic fulfillment) is to ensure that whatever the implied lesson-in-experience is actually learned and whatever adjustment in consciousness that is needed is actually made. Thus one cannot simply be imprisoned or punished, and one cannot simply compensate one's victim for his or her losses or injuries, one must actually learn the lesson and make a suitable adjustment in consciousness and engage in

expiation. Otherwise the apparent act of expiation will not actually restore the balance and the unresolved force will then necessarily (eventually) reappear, generally through other means or in another form and generally with greater intensity. Thus no form of "punishment" is effective unless there is also an effective consideration for and facilitation of learning and growing.

If one engages this process (expiation) openly, sincerely, and voluntarily, then there is greater likelihood of learning the lesson (properly and fully) and restoring the balance, without further untoward consequences. But if one ignores the process or if one engages the process insincerely or involuntarily, then things (untoward consequences) tend to be more complicated and generally more painful and generally longer-lasting (untoward suggests adverse or unpropitious if not also somewhat intractable). Karmic force is unrelenting until such time as it is fulfilled. It may be acting indirectly at times and directly at other times, but it remains (and grows in intensity) until it is actually fulfilled.

The problem of expiation is not merely a matter of attitude, e.g., willingness or earnestness to engage the process, but also a matter of ability and intelligence. In order to learn the lesson one must have a capacity and facility for learning, one must be open and able to comprehend the issues. Thus much of ordinary experience is involved not so much with actively restoring the balance as with developing the capacity for intelligently restoring the balance. And ultimately, every "offense" is really against oneself (God) (and the collective consciousness (life)), and so expiation is properly a matter of finding peace with oneself, with god, and all of life.

There is also a matter of atonement in two other senses, namely that of "reconciliation of God and man through the death of Jesus Christ" and the at-one-ment in the Christian Science sense of exemplification. The life of Jesus Christ symbolizes various stages in human evolution, where Jesus represents the human being and Christ represents the higher nature or God within. Thus Christ as intermediary, capable of remission of sins, is also symbolic, in the sense that it is only through one's inner life and relationship with God that our sins can be reconciled. Thus atonement and at-one-ment are one and the same, the goal being union with God through self-mastery and adherence to one's higher nature. In the final analysis, expiation occurs through unity and union,

through conscious and actual oneness with God and all lives. In this sense, karma is unification.

† Commentary No. 1406

Gurus and Disciples

The traditional guru-disciple relationship may offer considerable encouragement to the beginning student (called a disciple in the lower sense of being a disciple of the guru, but not a disciple in the higher, more proper sense of an advanced student), provided the “guru” is legitimate (sincere and talented) and provided the student does not become attached to or englamoured with the guru (the student who is englamoured is simply unable to learn very much).

The purpose of the guru (spiritual teacher) and that of the guru-disciple relationship is simply to encourage the reorientation of the student from the worldly to the spiritual, i.e., the first and more fundamental transformation from a state in consciousness in which the student is entangled in the mundane (secular) (superficial) world to an enduring state of consciousness in which the student is focused on the spiritual path, without losing sight of his or her worldly obligations (to live in the world without being absorbed in worldly ways). Many prospective students are simply not able to do this without a teacher and/or the encouragement of a community (fellowship) of spiritual students. Thus the guru tends to be an authority figure who provides encouragement for the preliminary discipline and practices that a student needs in order to engage the transformation process.

But many so-called “gurus” are either pretenders or self-deluded. Few are actually spiritually-focused and qualified to be spiritual teachers, though many seem to be (but are not), and many make authoritative claims, seek students, charge for their services, and/or otherwise take advantage of their students naiveté. In some cases it is about money, in other cases it is about power or ego. In some cases delusion. A proper guru does not seek students, only accepts students who are amenable to the spiritual discipline, does not charge for his or her services, and exhibits genuine respect and consideration for his or her students. A proper guru does not intimidate or control his (her) students, but simply offers encouragement and facilitates training and preparation for the

student to then actively embark upon the path of self-realization (self-mastery) (enlightenment) (service).

Even a proper guru-disciple relationship depends very much on relative consciousness, i.e., need. A student who truly needs a teacher will simply find a teacher suitable to his or her needs. And a student who is able to find proper encouragement and support without a teacher will simply do so. Advanced students learn to rely on the intuition, and in this sense a traditional personality-centered guru-disciple relationship tends to undermine the student's focus on the inner self. Thus even a proper (necessarily personality-centered) guru-disciple relationship is temporary and serves a purpose, but allows (indeed encourages) self-determination (not in the sense of ego, but in the sense of the inner self).

The traditional guru-disciple relationship that has been popularized in the west in the last hundred years or so has value, for some, perhaps even for many, but is not the true guru-disciple relationship. For the true teacher is the soul and has naught to do with personalities and the outer teachings of any faith, and is not about authority in any sense. The best (highest, deepest) relationships between students and gurus are relationships that exist through the soul, i.e., the student relates to the (outer) teacher through his or her own soul, so that the two souls are more prominent than the student-person-disciple and the teacher-person-guru.

Consistency and Conformity

Consistency and conformity with natural, higher law, leads to or sustains health. There is simply no other means available for enduring health. All of life is qualified by purpose, namely evolution in consciousness, i.e., learning, growing, and serving. The extent to which people live inconsistently or non-conformingly with natural, higher law, is the extent to which there is disease (dis-ease) and injury and other imports relating to health.

Consistency and conformity with natural, higher law evoke opportunities for further growth. Inconsistency and non-conformity with natural, higher law also evoke opportunities for further growth, but these opportunities are further conditioned by the balancing force that brings a person back into consistency and conformity with natural, higher law. And so these opportunities are mainly about redressing the balance and less about moving forward, i.e., more about helping a person to be responsive to learning opportunities than actually learning. Except that one of the more important things to learn is what actually facilitates learning (i.e., consistency and conformity with natural, higher law).

What is actually meant by consistency and conformity is simply living in accordance with the (ethical, moral, and spiritual) principles that facilitate evolution in consciousness, at the individual, group, and collective levels. It does not mean rigid conformity with rules that are not really understood. But it does mean learning about natural, higher law and then living in accord with that knowledge and understanding. Disease, injury, and other difficult circumstances all indicate a lack of balance, a lack of harmony, and a lack of understanding (a lack of consistency and conformity with natural, higher law). Health and a lack of difficult circumstances does not necessarily indicate consistency and conformity, as it may indicate simply that a person is asleep and unresponsive (in which case there is generally an eventual, impending disruption of the status quo, and a more dramatic opportunity for adjustment in consciousness).

But more generally, health implies a facility for learning and growing and serving, such that disease, injury, or other awkwardness is simply not needed in

order for a person to be responsive. But health is not simply a matter of apparent, physical health. There is also vitality (etheric health) and harmony and stability (coherence) on emotional and concrete mental levels. Many who appear physically healthy are simply “unhealthy” on higher levels. And that dis-ease on higher levels will eventually manifest on lower levels unless it is first properly resolved. A “healthy” person is really one who recognizes unhealthy energy within himself (herself) and makes a suitable adjustment in consciousness (i.e., in attitude, behavior, disposition, etc.). To such a person, the healing process is continual if not continuous, because there is learning, there is adjustment, there is responsiveness to healing energy, there is engagement in healing, and this engagement endures.

Natural, higher law is simply the law of evolution in consciousness that pervades all of life and experience. It is karma in all its various facets. It is dharma likewise. Consistency to natural, higher law is simply being harmless, being devoted to truth (seeking truth, being honest in all regards), and cultivating humility (not allowing the ego to serve as a barrier in consciousness). Consistency and conformity is simply living in harmony with all of life, learning and growing in consciousness, serving others according to need and opportunity, embracing the healing process.

† Commentary No. 1408

Reactive Projection

There are actually (at least) three kinds of projection, namely the (unconscious) projection of one’s values on other people (i.e., unconsciously assuming that other people have the same values, are motivated in the same ways, and see or perceive things in the same sense), (unconscious) reactive projection of limitations, and (conscious or unconscious) energy projection (sharing of energy) in general.

One of the more severe types of unconscious projection is that of reactive projection or egoistic projection (projective (evasive) (protective) egoism) in which one unconsciously recognizes one’s own limitations, consciously or otherwise denies their existence, and then unconsciously projects them upon others, with or without some discrimination. This projection is virtually never

done consciously, although the denial is sometimes accomplished consciously (not that one acknowledges the denial, just that one can consciously deny the truth about one's nature and circumstances). For example, truly arrogant people almost never see themselves as arrogant, but often they see others as arrogant (i.e., they see themselves in others, truthfully or otherwise, and sometimes even project disdain for others without acknowledging their own (similar) limitations).

This form of projection generally occurs where there are deep wounds and the inability of the ego to deal with the truth and import of that wounded-ness. It is simply easier for the ego to remain in denial and project these "limitations" upon others, often reactively. It is inherently a defensive and reactive posture and generally undermines otherwise healthy relationships. It is also delusional and therefore quite complicated psychologically. But it is fundamentally egoistic. It is the ego that is wounded, the ego that cannot face the truth about itself (its own character or personal nature (let alone its own artificiality)), and the ego which projects itself upon others, seeing these personal weaknesses in others rather than in itself, whether or not they actually exist in others hardly matters (to the ego) as they are perceived to be real.

Because of the (potential) ferocity of the delusion, the fear of facing the truth, the projection is usually (often) vehement. The ego is so certain of its validity (so secure in its evasion) that the other person (people) is (are) victimized by this projection. Given the propensity of the ego-mind to see what it wants to, the behavior and characteristics of others can easily be distorted and misconstrued to (wrongly) validate one's projection (belief that the other person (or people) has (have) the "problem" and not oneself). In effect, the ego builds a wall to hide from the truth and then projects the truth about oneself (often speciously) upon others.

This is a particularly difficult psychology. It is almost impossible to encourage someone to deal with this sort of problem (denial). One can only gently encourage someone to be honest with himself (herself) and hope that eventually he (she) will realize some small part of the truth and that it will grow (e.g., possibly the least threatening approach is to ask someone if he (she) is being honest with himself (herself) (i.e., not suggesting a problem but simply asking). In extreme cases even that will be provocative, especially if the asker is already

the victim (recipient) of such projection. But reactive projection is necessarily self-defeating. It tends to greatly complicate one's life and relationships. And it attracts progressively more severe circumstances that force a person ultimately to face the truth.

† Commentary No. 1409

Energy Projection 1

In the more general sense, projection is simply the projection of energy, consciously or unconsciously, purposefully or casually, intensely or non-intensely.

The basis of energy projection is simply that the human being is an energy (energetic) being who naturally absorbs, reflects, and transmits energy through every waking and non-waking moment, on virtually all levels (physical, emotional, and mental). A healthy person tends to attract and absorb "good" energy, reflect "bad" energy in some diffusive sense, and transmit "good" energy by virtue of his or her nature and circumstances. Conversely, an unhealthy person tends to attract and absorb "bad" energy, reflect "good" energy in some diffusive sense, and transmit "bad" energy according to his or her nature and circumstances. Most people are somewhere in between and not entirely consistent energy-wise. Most people are not really aware of their energy nature or of the consequences of their projections.

In this sense "good" energy is that which is encouraging or constructively helpful to others in some evolutionary context, while "bad" or harmful energy is that which is discouraging or destructively not helpful to someone, i.e., that which is counter-evolutionary. Virtually everything that a person does or feels or thinks results in the projection of some energy qualified in consciousness by that person's nature. If one is angry or critical or wounded in some other way then one tends to project that "energy" on etheric and astral (emotional) and concrete mental levels. One tends then to (resonantly) attract similar energies. But if one is good-natured and gentle and respectful of others then one tends to project that good-natured energy as a matter of course. Good-natured energy is never imposed on people, it is simply shared, gently. Wherever there is

imposition the energy projected is relatively negative, regardless of intent. Because imposition is inherently harmful (counter-evolutionary).

Most people project energy unconsciously and continuously, for good or ill, accordingly to their nature and according to the dynamics of their nature. But with proper (occult) training, the student learns to become aware of his or her projections and then qualifies the entire process in some constructive sense. So that energy is no longer projected unconsciously in any negative sense, but only unconsciously in some positive (overall gently encouraging) sense. So that energy is projected consciously only with wisdom. This process of cultivation and refinement is very preliminary to the spiritual path and the development of the higher faculties.

The main reason for the preliminary discipline and preliminary endeavors is to minimize a person's potential for harm (through carelessness), and to maximize a person's potential for good. This requires purification and qualification and refinement. This requires a growing awareness that is only possible if one's coarser nature is tempered. Thus the spiritual student learns to temper the lower nature, refine the components of the personality (physical body, etheric body, emotions, and concrete mind), and achieve some degree of self-mastery before any advanced training can be undertaken (safely). With power comes responsibility. Thus a student needs to be properly qualified. Then, in embracing the spiritual path and its dharma, the student works within the framework of evolution, gently encouraging everyone in his or her vicinity, simply by virtue of his or her (now) more refined nature and understanding. And to some extent deliberately projecting needed energies.

Energy Projection 2

With regard to energy projection, the role of the spiritual student has two major aspects, the first being sufficient qualification of one's own nature such that natural (unconscious) (incidental) and deliberate energy projection is healthy (encouraging, constructive, non-impositional), the second being the deliberate and constructive working with energy according to the principles of the path (to encourage evolution in consciousness by sharing energy (not imposing energy)).

There are a number of stages in energy work, including attraction (accumulation) (accretion) (invocation), qualification, projection (evocation), and release. It is natural for energy to accumulate and be released, as a person engages the ebb and flow of life in the lower worlds (indeed, in the case of an unhealthy person there is either the inability to (naturally) accumulate and release energy or the tendency for negative qualification of the energy released). In (proper) meditation work the student tends to attract particular energies (according to the student's attractive quality of consciousness) that are then further qualified by the meditation (and the student's nature), and then projected into the immediate (and not so immediate) environment, to be available to anyone who has both need and the ability to respond to (that) energy. It is then important (vital) that the student release the projected energy and not become entangled in it. That way the energy is free to be fulfilled and not (artificially) constrained by the student. Once a proper meditation (energy) practice is engaged, the process becomes (also) incidental (unconscious, during non-meditative periods).

If energy is allowed to accumulate needlessly, without being projected, then it tends to evoke problems (dis-ease) within the body and consciousness (retained (unfulfilled) energy tends to crystalize and form "blocks" in the body (and consciousness)). Else, under stress, the energy is (unconsciously) (sometimes explosively) projected in some (relatively) negative sense. All energy has some implied destiny and must ultimately be released or fulfilled in some way. Thus the student properly attracts energy, works with it in consciousness, and then projects and releases it, with healthy import. Energy is not (properly) retained, for the healthy student attracts whatever energy is needed (there being

effectively an unlimited supply). Energy is allowed to accumulate only for some period and process of (further) qualification, and then projected and released.

Thus the student should be wary of needless accumulation and wary of unfortunate qualification. These are particularly significant due to the (implied) potency of a properly trained spiritual student. With power and potency come additional responsibility. And without (relative) purity (a refined body and refined consciousness, through spiritual discipline) potency can be quite dangerous (to the student and to others). Thus the student engages continually in refinement and safeguarding. With pure heart (service motive) and a tempered personality, the student can much more effectively work with needed energies.

Depending on the relative intensity and qualification (purpose and nature), projected energy can persist for quite some time. The ability of people to respond to energies-of-encouragement is determined by (overall and particular) karma, but then so is the availability of students to work with these energies (thus there is balance). Thus in some broad (karmic) sense the availability of energy and the availability of energy workers equates to human need.

† Commentary No. 1411

Guidance of Spirit 1

There are many people, both within and beyond the new age and traditional religious communities, who “look to spirit” or to “God” for guidance. For some it is simply a matter of prayer for understanding, for others a matter of seeking specific directions. For some it may be a matter of trying to live according to “God’s will” while for others it may be a matter of discerning the flow of life (the framework and pattern of evolution in consciousness) and living in harmony with that flow.

The underlying principles of this are quite sound, namely that one should indeed look beyond the ego or “little self” for guidance or understanding or wisdom, and that guidance and understanding and wisdom are indeed available to those who seek properly and who are properly receptive. The ego is necessarily self-serving

and very limited in its (artificial) intelligence and insight. The mind likewise, though more natural, but nonetheless limited by its qualification and the inherent limitations of "reasoning" ... Better to be moved by reason than by the stimulation of the lower senses, but even better to be moved by intuition and real insight. Seeking guidance is therefore a matter of the relative propriety of source and the relative proprieties of the manner and nature of what is sought.

The first problem has to do with the source. Most people, however sincere they may be, are unable to discern the difference between the sense (voice) of the ego (mind) (personality) and the sense (voice) of the soul (God) (divinity within). Thus many are led astray by their own egos, through their own desire nature and their own qualification and conditioning. Similarly, those who are perhaps more sensitive but nonetheless untrained are easily led astray by external entities posing as spirit-guides of one sort or another. Some of these spirit-guides may even be sincere, but they are not enlightened and their "guidance" is usually of little real value. The tendency of the mind (ego) is simply to interpret whatever impressions are received, however noble they may be, in whatever terms are (consciously or unconsciously) desired. Thus whether the "guidance" comes from within or beyond it is often (biased) transformed into whatever is wanted.

The second problem has to do with the manner and nature of what is sought. Most people are ego-based (personality-centered) and their manner and nature of seeking is largely mundane, personal, and self-serving in some sense or another. Many seek merely to do what they wish, and so by seeking "external" guidance (from "spirit") they actually seek to avoid responsibility for their own decisions or desires, to somehow "justify" their own actions and inclinations. This is generally so even where there is not inconsiderable sincerity. People are simply generally not aware of their own nature in consciousness. Wherever there is personal motive, there is bias.

In wisdom, the spiritual student seeks whatever guidance is pertinent, without judging what is or is not pertinent or needed and without any expectation of specifics. In wisdom, the spiritual student properly seeks guidance from the God-within and not from any external sources. The spiritual student may listen to externals (people, spirit-guides), but proceeds only according to what rings true, and the student properly always takes responsibility for the action

and its consequences. And the spiritual student properly seeks only insight that is relevant to the path and living a spiritual life, not (properly) that which is personal or mundane. Thus key ingredients are discretion and discernment.

† Commentary No. 1412

Guidance of Spirit 2

The other dimension or factor is that of "God" or spirit. Many consider whatever is "received" from "God" or spirit to be absolute, infallible, or otherwise compelling. If "God" or "spirit" or an angel says this or is "sensed" in some way, then it must be true. Much that is "received" is simply a matter of self-delusion, but there are instances of genuine inspiration (but not specific "guidance"). But aside from the problem of legitimacy there is a matter of just what is God or spirit and how do they function with regard to prayer or requests for guidance.

In some sense "God" and "spirit" are equivalent; in some sense "spirit" is simply a manifestation of God. And angels (devas) are real (but not anthropomorphic except in one's imagination) (and they do not (ever) communicate in any objective manner). The problem is that neither God nor the manifestations of God are particularly interested in the mundane or personal lives of anyone. They do care about all life, and offer generalized encouragement for evolution in consciousness. But they do not get involved in individual lives or personal matters. They do, however, respond to prayer or other projections of energy. But they respond in some holistic fashion, within the framework of cause and effect (and evolutionary needs). Thus if one projects energy, then that energy evokes some (universal) response. There is an underlying wisdom in this response, that can be applied to the person, but the response itself is just qualified energy. The "interpretation" of this energy is wholly personal or inferred by one's own biases and expectations.

So. Whenever someone genuinely thinks that "God wants me to do this" or "Spirit wants me to have this" there is self-delusion. Because God does not "want" anything. God is beyond wanting. God is all-embracing and underlying and overshadowing, as well as indwelling. And God is personal

(only) in the sense that God lives within (all) and qualifies everything, but is not personal in any other (ordinary) sense. The closest that God comes to “wanting” is the divine intention, which is evolution in consciousness. That divine will or intention is reflected through various (energy) qualifications and laws (such as karma). All that is and all that happens is simply a consequence of that intention (purpose). But it is not a “wanting” at all. And it is not at all personal. It is individualized only in the sense that people respond to evolutionary pressures in different ways and those pressures are tailored by karma to fit the person and his or her circumstances.

There is, however, another sense of seeking guidance, and that is seeking to discern the patterns of “life” or the various flows of energy as they relate to one’s own life. There is a natural balance of energy. There is a natural flowing of energy. If one is consciously or unconsciously “attuned” to this flow then things tend to “fall into place” however they need to (not necessarily as one “wants” them to). Things will happen as they need to, but if a person is antagonistic or unresponsive to the natural flow of energy then the energy tends to be disruptive. While if a person is receptive or responsive then the energy tends to be supportive. This does not mean that the student should be passive, but it does mean that the student should be aware and consciously conforming to the natural flow of energy.

Thus “seeking guidance” for the spiritual student generally means seeking to discern the flow of life and how one can more effectively participate in that flow. In this way one is more likely to learn, and one’s opportunities for growth and service are naturally enhanced and increased.

Guidance of Spirit 3

There are, however, a number of relatively mature approaches to “seeking guidance” especially within the framework of true mysticism (embracing the heart, deeply and necessarily quietly), where the role of the ego is recognized and discerned (discounted) (tempered). Finding and listening to the God within (voice of the silence) is not so easy. Proper meditation and quiescence of mind and emotion are essential. But overall the most important factor is self-qualification or preparedness. If one is not clear (peaceful, purified, receptive) then one cannot sense clearly. If one is entangled in materialism or the senses or the ego (lower self), then one cannot be receptive to anything truly insightful.

It may be helpful to meet with others of similar sincerity and qualification. In a proper group environment one is generally able to be more attuned. Group sincerity (potentially) offers encouragement and helps build momentum. In the Religious Society of Friends (and other proper formulations of mysticism), for example, there is generally not inconsiderable encouragement toward (mature) receptivity, based in large part on the qualification of environment (the meeting for worship) through silence and sincerity. Many groups purport to facilitate “attunement” but most more often than not offer distraction (entertainment) (a more worldly or more personality-centered or more glamorous focus). Most people who “go to church” do so simply through habit and social contract, not through (genuinely) seeking to grow spiritually or to serve more effectively. But where there is a genuine “seeking to grow” then there is progress, whether it is within the framework of conventional religion or beyond those boundaries. God or “spirit” is everywhere and always. But it is easier to embrace through proper approach and through a proper atmosphere (group or individual).

Another key to proper receptivity is simply not wanting. If one seeks too earnestly then this very entanglement in seeking hinders insight. If what one seeks is ego-driven one is much less likely to find insight. If what one seeks has to do with material needs, likewise. If what one seeks is less self-centered, there is greater likelihood of success. If what one seeks is simply understanding or wisdom, if one is receptive and not simply pushing insights away through striving, then one is more likely to find the needed understanding or wisdom.

If one genuinely and properly seeks guidance from the God within, then there results a growth in spirit, a deepening of one's qualification and understanding, a strengthening of one's spiritual focus, a lessening of entanglements in the world (and lower self). One simply begins to see things more clearly, to see things with a better (higher, deeper, more subtle) sense of proportion. One's sense of what is important will generally change. One becomes less intense (as a person), more centered (in the deeper sense), and more embracing of life (in the higher, deeper sense). It is not so much what is received but that something (energy) is embraced. It is not the knowledge or even the understanding that matters, but the quality of consciousness evoked and embraced.

In the final analysis it is not "guidance" of spirit that matters, but (conscious) participation in spirit. It is not what one receives that matters, but what one gives to the process. One grows to the extent that one commits to the process of evolution in consciousness, which is not about receiving guidance or insight, it is about being (spirit).

† Commentary No. 1414

Quaternaries

A quaternary is a member of a group fourth in order or (more commonly) a set (quaternion) (tetrad) comprising four (generally equal but not generally identical) units or members. In this sense (of a four-fold set) the quaternary is a natural bridge (energy-link) between the more natural trinity (tertiary) (triplicity) (three major rays) and the astrological framework which has a basis of twelve.

The quaternary also has significance by virtue of the role (qualification, correlation) of the fourth ray and offers the energies of harmony through contrast and relationship through balance. In a trinity properly there are three members and three relationships and a whole, while in a quaternary there are four members and two primary relationships (pairs of opposites) and four secondary relationships and a whole. The trinity is relatively more simple and stable while the quaternary is relatively more complex and dynamic. And yet

relationships exist between trinities and quaternaries (significantly) and between quaternaries and pentads (significantly less so).

One natural quaternary is that of the four directions (north, south, east, and west) and various associated symbologies. Another is that of the four seasons (spring, summer, autumn, winter). Yet another is that of the four elements (air, water, fire, earth) and their astrological implications. Indeed, it is the interaction of the trinity (cardinal, fixed, mutable) and the quaternary (air, water, fire, earth) that forms the (three times four equals) twelve signs of the zodiac (the astrological background) as well as the twelve houses (that background in its more dynamic sense). And of course the four seasons correlate directly with the annual astrological cycle. There are also the four (symbolic) horsemen of the apocalypse (war, famine, pestilence, and death). And the four (normal) dimensions of space-time (length, breadth, depth, duration). And four suits of the Tarot (wands, cups, swords, disks) (hearts, spades, diamonds, clubs). There are also four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude). And many other quaternaries (significantly so or otherwise). All sets of four which are mutually correlative in some sense or another.

A number of religious symbols embrace or derive (from) the quaternary, including the Christian cross, the (ancient) (more dynamic) swastika, and the tetragrammaton (Yahweh). Some crosses are symmetrical in one dimension (only), while others are symmetrical in two dimensions. There is relatively more balance in symmetry, but more "urging" with less symmetry, provided the whole (symbol) (set of relationships) is coherent. The cross is an open quaternary (symbolic framework), while a square or rectangle (or other tetrahedron) is a closed quaternary (symbolic framework). Thus the energy relationships of a cross are quite different from those of a square.

Tetravalent members are properly equal but not equivalent. Each conveys or embraces its own energy and symbolism. But the relationships that exist between set members also convey (generally deeper) insights. One should properly first study the nature of the four set members individually, then the nature of the four as a whole, then the nature of relationships of each to the whole, and finally the nature of relationships of each member one to another. There is greater meaning (and insight) in context. And a proper quaternary has

considerable (proper) context (albeit not as much as a trinity (there is greater depth in simplicity than in complexity)).

† Commentary No. 1415

Happenstance and Transpiration

There is a small but interesting paradox with regard to how things happen. On one hand there is the sense (belief) of some people that everything happens for a reason. On the other hand there is the comparable (different) (but equivalent) sense that things just happen (or in some more extreme sense, that everything is happenstance). Happening simply refers to whatever comes about without regard to causation or intention (or underlying purpose), i.e., without recourse to any sense or apprehension of cause and effect relationships. While happenstance refers to things happening (believedly) due entirely to chance. Transpiration refers to the knowledge or understanding of what has happened. In fact, everything happens by chance, and nothing happens by chance. These statements are both true and equivalent.

As usual, the deeper truth lies either between the extremes or is broad enough to embrace both senses. From one perspective, everything in life, everything that happens, is truly a consequence of everything else (past, present, and future). Every action is inexorably linked to every other action. But only some of those links are significant (and the human being, with limited consciousness, is not able to discern true significance because much is simply beyond the human scope or senses). Most happenings are not significant. So one can say that everything happens for a reason (more or less), because there is an underlying causal fabric that embraces everything. Every cause, every process, and every consequence. One may never actually fully know the reason for anything, because of the scope and complexity-in-manifestation of that causal fabric, but sometimes one can know or understand some of the reasons, to some extent (or at least one can have the artificially comforting illusion of knowledge or understanding). The problem is that if one focuses on reasons instead of learning and growing, then reasons become excuses. One can become entangled in reasoning and in reasons.

Thus it is also true that things just happen, which means that it does not really matter why or how (meaning that one needs to not be entangled in or distracted by the why or how). Especially since one cannot be sure of "reasons" or of all the causal factors. One can be sure, however, that there is a flow to life, that all things and all lives and all events exist within that flow. That things and lives and events are all interrelated. Better for the spiritual student to focus on living in the moment, i.e., with a spiritual focus and according to spiritual principles, than to be engaged (entangled) in trying to understand the small things (in details).

The manifestation of the universe is mechanistic in some sense, in the sense that everything happens according to natural law and in the sense that what happens is stochastic. But natural laws are themselves consequences, and governed by underlying purpose (evolution in consciousness). And what seems to be statistical is simply a matter of how we look at it. If we embrace a broader, deeper perspective, then there is really no significance at all in statistics. Statistics are consequential and superficial. So while (some) natural laws may seem mechanistic, they are actually just a small part of something greater and purposive. Thus what happens at the material (superficial) level is a very small part of what really happens.

Transpiration is different from happenstance, for transpiration implies at least some limited apprehension, that something has happened if not the significance of what has happened. Thus things just happen. And some things transpire, to some extent.

Self-Centeredness 1

There is a spectrum or variety of self-centeredness, at one extreme there is selfishness, at the other there is self-absorption. All are included in self-centeredness in the broader sense, while self-centeredness in the narrower sense is a matter of bias in thinking and feeling, and does not necessarily include being selfish or self-absorbed.

Most people are selfish to some extent, self-centered to some extent, and self-absorbed to some extent. Indeed one can consider these three “qualities” as more or less independent. One does not necessarily follow from another. Thus one can “embrace” these three characteristics in varying degrees and combinations. Some people are relatively more selfish but not necessarily self-centered or self-absorbed. Some people are merely (particularly) self-centered. And some people are relatively more self-absorbed but not necessarily selfish or self-centered. Some are selfish and self-centered but not (really) self-absorbed. Some are selfish and self-absorbed but not (really) self-centered. Some are self-centered and self-absorbed but not (really) selfish. Some are selfish and self-centered and self-absorbed. And a few people are not (substantially) selfish nor self-centered nor self-absorbed. Each of these combinations results in a (different) particular manifestation of consciousness.

Selfishness is “being concerned excessively or exclusively with oneself, seeking or concentrating on one’s own (apparent) advantage, pleasure, or well-being, without regard for others.” Thus a selfish person is simply one who does not care about the welfare of others. A selectively selfish person is one who cares only about some immediate (or not so immediate) group of people (e.g., friends or family (members of the same race, religion, etc.)) to the exclusion of others. Self-centeredness is “being (superficially) independent of outside forces or influences” which means having a lack of awareness of others and of external factors. Selfishness is a more active quality, of not caring, of behaving in such a manner that other’s concerns or interests are actively ignored. It is the “position” of one who lacks awareness or understanding of the collective consciousness, of cause and effect relationships, of underlying reality.

Self-centeredness is more passive, concerned with the way things are perceived, about (lack of) awareness. A self-centered person who is not otherwise selfish, will generally be considerate of others to the extent that he or she is aware, but such a person is not naturally or generally so aware. Thus a self-centered person generally exhibits a mix of behavior depending on the nature of (passing) awareness. Some forms of self-centeredness relate mainly to biases in thinking and feeling, to having strong attachments or to having opinions, such that a broader, deeper context cannot be apprehended or considered. But a (merely) self-centered person is not generally without some potential for learning and growing, just that such a person is limited in his or her ability to learn and grow, by virtue of (the extent and nature of) his or her self-centeredness. Self-absorption is a more extreme case of self-centeredness, in which there is virtually no responsiveness to external forces and virtually no awareness beyond one's own thinking and feeling.

Each of these three qualities indicate a lack of responsiveness to others and/or others' needs. Where there is some awareness of others and/or others' needs, they are generally perceived more unconsciously than consciously, and usually in accordance with one's own (naturally) self-centered perspective (and values).

† Commentary No. 1417

Self-Centeredness 2

Self-centeredness and related (excursionary) qualities of selfishness and self-absorption result from immersion in the material world to the exclusion of the inner and higher senses. They result from entanglements in the world, e.g., being entangled in materialism or the senses or the intellect (ego) or some combination of these things. In every instance and extent of self-centeredness there is simply a lack of embrace of higher, deeper consciousness. It is a matter both of ignorance (absence of knowledge and understanding) and lack of capacity for realization. It is a matter of the illusion of separateness, of being relatively substantially isolated in consciousness. Thus one who is selfish or self-centered or self-absorbed is considered to be asleep (in consciousness).

The challenge, then, is to wake up, to become relatively less selfish, to become relatively less self-centered, and to become relatively less self-absorbed. To become relatively more free from these things and thereby relatively more able to see things as they are rather than according to one's self-centered perspectives. The problem is reinforced and compounded by the world, by the vast majority of people being similarly asleep and unresponsive to higher, deeper energies and insights. Worldly societies (based on collective ignorance (unconsciousness)) reinforce notions of independence and of self-interest by virtue of customs, mores, laws, and other common practices in thinking and feeling and behavior.

People are usually "rewarded" by society based on superficial (worldly) accomplishments (e.g., accumulation of wealth, to the detriment of others). The active (even passive) pursuit of fame and fortune and power and status are deadly (in consciousness) and serve only to further separate one from another. Even the pursuit of these things on behalf of a group of people (sex, family, race, religion, nation, culture, humanity as a whole) is separative at that group or collective level. But none of these things (fame, fortune, power, status) has any real or enduring value. Most worldly accomplishments are simply matters of illusion.

But there is some hope that understanding on some intellectual level leads to growth of awareness and change-in-consciousness, but real change comes only when that understanding is felt in the heart. Understanding that one is (relatively) selfish, or self-centered, or self-absorbed helps. Understanding that one's own accumulations (possessions of things or experience) or interests can be detrimental to others also helps. Understanding that one is biased or prejudiced in thinking and feeling, likewise (and that such bias and prejudice leads unconsciously to associated behavior). But it usually requires a crisis of some sort, reinforced either through intensity or repetition or both, before a person begins to awaken from the clutches of self-centeredness. As one awakens in consciousness, the new insight is incorporated, in consciousness, in perspective, in values, and in behavior.

Most people are substantially self-centered in some ways and will simply gradually experience what they need to experience and eventually become more aware, and eventually become less self-centered. But for the spiritual student self-centeredness is much more significant, for the spiritual student has a

greater (more urgent) need for truth (honesty) (clarity), and even small measures of self-centeredness (selfishness) (self-absorption) are problems-in-consciousness, for the spiritual student. And so there is a great need for honest observation and self-awareness, leading to self-realization.

† Commentary No. 1418

Delusion of Understanding

One of the more poignant and substantive barriers to communication and understanding is the delusion of understanding. Many people believe they understand something when in fact they do not. This presumption of understanding then creates a barrier to understanding. Even if a person does understand something, it is better not to presume (complete or full) understanding, because that presumption then undermines a person's ability to understand something deeper or more fully.

Words are inherently limiting. They do not convey literally or completely the intended meaning, simply because words mean different things to different people and one can never be entirely (at least rationally) sure that one understands words in the same way that someone else does. Moreover, much that is expressed in words is not a complete conveyance of what is felt or meant. The expression "I understand how you feel" is generally invalid, because unless one is actually connected to another person through a common aura (not merely proximate) then one cannot actually know properly or completely how another feels. Thus understanding is generally and necessarily limited and partial. People tend to understand things according to their own experience, which is generally (somewhat or substantially) different from that of other people. And people tend to "understand" with the mind rather than intuitively, and the mind is necessarily limited (while the intuition is necessarily subjective).

If one then understands that one does not understand completely, then one is more likely to be able to understand in some deeper or broader sense. But if one does not understand that one does not understand, and simply presumes to understand, then it becomes much more difficult to perceive the (deeper, broader) truth of something. It is similar to having opinions. Having an

opinion and presuming understanding are grasping phenomena in which one is simply unreceptive to the truth. The quest of the spiritual student, however, is to learn and grow, to seek truth wherever it may be found, which means not having opinions and not presuming to understand (anything). Humility is an extremely potent quality in this regard.

Another factor is the relative degree of certainty or confidence that one has in knowing or understanding something (or believing that one understands something). If one is indeed sure of something, then one is necessarily deluded. Being sure of something means that one is not open to the truth. But if a student believes things more provisionally, without grasping, without attachment, without forming opinions, without presuming to understand, then one is therefore (relatively) much more open and receptive to learning and growing (more readily embracing truth). Thus presumption of understanding is relative. It is better to presume to understand things only to some extent. That provides coherence (and relative confidence) without actually undermining one's ability to perceive truth. Indeed truth is relative, and the embrace of truth likewise. One can (and should) deepen in truth and deepen in one's ability to deepen in truth, without much in the way of presumption.

Of course presumption of truth is rarely a conscious act. Most people presume things unconsciously, without realizing that they are making presumptions. Thus the first step is to be more consciously aware of the assumptions and presumptions that one is making. The second step is to cultivate humility such that one no longer makes assumptions or presumptions, but remains more open to learning (understanding) and further realization (embrace of truth).

Quality Aggregation

One of the tendencies of human nature (and the mind) is to aggregate qualities in one's perception, i.e., to presume that if a person has one quality then that person also has other qualities that one associates with that quality. For example, gentleness and kindness are similar in quality and energy, but they are not really the same thing. Many people would observe gentleness and infer (usually unconsciously) that kindness is also present, but in fact, while many people are indeed both gentle and kind, one does not necessarily coincide with the other.

The reason is that human development tends to be unbalanced. People develop qualities according to their experiences (karma) and nature (needs). Over the course of a number of lifetimes there tends to be increasing balance (wholeness), but most people have not yet achieved any real balance. If a certain quality has been developed, there is a good chance that similar qualities have also been developed, but it is not necessarily so. Thus most people who are gentle are also kind, but some are not both gentle and kind. Similarly, while most people who are critical are also judgmental, some are not both critical and judgmental. So it is wrong to generalize from an observation of qualities, to make (conscious or unconscious) assumptive associations or perceived aggregations.

Moreover, one quality does not rule out another. Some qualities seem inconsistent one with another, based upon experience, but there are always anomalies, people whose development is relatively more unbalanced or whose nature is inherently self-inconsistent. Thus a person who has many "good" qualities should not be expected to have "all" good qualities. And much depends upon circumstances and context. For example, a person who is honest in some sense is not necessarily honest in every sense. But a person who is truly honest, who is consciously committed to being as honest as he or she can be, is generally truly honest in all respects, at least to the extent that he or she is conscious.

The human being in incarnation is a relatively complex mixture of qualities and characteristics. Each develops relatively uniquely, according to experience and

opportunities (and needs). Eventually there is convergence (increasing coherence and consistency in quality of consciousness (and therefore in aggregate)), but most people are still very much in the “complicated” stage of life, where there are usually a number of different and contrasting forces at work. In “getting to know” someone there is a natural tendency to fill in the gaps assumptively (or imaginatively), only to be surprised later on when inconsistencies are revealed. This is certainly true where one relies on observation and either emotion or intellect. But it is not generally true where one relies on the (true) intuition. With proper intuition, one has a general and subjective sense (insight), not based on observation or judgment, but simply based on (inner, higher) feelings. With intuition it is much more likely that one can simply sense in someone their overall quality of consciousness, without judgment and without presuming or inferring anything about the specific characteristics or nature.

Part of the human experience (evolution in consciousness) is simply developing and encouraging right (proper) human relations. Understanding human nature and understanding the various propensities and inconsistencies in human nature are part of the process. Both in relation to one’s own growth and in relationship to others.

† Commentary No. 1420

Qualities and Conditions

With regard to consciousness, there is a subtle distinction between qualities and conditions. A condition in consciousness is something that is embraced in some sense but not something that is actually possessed. A condition may be common, even prevailing, but it is not actually incorporated in consciousness. It is not something that one assimilates nor something that one can carry on into the next life. Happiness and sadness are conditions in consciousness. These conditions may come and go. They are inherently transient, though one or another of the various conditions may prevail (be sustained in consciousness for some period of time).

Some conditions are evoked and embraced by circumstances, others simply by choice (actually even circumstantial conditions are a matter of choice (usually

unconsciously)). Some people are happy when the sun is shining while some people are "happy" all the time, regardless of circumstances. But happiness is relatively superficial; it is simply a condition in consciousness. There is happiness. It can be embraced. It can be evoked. But it cannot be possessed. One may be good-natured and appear to be happy all of the time, but happiness is still merely a condition in consciousness.

Qualities are somewhat similar to conditions in consciousness, except that they are actually developable. Qualities are "things" that one develops and incorporates into one's nature and consciousness. Qualities are characteristics that can be assimilated and carried forth into the next life. Qualities evoke conditions in consciousness, but the qualities themselves are not transients. For example, honesty is a value. If one is indeed honest by nature, if one has developed the quality of honesty, then one naturally embraces the condition in consciousness of "being" or demonstrating honesty. But the root quality of being honest is part of the consciousness, part of what is carried forth from one life to the next.

Most people are experiential. They seek and embrace conditions in consciousness. But spiritual students are not focused on seeking or embracing conditions in consciousness. Spiritual students are (properly) focused on learning and growing and serving, which also means developing qualities that can be assimilated. In other words, spiritual students are focused on evolution in consciousness rather than simply "having" the emotions and feelings engendered by experience. Spiritual students tend to be "happy" but happiness is neither a goal nor is it important. Happiness may facilitate, but spiritual students are much more concerned with developing and expressing real qualities in consciousness. Thus embracing gentleness and kindness is much more important to the spiritual student than (merely) being happy. Being perceptive, being aware of conditions in consciousness (both with regard to oneself and with regard to others), understanding cause and effect relationships, serving humanity according to whatever talents and opportunities there may be, these things are (relatively) important, while (mere) conditions in consciousness are not.

Thus some "things" are merely conditions in consciousness, while other things are actual qualities that engender and sustain conditions in consciousness. But

some qualities are counter-evolutionary and must be overcome or transformed into their more constructive counterparts. And because these are qualities and not merely conditions in consciousness there is inertia, which means not inconsiderable challenge, e.g., to transform a self-centered quality into something selfless. Of course selflessness is not merely a condition in consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1421

Intelligent-Perceptive Awareness

In general, there are two kinds of awareness, namely awareness through the senses and intelligent-perceptive awareness. Most people are aware in the first sense, of seeing, feeling, hearing, tasting, and touching, with their physical-plane senses. Some are aware on more psychical levels, on etheric and/or astral levels, likewise, with their etheric and astral senses. But that does not mean, necessarily or generally, that they have any appreciable intelligent-perceptive awareness.

The problem is making sense of sense-perceptions, of developing intelligent-perceptive awareness. This is as true on the physical plane as it is on non-physical levels. The mind (waking-consciousness) is the key to apprehension of sense-impressions. If the mind is unfocused then the impressions from the senses will not be sensible. If the mind is improperly focused, likewise. If the mind is cluttered with presumptions of knowledge and understanding, then the apprehension of sense impressions is lessened and much will be missed. If the mind is self-absorbed, likewise. And of course there are various biases and conditioning that also greatly limit the ability to apprehend whatever is observed through the senses. It is the uncluttered and unfettered mind that truly opens the senses to realization of truth.

Knowledge has value. But if one is attached to knowledge, if one believes that one knows something, then that knowledge and that belief tends to limit or preclude any broadening or deepening (or clarifying) of knowledge and understanding. The open mind "has" knowledge but not attached to knowledge. The open mind is thereby able to acquire additional, clarifying knowledge. The open mind is able to transcend knowledge and assimilate

knowledge into understanding. But most people know too much and are simply unable to see the truth of their own nature and surroundings.

The ego is another complicating factor. It is the ego that sees and hears and feels whatever it wants to. It is the ego that engages in self-deception and biases the perceptions. Thus (artificial and natural (experiential)) bias and conditioning, the ego, and (attachment to beliefs (attachment to knowledge)) are all limiting factors. Most people are so conditioned by these things that they experience the physical world in a substantially superficial and self-centered way. And most people who are "psychic" or "perceptive" on etheric and astral levels are also substantially biased and conditioned, untrained, and unable to perceive things clearly (even if (though) one "believes" that one is seeing clearly).

Thus the spiritual student must (properly) be trained to perceive clearly on physical levels as much as on non-physical levels. This involves the elimination of much of the ordinary bias and conditioning, reducing and eliminating the role of mind (intellect) and ego (and self-centeredness). And for the most part, it also means transcending the lower psychic senses (etheric and astral and concrete mental). Indeed, one of the keys to true awareness is non-reliance on the lower senses (physical and non-physical). To sense things on lower levels without being entangled in or distracted by them (or by the interpretive process). Thus the key to higher (intelligent) perception is quiescence (of body and emotions and mind). True intelligent-perceptive awareness is intuitive in the higher sense (of buddhi, not astral). True intelligent-perceptive awareness is non-presumptive realization of truth. The true perceiver is an observer who does not interpret or judge or make any assumptions. The true perceiver is simply aware.

Higher-Order Loneliness

There is a loneliness to be transcended and there is a higher-order loneliness that is to be accepted and embraced in some sense. On lower (ordinary, human) levels there are many people and large numbers of relationships among peoples, necessarily and generally superficial, but nonetheless satisfying for those who are absorbed on personality levels and entangled in the experience and expression of ordinary (worldly) existence. But when one embarks upon the spiritual journey one naturally and necessarily finds fewer and fewer kindred spirits along the way.

For most people life is about worldly experience and expression, of worldly accomplishments and achievements. But for the spiritual student life is about growing and deepening spiritually, which means being progressively less entangled in worldly experience and expression, and being less engaged in worldly or ego-based relationships. The spiritual student is naturally and necessarily somewhat isolated by virtue of his or her deepening nature and values, which are naturally and necessarily in contrast with those of more worldly and personality-centered peoples. This does not mean that there is any conflict with more worldly peoples, but that there is a contrast that tends to isolate the spiritual student in terms of perception, understanding, and awareness. The spiritual student must perforce remain in the world, but be progressively less of the world. The spiritual student may very well and generally seem to be comfortable in the world, but in consciousness be quite different from that of the bulk of humanity.

This means two things, that the spiritual student must take care to remain consciously “connected” with humanity, albeit on more subtle levels, and that the spiritual student must learn to live comfortably (or at least not uncomfortably) with the subtle loneliness that results simply from being committed to the spiritual path. One who does not grasp this sense of emptiness or loneliness is simply not there yet. It comes from deeper, more subtle spiritual experience and not from the superficially-spiritual experience that is relatively commonplace. But along with this deeper, higher-order loneliness there is a quiet, subtle, inner joy, the joy of being consciously

connected with all life at the soul level (at not merely intellectually or emotionally). One cannot reach this place of higher-order loneliness without some considerable effort and experience (qualification).

That effort and experience necessarily challenges the personality consciousness (mind, emotions, ego, lower self), which is more comfortable being absorbed in more ordinary, worldly life (and superficial human relationships). As the student deepens in consciousness, the personality may yearn naturally for suitable companionship, and there is often a tendency to compromise, to engage in more worldly (personality-centered relationships) (which leads the student to regress into sleep (absorption)). But if the spirit is strong enough, these temptations will pass, and the student will come to terms with being alone in some sense and with being lonely in this higher-order sense.

Only then is it possible for the spiritual student to embrace a truly higher-order spiritual relationship with another human being (partner). Kindred spirits along the way are relatively few, and should be treasured and appreciated. For while there is much to learn and many opportunities for service, the journey is nonetheless enhanced through proper relationship. Indeed, there are places in consciousness that can only be embraced (safely) through spiritual partnership.

† Commentary No. 1423

Spirit Guides 1

A spirit guide is someone or something (some entity) that either approaches or is drawn to someone and either provides “guidance” or energy (or relationship) that is interpreted as guidance. There are spirit guides and there are truly enlightened beings. Spirit guides reside on etheric and astral levels and include all manner of creatures sub-human and human. Truly enlightened beings do not function on etheric or astral levels and can only be related to on soul levels (atma-buddhi-manas). Even the relatively more advanced human beings do not “communicate” on etheric or astral levels, but work primarily on mental and (higher) intuitional (buddhic) levels.

But on etheric and astral planes there are many different kinds of creatures that “sensitive” people can relate to in some way or another. Some of these beings are natural (living) and some are artificial (energized only by virtue of thoughts and feelings projected by living beings and enduring only to the extent and magnitude and nature of their (artificial) vivification). Some of these beings are relatively coarse, while some are relatively more refined (and therefore reside on the lower and higher sub-planes respectively). Some are to some extent intelligent, while others can only mimic intelligence (yet many “sensitives” cannot discern the difference and are deceived by such mimicry).

Some are active creatures, benevolently so or otherwise, while others are relatively passive and relatively harmless. Some are part of or related to the human lifewave (being sub-human or human), while others are part of or related to the deva lifewave (angels, fairies, nature spirits, sprites, etc.). Deva lives (angels and their less-evolved brethren) do not interact directly with human lives, but simply provide healing energy and various forms of encouragement to other, more active creatures (to mineral, plant, animal, and human lives, depending on their (deva) roles).

And of course there are all manners of (deceased and living) humans functioning on etheric and astral levels. Many deceased human beings (i.e., human lives who are “between” incarnations but who have not yet passed on the preparatory levels) linger about on etheric and (mostly) astral levels because of various attachments (to living in the objective world) (e.g., to various desires that can only be embraced on physical levels). Some of these (human) creatures are aware that they are dead, some are oblivious to their condition. Some are relatively intelligent, but no more so than when they were “alive” and so are no more “spiritual” and no more “wise” than ordinary living people (who are generally not very spiritual nor very wise). But some are sincere and well-intentioned, while others are simply prey on those who are living, drawing energy or “living” vicariously. Some are even sincere and well-intentioned and yet also draw energy instead of sharing energy.

Thus etheric and astral “relationships” vary a great deal, from healthy to unhealthy, to gentle relationships with healing energies to relatively more violent relationships with malevolent beings. The quality and nature of any of these relationships are based primarily on relative refinement of consciousness

and relative intelligence. Relatively coarse people tend to attract relatively coarse energies and relatively coarse creatures, both here in the objective world and in the astral realms. Relatively refined people tend to attract relatively refined energies and relatively refined creatures, similarly. But most people, even most “sensitive” people, are simply not really intelligent, and are not properly trained, and therefore cannot properly discern the nature of the “beings” they come in contact with.

† Commentary No. 1424

Spirit Guides 2

Just because someone is psychic or sensitive to impressions on etheric and astral levels, just because someone is clairvoyant or clairaudient, does not mean that he or she is necessarily intelligent or trained or capable (competent) to interpret those impressions in any accurate or even sensible way. It is difficult enough for most people to perceive things correctly on objective levels. On etheric and (especially on) astral levels, there is a great deal of conflicting and contrasting energy (impressions). It is chaos. It is a realm of all manner of thoughts and feelings projected by all manner of peoples and creatures, jumbled together. Indeed, it is not a realm that intelligent, trained, spiritual students (or other, more enlightened creatures) chose for a medium of communication.

The spiritual student is urged to develop relatively slowly and by virtue of his or her own experience in the objective and subjective realms. This does not require or imply any need for “contact” with astral creatures, benevolent or otherwise. Guidance comes properly from one’s own intelligence (conscience) (inner, higher self), based on experience and ability. One can properly listen to others and learn from others, but one remains entirely responsible for one’s own actions. Guidance from others (astral or otherwise) does not (ever) supersede one’s own responsibility for one’s own actions (attitudes) (beliefs) (understanding).

But many people do not take conscious responsibility for their own actions and behaviors, seeking (passively) to be “guided” in their efforts. Many are enamored by astral creatures purporting to be spirit guides, e.g., native American spirit guides, ancient Egyptian spirit guides, etc. If one is susceptible to being “guided” in this manner, then one will attract spirit guides (astral

creatures or human beings on astral levels) who will “tell” one what one wants to hear. Even if one believes that it is not what one wants to hear (and therefore must be true), it is generally what one really wants to hear (and is generally not true).

Even if “guidance” seems to be true or is true (to some extent), one should simply not trust these sources of “knowledge, understanding, or wisdom” because they are simply not reliable and because the process tends to undermine one’s own development (intelligence) (consciousness). Most relationships with spirit guides develop into either hypnotic or parasitic relationships. In a hypnotic relationship the spirit guide provides “insight” that the person being guided takes (passively, through subtle hypnotic means) to be true or meaningful (whether or not it is indeed true or meaningful, it will seem to be true and meaningful). In a parasitic relationship the spirit guide draws energy from the “victim” though the spirit guide may not intend to and though the victim may not be aware of what is actually happening. Some relationships are nominally benevolent and yet also hypnotic and/or parasitic, and therefore (occultly) unsavory (not healthy).

The spiritual student is properly trained to understand these things, to be able to discern the differences and distinctions among the various astral creatures and processes (phenomena). The spiritual student is properly urged to avoid relationships with spirit guides, to meditate and achieve the inner alignment that results in growing and deepening (enlightenment) through divine process rather than through external means. The spiritual student may work on astral levels, in helping (encouraging) others, but never through the agency of spirit guides, and never as a spirit guide.

Astral Working 1

How then does the (trained) spiritual student work on the astral plane?
Gently. Without being entangled in the chaos. Through simply living a spiritual life and sharing constructive, encouraging, non-impositional energy on all levels. The astral plane is a place of conflict and contrast, a place of so many and such diverse energies and forces that there is no real coherence or clarity there. So the spiritual student simply projects the energy of coherence and clarity, that encourages “goodness” ...

In some instances a (suitably trained) spiritual student may be called upon (through dharma) to assist those who are trapped on the astral plane or who are otherwise entangled in astral phenomena (whether or not they are “alive” in this world). Usually it is a matter of helping “dead” people to realize that they are dead and enable them to find their way to the next level (beyond the chaos of the astral plane). Many deceased people are so attached to their life-on-earth that they do not realize that they have died and cling to whatever people and experiences that enable them to remain in touch with their (now former) lifetime. People who are entangled in drugs (alcohol and other recreational drugs) are quite susceptible to this, except that their cravings cannot be satisfied on astral levels and so it is a particularly painful or distressing experience. Thrill seekers likewise. They tend to seek incarnated people who they can influence in order to vicariously embrace their cravings, often drawing people into their old habits.

Suicides are also fairly dangerous “people” on the astral plane because they prey on others who are susceptible, i.e., who are prone to depression, except that for suicides it is particularly stressing, as they are necessarily trapped on astral levels until such time as their lifetime would have ended naturally (and therefore cannot be assisted by others). Bad energy resonates with similar or comparable energy, and so people of coarse energy, or particular vices tend to attract others of similar character and quality, alive in this world or otherwise (on the astral plane). Spiritual students and others (devas) work with all manner of distressed creatures in this world and the next. But spiritual students do not generally encounter malevolent creatures, because there is no real affinity. The spiritual

student can generally feel compassion and sympathy with those in distress, but there is no substantive identification with relatively malevolent creatures.

The only time that (properly trained) spiritual students come into contact with malevolent creatures is where it is a matter of helping or encouraging the victim to develop psychic defenses, through purification (refinement) and integration exercises (qualification). Unless one advances in consciousness beyond vulnerability to the (lower) astral, one will remain susceptible to creatures and energies at that level of consciousness. There is also a matter of helping people to heal themselves, by clearing and healing the aura, but unless there is growth in understanding, these clearings and healings are more temporary, yet may still afford or encourage an opportunity to learn and develop.

Another role for the (trained) spiritual student is the destruction of artificial forms on the astral plane. While these cannot properly be destroyed until the source of vivifying energy is resolved, the spiritual student can work to encourage the creative (responsible) person to not project energy in such a way that it creates and sustains these artificial lifeforms (which in turn prey on people whose energy resonates with them).

† Commentary No. 1426

Astral Working 2

While spiritual students in general are encouraged to (and eventually must) eliminate smoking, drinking alcohol, using other recreational drugs, and eating flesh foods, because these practices undermine (indeed, prevent) the needed refinement of consciousness (and subsequent proper integration and alignment (of soul and personality)), there are serious practical considerations as well, for the trained (properly qualified) spiritual student working or functioning on astral levels.

Much of the psychic vulnerability that people encounter is related to relatively unhealthy practices. Smoking lowers the vibration of the etheric and astral bodies and means that astral impressions from the lower astral sub-planes will dominate. The resulting coarseness also attracts comparably coarse creatures on astral levels. Drinking alcohol and using other recreational drugs tends to

undermine one's integration and open the aura to external influences, particularly those on astral levels. People who drink even in moderation are much more vulnerable to these external forces than people who don't drink any alcohol, even if that vulnerability is not apparent. The half life of the effects of alcohol on the aura is much (much) longer than and readily apparent physical impairment. Indeed, the effect of one drinking episode can last for many months, even though it is only apparent on subtle levels (and certain drugs have half-life effects over many years (indeed, some drugs (and sustained drinking of alcohol) cause permanent impairments on subtle levels)).

Eating flesh foods means that the relatively coarse energies of the animal consciousness are appropriated and placed in the aura. For someone is also sensitive (or vulnerable) on etheric or astral levels, this results in a magnetic force, that attracts similar (coarse, animal) energies from the astral plane, compounding one's astral experience. Flesh foods tend to dull the senses as well and create additional energy burdens. The creatures that are attracted to flesh-eaters tend to be more parasitic than hypnotic. Few of these creatures are actually malevolent. It is just that they are naturally and instinctively opportunistic. The expression of relatively coarse emotions likewise attracts various less savory creatures. Thus the student is encouraged to temper or qualify the coarser emotions. And expression of anger or hatred, jealousy or resentment, any expression of ill will, on emotional or mental levels, attracts similar energies (and the coarse energies projected will inevitably return to the sender, magnified and intensified).

Subtle vulnerabilities can be just as devastating to a spiritual student as the less subtle varieties. Moreover, subtle vulnerabilities are much more difficult to recognize and resolve. One may be struggling earnestly over a long period of time, without making any appreciable progress, only to (finally) realize the subtle cause(s). By committing to the proper spiritual practices of not smoking, not drinking alcohol, not using non-medicinal drugs, not engaging in vulgar or profane language, and not eating flesh foods (meat, fish, fowl), the student is eliminating the detrimental effects of these things and can then focus more properly on progress in consciousness.

Not only must the spiritual student understand these things and embrace the relatively more subtle practices that lead to refinement and growth in

consciousness, but the student must also eliminate his or her own substantial vulnerabilities before he or she can properly be of assistance to others. And in overcoming one's psychic (and other) vulnerabilities, one can embrace others less fortunate with compassion and sympathy and genuine understanding.

† Commentary No. 1427

Communicative Rapport

One of the dimensions of human relationship that tends to bring people together is a comfortable non-superficial conversational or communicative rapport. Conversely, one of the dimensions that tends to separate people one from another is the lack of communicative rapport, either from semantics, language, contrasting methods, or conflicting values. This does not mean that two people need to believe in (all) the same things or embrace (all) the same practices, but it does mean that (in order to have conversational rapport) there must be mutual respect and consideration. Harmony is often produced from contrast, and so it is relatively important to see people and differences in thinking (values) as complementary and contrasting rather than conflicting or separative.

One of the keys to effective communication is the ability and practice of proper and effective listening. Which means allowing the other person to speak without interrupting or otherwise impeding their conversational flow. Which means actually listening (and not merely hearing), actually paying attention to what is said and not either jumping to conclusions or inferences or judging what is said or how it is said in any way. The open mind is not properly a judging mind or a passive mind. It is simply a matter of consideration, of being open to truth (and to the possibility of truth). Interrupting someone is not merely rude and inconsiderate, but it effectively destroys the flow of energy and content, and precludes depth (and discourages any real connection). And one cannot really embrace the energy and content during if one is "thinking" about what one is going to say (indeed, if one is thinking or planning then one is not really listening).

Conversation (communication) implies a conveyance of energy and content. The whole content is more than just the words, more even than what the words mean to someone. The whole content is what the words mean to the speaker, plus the consciousness (energy and qualification) that enfolds and conveys the words, and the source of the ideas being conveyed. If one does not listen properly, if one is not really open to the whole content, if one is already filled (cluttered) with presumptive knowledge and presumptive understanding, then one is both unresponsive to truth and separative with regard to the other person, effectively pushing away both whatever truth there may be and pushing away the other person.

In short, there are tremendous differences between superficial conversation (communication), merely intellectual conversation (communication), and deeper (genuine) conversation (communication). Superficial or passive communication tends to draw people closer together in the sense that both people are asleep and superficial conversation tends to deepen or sustain that sleep (lack of real awareness). Intellectual communication may be either attractive or repulsive depending on the respective affinities, but is generally separative even where the content is agreeable, because intellectual communication implies attachment to the ideas (relative truth) being conveyed and intellectual communication implies the engagement of ego, which is inherently separative.

Proper communicative rapport results from deeply felt respect and consideration for others and their ideas and from being truly open to the truth, wherever it maybe found and through whomever it may be conveyed. It also means not knowing anything presumptively or being attached to whatever we think we know or understand. True (non-superficial) conversational rapport facilitates growth and deepening and inclusiveness.

Gentleness and Speaking

Thinking and feeling are projections of energy, that impact the immediate environment (and people and other lives within that environment) and to some extent the entire planetary aura (likewise). Depending on magnitude (intensity), thoughts and feelings can persist almost indefinitely, attracting similar or comparable energies. Much of the chaos (noise) on mental and astral levels is attributable to all these many and diverse (non-coherent) projections of energy. Non-gentle thoughts and non-gentle feelings are inherently separative and destructive even while persistent. They do not blend or relate harmoniously with others. They contribute to the chaos and they encourage others who resonate at that (relatively coarse) level. They also impede evolution in consciousness.

On the other hand, gentle thoughts and gentle feelings are not separative and do not contribute to chaos. Even substantially contrasting thoughts and feelings, expressed through gentleness, are inherently constructive and harmonious and encourage evolution in consciousness. Non-gentleness is an expression of strength of personality, which is a barrier in consciousness. Embracing gentleness allows the higher self to be expressed through the personality. Spiritual students are therefore encouraged to think and feel gently, to be responsive to higher calling (the soul), to encourage growth in consciousness.

Similarly, speaking is a projection of energy, for good or ill. Like thinking and feeling there is generally a flow of energy associated with speaking. There are words and there is content (meaning) (energy) associated (conveyed) with or through the words. The words are actually a small part of what is conveyed. But if the words are gentle, if the way of speaking is gentle, then the flow of energy is constructive and encouraging. If the words are not gentle, if the manner of speaking is not gentle, then the flow of energy is an expression of strength of personality and not an expression of one's actual spirituality (higher consciousness). Thinking, feeling, and speaking are all expressions of consciousness.

If a person is relatively coarse or if a person has considerable strength of personality, then the thoughts and feelings and speech will be relatively coarse and relatively forceful (imposing energy instead of sharing or offering energy). If a person is truly responsive to the higher self, then there is never any wanting to speak, and when such a person does speak it is necessarily gentle. The words are gentle and the manner of speaking is gentle. It is never contentious. It is never critical or judging. It is never challenging or confrontational. These things (e.g., wanting to speak) are all indications of personality strength.

Interrupting someone who is speaking is an inherently violent act. It is an expression of ego (mind) (personality strength) and is disruptive to the flow of energy (words and content). It is not simply a matter of rudeness or lack of respect or lack of consideration, but an act of (subtle but definite) violence, however intended, and however sincerely it may be perceived. The spiritual student learns to embrace gentleness in all things, in all manners of expression. The spiritual student (properly) embraces patience and graciousness and considerateness. The spiritual student is (properly) more concerned about listening and learning and understanding (and serving) than about speaking. But when the student does speak, he or she should properly speak from the heart, in gentleness.

† Commentary No. 1429

Strength of Personality

Most people in incarnation are embarked upon a non-conscious path of development at the personality level. Through the course of experience and expression and circumstances (the dance of karma) the personality is developed and strengthened, in order to relate effectively with the pressures and challenges of life in the world. Actions and behaviors (including thinking and feeling) invite consequences. This is a world of harmony through contrast (conflict), and the (artificial) strength of personality is a natural consequence.

But life in this world is also a dance of ebb and flow. Development is multi-faceted, but current experience tends to foster development in particular aspects or facets before moving on to other aspects. People develop in certain ways, then need to achieve some measure of balance, before extension or expansion to

the next level is possible. And in many instances people are necessarily over-developed in some way or another, and the relative strength of development in some regard becomes a barrier to subsequent development. Evolution is a matter of cycles within cycles, a spiral of progression, a relatively complex succession of experiences and advances and overcoming of barriers.

The personality is an artificial aspect of consciousness. It is not the real person. It is both a reflection of consciousness and the means of that reflection. It is simply an instrument for experience and expression. It should be developed and maintained in a healthy state, fit for proper experience and expression, but not over-developed. The problem is that most people identify with their personalities and this gives additional strength to the personality (as an artificial entity). Even where there is intellectual understanding that it is just a personality, there is still (usually) tacit identification. So even (nominally) spiritual students are limited by this instinctive (conscious or unconscious) identification and the relative strength of personality.

Strength of personality is compounded by ego, which is necessarily self-serving and defensive, and by the inertia of matter, since the personality consists fundamentally of several bodies of matter. Indeed, for most people the mind and personality and ego are all the same energy and distinctions between these things are not really significant. But the mind is simply a component, like the astral or emotional body, the etheric body, and the dense physical body. All contribute to strength of personality. And the ego is simply the most artificial part of the personality as a whole, induced through (improper) identification in consciousness with the personality. Experience at the personality level, development at the personality level, all contributes toward increased strength of personality.

It is perhaps the greatest challenge of incarnated life, to recognize the distinction between soul and personality, between the higher self (the real self) and the lower self (the artificial self), to temper that lower self and to transcend that distinction. But in the meantime, for most people and most instances, it is the (strength of) personality that dominates life (experience and expression) in the lower world. So the spiritual student comes to this realization (distinction and significance) and gradually tempers the personality, through personal discipline and other, more subtle methods. And eventually the purified

(qualified) (refined) (tempered) personality becomes a more effective instrument and less of a barrier in consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1430

Knowledge and Truth

Evolution in consciousness involves learning and growing and serving. Through the course of experience and expression, the student acquires knowledge, assimilates that knowledge into understanding, and assimilates that understanding into wisdom. And as one deepens, the focus shifts from learning and growing to serving, even while one (necessarily) continues to learn and grow. But as one advances the challenges and lessons become relatively more subtle.

One cannot take knowledge into the next world or into the subsequent incarnation. One cannot actually take understanding into the next world. But one can take wisdom. And if one has wisdom, then the underlying basis (understanding) is inferred. And one can always evoke whatever knowledge and understanding has contributed to wisdom or consciousness. So while one does not carry knowledge or understanding on to the next world and the next lifetime, one does carry forth what is actually needed which is the ability to evoke knowledge and understanding. So what matters is not knowledge or understanding but wisdom and the ability to evoke understanding. This ultimately requires a relationship to truth that (relationship) eludes most people until the relatively final stages of evolution, namely a dedication to truth that facilitates learning and growing and serving.

For most people knowledge is not a barrier because for most people life is about acquiring knowledge and to some extent about understanding. But for the spiritual student life is more about understanding and wisdom and consciousness. For the spiritual student life is about embracing truth. And truth is much more subtle than knowledge. Knowledge involves the mind and the mind is naturally grasping. The mind tends to be attached to knowledge. It acquires knowledge and keeps it. For the spiritual student, who is advancing beyond the ordinary sphere of human experience, this attachment to knowledge tends to undermine the learning process. Believing that one knows something

creates a barrier to understanding. Knowing something is an attachment, that precludes or inhibits deeper, broader knowledge and understanding.

If one is to be receptive to learning, one must continually consider the possibility that what one knows may not be true, or may not be the whole truth. Indeed, what one knows (even what one understands) is never the whole truth. Because knowledge is not truth and understanding is not truth. Knowledge is simply a small reflection of truth, constrained by our circumstances (consciousness), while truth is real, has depth and breadth and persistence. So learning is properly not so much about acquiring knowledge as it is about embracing truth. It is about being open-minded, not having attachments to whatever knowledge there is, but simply working through whatever knowledge is apparent to that which is beyond (understanding, truth). If one grasps knowledge then one cannot see what is beyond.

Knowledge is not the only substantive barrier to truth (understanding, wisdom). Another substantive barrier is lack of honesty. In order to recognize truth, one must be true. One must be honest with oneself and with others, in thought and feeling, in word and deed. If one compromises, by thinking or feeling or speaking or otherwise expressing what is known to be not true, then one thereby undermines one's ability to discern the truth. Consequently, the spiritual student properly learns to not know things and to be comfortable not knowing things. The spiritual student learns to embrace truth instead of knowledge, and ever without attachment.

Cognition and Affection 1

Cognition is defined as the act or process of knowing or believing, including (some) conscious awareness and some (not inconsiderable) judgment. It is generally a matter of “knowing” through the mind or head-centered nature. Even where one is more intuitive or heart-centered, knowledge continues to be something that involves the mind in some way, if only to bring what is believed to be known to the waking-consciousness. In this context, affection is defined as the act or process of knowing or believing, without recourse to judgment or rational process. In the lower sense, generally, affection is based upon the emotions (emotional nature (temperament), astral impressions, emotional biases (largely unconsciously)) and in the higher sense, less generally, affection is based upon the (true) intuition.

Most people are both cognitive and affective. Cognitive at some times and/or in some ways, affective at other times and/or in other ways. Some are primarily cognitive, some are primarily affective. In the context of the spiritual path (conscious evolution), the objective is to perceive things clearly, relying on the (true) intuition, without recourse to analysis or reasoning or judgment, and without recourse to emotional impressions. Without substantive bias or prejudice. In understanding how the cognitive and affective natures function, it becomes possible to begin to see things more clearly, and eventually to transcend these limitations (mind and emotions).

In this sense there are necessarily distinctions needed between affections, emotions, feelings, and sentiments, but mostly between emotions and feelings. In this sense, emotions are simply states-of-consciousness within the astral body, while feelings are more substantive (higher or consequential) impressions in consciousness. Feelings are of two varieties, the lower in the sense of the physical senses, the higher in the sense of something more conscious. In some sense emotions are relatively shallow or superficial, a reflection of external impressions and internal biases (the emotional nature), while feelings are somehow deeper. Emotions are transients and generally dynamic. Feelings are more enduring, more assimilative. Affections suggest biases in the sense of likes and dislikes. Emotions suggest stronger implications in terms of

stimulation of the emotional nature (astral body). Thus, in this sense, emotions are not “real” and feelings are more internal.

It is not really fair to consider a person to be exclusively cognitive or exclusively affective, but is fair to consider the characteristics and processes that result from being primarily cognitive or affective. Similarly it is not really fair to identify cognition with deductive thinking, nor to identify affection with inductive thinking, at least not exclusively. But these associations are nonetheless indicative of the general processes. Similarly, everyone is biased to some extent, but the extent of bias varies greatly. Thus one key to understanding one’s own nature is the realization of one’s biases and the realization of the various processes that occur in consciousness.

So. Generally. A cognitive person is a deductive thinker who tends to look at the evidence, evaluate it, and draw inferences or conclusions. In principal, the cognitive person is not particularly biased and the evaluation and analysis process is potentially quite objective. That does not mean, necessarily, that the outcome (inference) (conclusion) is correct, only that the process is reasonable. In practice, even a cognitive person is biased, but if the biases are known consciously then there is some possibility of apprehension. Except that if one relies on thinking, then one can not ever actually embrace truth.

† Commentary No. 1432

Cognition and Affection 2

This is because the mind is necessarily superficial (shallow). It deals with observations and impressions, and is subject to bias and prejudice. The mind (reasoning) (thinking) is at best objective and reasonable, and even at best, is limited by logic and experience. The mind is not a source of truth. The mind does not inherently embrace truth. Rational process depends necessarily on assumptions and logic, and assumptions may not be true, and logic is a superficial means of drawing a conclusion. Thus deductive thinking, at best, is rather limited and limiting.

Similarly, an affective person in the lower sense is an inductive thinker who tends to believe or decide or desire an answer or outcome and then look for evidence to support that answer or outcome. This generally and usually occurs unconsciously simply because most people are unconscious (and lack the fully conscious awareness of what they are thinking and feeling and doing). The process engaged is often termed "selective perception" because an affective person tends to see only the evidence that supports the desired outcome and tends not to see any evidence that does not support that outcome. In short, this is "logic" corrupted by emotional biases. It is not very objective, but is subjective in the lower sense.

But. An affective person in the higher sense is another beast altogether. An affective person who relies on intuition rather than the mind and the emotions, who is relatively unbiased, can sense the truth (almost) regardless of it's trappings (context, framework, means). The truly affective-intuitive person does not suffer the limitations of the mind or rational process or intellect. The truly affective-intuitive person does not suffer the limitations of emotional distractions (because "feelings" in the higher sense are embraced and acknowledged in consciousness and are indeed meaningful and not distractive or transient). The truly affective-intuitive person is subjective in the higher sense, perceiving truth without the impediment of preconceived notions, without the imposition of the mind or intellectual process.

The truly affective-intuitive person is both cognitive and affective. Knowledge is acquired through the intuition and the mind is simply acceptive, except that it is not actually knowledge that is acquired, but understanding and wisdom. The mind is not allowed to cling to anything (knowledge) (beliefs) but simply reflects whatever is apprehended. This unfettered mind is thus able to apprehend things that would be leaps-of-faith for those less able to see the truth. The "evidence" may not be apparent to support what is apprehended, but that really does not matter, because "truth" is not about knowledge or evidence or rational understanding. Truth is about truth. The way things are, not the ways they seem to be.

But in order to get to this point and place of clarity, to be able to embrace truth, the student must necessarily first purify the body, the emotions, and the mind. The student must understand and temper the lower nature and win its support

for higher work. Purification leads to integration (of the lower nature) and this integration (and further refinement in consciousness) leads to the proper alignment of higher and lower natures. In this process the student must necessarily learn to be (become) honest in all things, internal and external (through outer relationships). Through spiritual discipline and spiritual practice, over the course of many lifetimes, the student is able to accomplish these things and become dedicated to truth (the way) and conscious awareness.

† Commentary No. 1433

Dichotomy

Dichotomy is the division or process of (artificially) dividing something into two apparently mutually exclusive or contradictory or distinctive groups, the separation of a class into two (or more) subclasses, one of which has and the other of which has not some quality or characteristic. In the proper sense, dichotomy is binary. In the less proper, more general sense, it is multi-valued. Dichotomies can be natural or unnatural (less natural). An example is humanity as a class, where human beings can be categorized or sub-classed as being either male or female. Another example is characterizing people as either cognitive or affective. Dichotomy is a reflection and indication of binary or distinctive thinking and is inherently separative. Some dichotomies are valid or legitimate, in some sense or another, others are not so. Most dichotomies are merely apparent and misleading.

The problem with dichotomy is that almost everything is integral. Men have a within themselves a feminine nature, women have a masculine side. The soul is not of one sex or the other, the soul is sexless and embraces both sexes as components. The human being in incarnation may be physically male or female, but that simply means that the "other" side to one's nature is not as readily apparent as the form itself. The relatively unevolved human being in incarnation is indeed mostly one or the other, but the relatively evolved person has developed both dimensions (male and female) and is able to function essentially and effectively with all the faculties and higher characteristics. To identify with being male or being female is simply to miss the truth about

oneself. Of course there is a practical dimension to being of one sexual orientation or another, but the truth is greater than the dichotomy.

Dichotomies usually arise from the delusion of separation, of being in the lower world and not being aware of or in touch with the higher nature. Thus there is an internal world and an external world, a higher world and a lower world, all of which is true, to some extent, but all of which is also somewhat misleading. Dichotomies arise from apparent distinctions, even where most of these distinctions are not significant (i.e., age, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, etc.). These distinctions provide for breadth (diversity) of experience and expression, but in the final analysis these (all) distinctions are necessarily transcended (in unity) (unity is a greater truth than diversity).

In the more general sense, dichotomy (dichotomization) (divergence) (separation) (subdivision) (diversity) (diversification) (differentiation) (discrimination) is a reflection and consequence of manifestation, of the sending forth of life (consciousness) (form) into matter. The ebb and flow of manifestation is first one of sending forth and increasing diversification in space and time, for experience and expression (evolution in consciousness), through various cycles (aeons) (illusion), followed by a process of integration and overall assimilation as the life (consciousness) returns to the source (embracing truth). Of course there are many imitative-correlative cycles within cycles, but there is throughout manifestation a basic dichotomy of evolutionary force (the pull of matter (independence, separateness, diversity) and the pull of spirit (integration, inclusiveness, unity).

With regard to dichotomy, the goal of the spiritual student is to think and feel and act inclusively, not based upon distinctions or separative thinking or feeling. Distinctions may offer some insights, but should not be the basis for separation-in-consciousness.

Pathquest

The spiritual path is the conscious and deliberate path of evolution in consciousness. It is both a path and a quest. The object of this pathquest is to achieve union of personality with the soul or higher self. The more immediate object of the pathquest is to accomplish whatever preliminary and practical work is needed to facilitate that union. That work involves several fundamental dimensions or aspects.

The first and possibly the most fundamental aspect is simply purification or refinement in consciousness. It involves purifying the physical body through proper diet and proper drink and proper exercise and not engaging harmful practices. It involves refining the emotions through embracing the more noble emotions and not engaging the relatively more coarse emotions. It involves clearing the mind and tempering the entire personality nature. Ultimately it involves integrating the personality and uplifting the personality consciousness and achieving alignment or union with the soul. The keys to purification are discipline, temperance, and meditation. Many and diverse are the meditative exercises and other practices that help to refine the etheric, astral, and mental nature. The purification and refinement process is never-ending, but is not properly an end in itself. But it is the first dimension of self-transformation.

The second aspect builds upon the first and involves embracing various ethical and moral principles and practices, that in turn encourage a broadening and deepening of consciousness and contribute toward right human relations and goodwill. These principles have been collected and summarized in various forms and in various ways, and generally include the relatively more fundamental principles of honesty (truth), harmlessness (gentleness), and humility (reverence). It also involves learning to distinguish between the personality (ego) (mind) (lower self) and the soul (higher self) (atma-buddhi-manas) and identification with the higher rather than the lower. It involves becoming less self-centered and more selfless. It means embracing all of life without being entangled in life in the lower sense. It means engaging in right human relations and encouraging goodwill. It means being more heart-centered

than head-centered. This selflessness (service) is, ultimately, the second dimension of self-transformation.

The third aspect builds upon the first and second and cannot be embraced effectively otherwise. The third aspect involves the continual process of learning and growing, both in terms of knowledge and understanding, leading to wisdom. But again this is not an end in itself, but simply a means toward an end (self-realization) (union). Learning and growing is not simply about knowledge and intellectual (superficial) understanding, but also about experience and realization that leads to deeper understanding (and to wisdom). Ultimately it is not so much about learning as it is about deepening, about becoming more perceptive and more aware, becoming more conscious and more caring. It is about becoming self-conscious in the higher sense rather than being merely self-conscious in the lower (superficial) sense. It is about waking up and realizing the truth about oneself and one's surroundings (context). It is about transcending the ego and the intellect. And it is the third dimension of self-transformation.

This pathquest is an ever-continuing and ever-deepening three-fold journey and process of individual and collective self-transformation. As the student progresses on this journey, he or she also contributes to the whole.

† Commentary No. 1435

Soul Mates

One of the many and various new age notions is that of soul mates or twin souls. Since most people who use this expression really don't understand what the soul is, the expression "soul mates" takes on a variety of meanings. The soul is, properly, that part of the human being which-that does not incarnate, i.e., which remains on the higher planes (atma-buddhi-manas) and merely overshadows the incarnated personality. Most people who use the expression (soul) are referring to their innermost conscious feelings rather than what actually comes from the soul.

Souls do evolve together, on their own level, as souls in the context of soul groups, over a number of lifetimes. This means that “members” of a soul group are likely to incarnate together and form various and varying personality relationships or at least to cross paths from time to time. Some but not all (not even most) family relationships are among members of a soul group. Likewise some but not all (and not most) marriages and serious relationships are among members of a soul group. In fact, most human relationships (and marriages) are merely karmic, superficial, and transient (not enduring to the next lifetime), and not in the context of a soul group. This is because most human beings are not significantly evolved in consciousness and are therefore unable to be responsive to the energy or quality of the soul (or to the energy or quality of the soul group).

But where two souls have indeed evolved together through various and varying relationships (male-male, male-female, female-female) (friends, siblings, parent-child, etc.) over a number of lifetimes there is a natural bond that develops between them and which is naturally expressed at the personality level. Sometimes this bond is felt through a strong attraction even while circumstances are preclusive, i.e., where one or both are entangled in particular (enduring or transient) experiences, circumstances, and relationship(s). And sometimes this bond is felt through a strong attraction that is able to be manifested properly through deep and enduring friendship, true romantic relationship, or true partnership.

And where two souls have thus bonded deeply over a number of lifetimes (and a number of marriages with each other) then this results in their being soul mates, two souls who are naturally and comfortably bound to each other in ways that transcend time and space (and other worldly circumstances). Soul mates tend to be attracted or drawn together time and time again (to an extent limited only by karmic considerations). One really nice aspect of this phenomenon is that the relationship picks up more or less where it left off in the earlier lifetime, except that the roles and circumstances may be different. But soul mates do not generally need to redevelop what has already been achieved together. They simply need to become reacquainted at the personality level (because the personality is new they are necessarily not therefore fully acquainted at that level).

But this does not actually work very well (spiritually) unless both persons are consciously upon the spiritual path and at least somewhat responsive to their souls (and soul group). To draw upon the inner relationship both need to be connected through spiritual practice (consciousness) and responsive to the soul (and therefore to each other on the higher level and not simply at the personality level). Thus finding one's soul mate is not really the point. If one has a soul mate, then one only needs to find oneself (and the soul mate will necessarily be there) (because soul mates are never actually separated).

† Commentary No. 1436

Twin Souls

While some people use the expression "twin souls" equivalently to "soul mates" (and some use either expression rather loosely) in fact while there are (some) soul mates there are no twin souls, at least not in the sense of identity. Souls are individualized within the collective soul (soul group), and while souls within a given soul group tend to evolve together and tend even to incarnate together, the relationships among such souls are not that of actual twins but that of simply having both a common source and similar energy (qualification).

Soul mates are to some extent complementary, not by virtue of being soul mates, but by virtue of having differences based on development and circumstances. Even personality "twins" (whose physical bodies and personality natures arise to some extent from the same circumstances (simultaneity in space and time) of birth) are not actually identical, as each indwelling soul is a distinct life. People are not (ever) fractionated. Each is a whole. "Twins" may be very (very) similar in many (most) regards, and "twins" may indeed enjoy deeper and more subtle connectedness than most siblings, but there are inevitable differences. Usually, the similarities are derived not from the common birth per se but from the place (context) and relationship at the soul level, i.e., being from the same soul group and simply choosing to incarnate simultaneously and synchronistically).

So the proper use of the expression "twin" is to refer to similarity rather than identity. In this sense, soul mates or twin souls are those who are simply

connected (much) more consciously, (much) more deeply than others, by virtue of their soul relationship(s). The basis for truly effective "relationship" is a harmonious combination of commonality and differences, of similarity and complementarity. Two people who are very much alike are not likely to be able to work (learn, grow, serve) together very effectively, despite appearances. But two people who have a common nature (core values, common source, similar paths) and who have sufficient but non-conflictive differences are much more likely to be able to work well together. Of course what really matters is quality of consciousness.

And in this sense of quality of consciousness all souls have an inherent commonality and all souls are traveling (developing) toward the same place (goal) (relative perfection) (God), so anyone who is truly en rapport with their soul will be able to work effectively with others who are also at that place in consciousness, regardless of circumstances and differences. Because anyone who is truly in touch with the soul is able to evoke that soul quality or energy into the personality life and it tempers the separateness of the personality (mind) (ego) (intellect) and enables collective and complementary growth in consciousness.

Soul mates or twin souls do not actually need each other (except in the overall, collective sense), but are simply drawn to each other naturally and provide enhancement. True relationship cannot occur where there is substantive independence (separateness) (ego) (individuality as an end in itself without consideration for the collective consciousness), and so one of the characteristics (properly) of soul mates is that there is a comfortable interdependence. An appreciation of each other on all levels. Also support for each other. It is not about need, nor is it about desire. It is simply about commonality and chemistry and magnetism and synergy. And deepening consciousness.

Idealism and Pragmatism

Idealism is the philosophy of embracing ideals, of embracing the relatively more noble practices without any real consideration of practicality or more worldly considerations. The essence of idealism is that concepts and ideals and principles are more real (enduring) (significant) than more worldly considerations, that “the essential nature of reality lies in consciousness or reason.” Idealism is also the practice of forming or realizing ideals and living under their influences, i.e., being guided by principles. Idealism to some extent involves living as if one is entirely noble, and that others are also (entirely) noble, without substantive appreciation for the limitations of human nature, i.e., being somewhat naive.

Indeed the essential nature of reality does lie in consciousness, but not in reason. Reality begins with archetypes and involves noble principles. If one lives according to higher principles one is therefore closer in consciousness to reality, and one progresses accordingly. The nice thing about having and seeking to embrace ideals is that that having and embracing leads one toward the ideal. The problems with idealism are two-fold, namely (1) discerning what is real or noble, i.e., what the ideals are or should be, and (2) living consistently in accordance with one’s ideals when the outer world seems to be governed by more practical matters.

Pragmatism is in some sense the opposite end of the spectrum, embracing a more practical approach to problems and affairs. The problem with pragmatism is that it is based on superficial considerations. Worldly behavior, based on (necessarily superficial) understanding of how things work may be relatively self-serving but it is also a matter of self-delusion. Because the world is not actually as it seems to be. Because there are underlying causes. Because there are underlying principles (cause and effect, evolution in consciousness, karma) that determine more enduring outcomes than what is merely apparent. Pragmatism is based on the illusion of separateness, that people are inherently separate and independent, and that one can advance one’s own interests, e.g., through accumulations and achievements without any real consideration for the consequences to others. Even where pragmatism is adapted with conscience, it

remains necessarily superficial, because it does not generally take into consideration the evolutionary framework.

Some people are more principled than others and seek to live according to their ideals, oftentimes placing ideals before practical considerations; others are entirely pragmatic and simply do whatever they need to do in order to achieve their objectives. But it is more effective, in terms of learning and growing in consciousness and serving meaningfully, to find a middle ground between idealism and pragmatism. Some would suggest that being pragmatic is being realistic, but that assumes that superficial reality is indeed reality. But in understanding ideals as goals, and in understanding human nature and worldly considerations, the spiritual student is better able to tread the middle ground.

The student should endeavor to live according to his or her ideals (higher, more noble values) (principles) while making (some) allowances for practicality, without necessarily compromising one's ideals or one's nature. In understanding the more subtle nature of the world, in understanding cause and effect relationships, one can then more actively embrace right action and right attitude, in a practical manner. Yet it remains better to err on the side of one's ideals than on the side of practicality.

† Commentary No. 1438

Egalitaria

Egalitaria or egalitarianism is the "belief in human equality, especially with respect to social, political, and economic rights and privileges." It is also "a social philosophy advocating the removal of inequalities among men (people)." In fact, human beings are (all) equal, in principle and in value. And all are equal under divine law (karma). The apparent inconsistencies and inequalities are part of the process of learning, of experience in the lower worlds, leading each person eventually and inexorably to evolution in consciousness. Through karma, through the law of action and consequence one evokes subsequent experience and circumstances that facilitate the learning of the needed lessons.

Thus all of the conditions that a person faces are necessarily self-created, and do not imply either inequality or inconsistency. Each person is entirely responsible

for his or her own circumstances. However, part of the learning process involves both individual and collective realization of the underlying equality (and the underlying reality) (and the underlying (higher) principles). And this means that egalitarian ideals are quite worthy of effort to embrace and fulfill. In practice this means that as humanity evolves there is an improving consideration for equal rights under (human) law, and eventually that emphasis on human law is replaced by understanding and consideration of underlying truth and (higher) principles of justice. Thus the relatively more "advanced" nations and societies are relatively more egalitarian, where there are equal rights under law, where there are equal opportunities for health, education, and welfare.

But in practice, in this context of egalitaria, there are several challenges. One challenge involves consideration for the (practical) fact that people are quite diverse in their abilities (talents) and consciousness (awareness) (understanding) (wisdom), that some are naturally more capable in the ways of the world than others, that some are more insightful in the (higher) ways than others. It is impractical to expect everyone to live according to the same standards, or even to place some standards ahead of others, for each has needs according to consciousness and circumstances, and those needs can be very different.

Thus there needs to be (and there is) not inconsiderable freedom for each to embrace his or her own principles, consciously or otherwise. Some live more according to higher principles. Others live more according to the more apparent worldly and self-serving considerations. As a society evolves then the lowest standards are raised and the bulk of people are expected to embrace them, even while some (pioneers) are living well beyond those standards. As the collective consciousness understands matters of health and (true) justice then the societal standards change accordingly.

Another (serious) challenge has to do with the distribution of wealth and the problem of extremes. In a more proper egalitarian society there are no great disparities in income or in wealth. Wealth is truly a collective quality, and where there are wide disparities (apparent inequalities) then there are evoked collective (sometimes dire) consequences. But what actually advances is not the equal distribution of wealth, but a more balanced sense of merit, such that the

larger disparities disappear and the lesser disparities are more consistent with merit. Which also means that societal values evolve and that standards are less based on material and ego (superficial) values and more on values in (quality of) consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1439

Dying Gracefully

Entering transition properly, or dying gracefully, has at least two components, namely a person's desire or intention or need to die gracefully and the role of friends and family and other attendants in allowing that person to die gracefully.

Most people do not really understand the transition process but have beliefs about death and the after-life that may or may not be realistic but are satisfying or not as the case may be. But most people don't really "know" about death or transition and rebirth and there is therefore generally and usually some apprehension, concern, fear, or foreboding. This tends to be more prevalent at instinctive levels, i.e., the body's instinct for self-preservation and comparable instincts on emotional and mental (ego) levels. Most people do not want to suffer growing old or experiencing pain and discomfort as the body wears out. Many seek to artificially (and futilely) sustain the appearance of youthfulness. Many seek to live longer lives, also relatively futilely. These are generally related to vanity (appearances) and either attachments to "living" or the inability to appreciate the naturalness and inevitability of death (and the usefulness of what exists beyond). Thus some people seek to extend their lives artificially, which does not generally sustain the (actual) quality of life. Others are more sanguine and many people seek simply to end their lives gracefully, with dignity, when their time comes naturally.

Emotional and mental attachments tend to make transition relatively rather more difficult, both in terms of letting go, and in terms of lingering after death. If one is attached to people or things or experience in the lower world, then the personality as a whole (and the ego in particular) is (are) generally resistant to transition, even if there is understanding and acknowledgement of the need to die. Transition generally occurs when the lifetime, or the soul's intentions for

the lifetime (in terms of experience and expression, fulfillment of karma, growth in consciousness) has (have) been achieved. Sometimes it is simply a matter of terminal disease or injury, evoked through karma. Sometimes it is a matter of growing old and the body wearing out, naturally. The body (and mind) wear out naturally as the impulse (momentum) for incarnation is gradually and eventually fulfilled. But a person can sometimes remain in this world, artificially, through attachments and artificial means. Which tends to evoke suffering because it is unnatural or contrary to the needs of the soul.

For some people letting go is not so easy. People tend to be entangled in the world and have attachments at various levels. And even where the body is wearing out the mind may still cling to worldly activity and engagements. These attachments, on physical, emotional, and mental levels, actually interfere with the natural process and make transition more difficult, not only in approaching transition, but also during the period immediately after death. In not letting go one is simply not responsive to higher needs. And even if one is "staying" for a while, not letting go of (worldly) attachments serves to preclude any real learning (it dulls the inner senses). In letting go one is thereby relatively more responsive to higher needs and the learning experience (which continues after death).

Upon physical death there are considerable needs for assimilation and passing on to the next level. But attachments to the worldly life and the clinging to or by other people can interfere in this process and delay the actual transition. So it is also crucial that one's loved ones also let go, effectively.

Truth and Truth of Mind

There is truth, and relative truth, and there is the “truth” of mind. The actual truth is what it is, actually, regardless of what a person thinks or feels or believes or perceives to be truth. Thus in order to embrace or realize truth one must approach truth without any preconceived or underlying assumptions, beliefs, ideas, opinions, or other biases. And if one is not entirely honest with oneself and others, in all things and in all regards, then that relative lack of honesty serves as a (relative) barrier to embracing and realizing truth.

But the human being (and the mind) is (are) limited in ability. It is not really possible for the human mind to embrace actual (complete) truth. Because truth is, on its own level, of greater dimensionality (complexity) (simplicity) than the human mind is capable of embracing. So a person can at best perceive or realize truth in some relative fashion, according to his or her abilities and capacities (consciousness, intelligence), and subject to his or her biases and conditioning. Virtually every aspect of truth that a person deals with is relative or partial, limited in some way or another. This relative truth is nonetheless valuable, as it serves as encouragement for learning and growing (and serving), so it behooves the spiritual student to overcome the more readily apparent human limitations (biases, opinions, habits of thinking) so as to better and more effectively apprehend relative truth.

One of the biggest (and most common) mistakes is to assume (consciously or unconsciously) that this necessarily relative truth is actual truth. Such assumption or clinging (attachment) then compounds the problem (of apprehension of truth) by inhibiting any broader or deeper appreciation of truth (learning). Knowledge is particularly dangerous because people tend to be attached to things that they believe they know, when in fact knowledge is even more relative than truth. In realizing that the truth that is apprehended is relative truth, the student allows refinement in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (and thereby progress in learning and growing and deepening). Thus the spiritual student may “know” things but is not generally attached to what is known or even to what appears to be understood. There is ideally stability and coherence, even while learning and growing. One can be open and flexible (non-

rigid, non-preclusive) while still adhering to the truth that is relatively understood.

Another relatively big and common mistake is to rely on rational or intellectual process (logic) to determine "truth" (which of course is not actual truth, but simply what is believed to be the truth). This truth of mind is not, ever, actual truth. Sometimes truth of mind is no less real than relative truth arrived at through other means, but it is inexorably less reliable than truth apprehended intuitively. The mind is a biased and conditioned instrument and is therefore (very) limited in its ability to embrace truth. If one relies on the intellect, even objectively and logically, there are necessarily involved assumptions and inferences and conclusions, consciously or unconsciously, which are merely assumptions, inferences, and conclusions. Not truth.

The highest truth is that which can be embraced through buddhi (intuition in the higher sense of relationship between (true) heart and (actual) soul). In buddhi, the mind is properly quiescent and simply reflects the higher impressions. What is then apprehended by the mind cannot be completely (or accurately) verbalized, but it is nonetheless higher truth (than could or would otherwise be realized). Thus the student is encouraged to temper the mind, and open the heart. To truth.

† Commentary No. 1441

The Monkey Mind

One of the perils of mental (and to some extent intellectual) development is the monkey mind. The monkey mind is a lower or concrete mind with a propensity for flitting or fluttering or fluttering from one object or topic or focus to another, almost incessantly, in an almost continuous chain of uncorrelated thinking.

The mind that flits tends to pass quickly or abruptly from one place or object or focus to another. This monkey mind is passive in the sense that monkey-ness (monkey-mindedness) is triggered by almost anything and everything, internally and externally. Whatever impinges upon the senses or comes to mind in any way tends to lead to a chain of casual and fleeting focus where each object of mind leads to another, or each sense impression tends to refocus the mind

accordingly. Given the barrage of external impressions, and given the natural associative nature of every object with every other object, each such impression or focus tends to lead the mind to the next focus. In the case of the (actual) monkey this (monkey-mindedness) relates to lack of mental development and the inability to focus. In the case of the human being it relates more generally to overdevelopment.

The problem is two-fold: the passivity of the phenomena or process and the lack of duration and sensibility of focus. Passivity implies that one is reactive to stimulation and not actually responsive and sensible. The lack of duration of focus, due to the (generally unconsciously) allowed distractiveness of the next stimuli or associative focus (one thing leading to another in the superficial sense), means that one is not actually comprehending anything. The monkey mind is not really conducive to learning or growing. If it collects or retains anything at all it collects and retains superficial, uncorrelated "data" that is accepted without it being placed into perspective or context. In short the monkey mind lacks both focus and discrimination, which means it lacks assimilative ability.

The causes of monkey-mindedness are relatively simple. Curiosity is a natural attribute of human development. It is part of the way in which people learn and grow, by being curious about things and looking into them. But as one matures (intellectually and spiritually), natural curiosity needs to be balanced by some growing and deepening sense of discrimination (discretion). With sensible discrimination one can focus on what needs to be focused upon, instead of being focused on what is not really pertinent. But where one is curious and where one lacks discrimination, monkey-mindedness emerges as the mind develops beyond the natural or intended limits. Thus the monkey mind is caused by curiosity coupled with a lack of discrimination and the overdevelopment of the (concrete) mind.

The cures for monkey-mindedness are not so simple or straightforward, especially where monkey-mindedness is coupled with other perils of mental development. For the spiritual student the long-term remedy is proper meditation practice, starting with concentration exercises. This tends to help the mind to focus, and to lessen the vulnerability of the mind to stimulation, and it tends to remove much of the independent power of the mind. The

overdeveloped mind is one that dominates the personality and is therefore unable to respond to the soul. As the power of the mind as an independent entity is reduced, it becomes possible to temper the mind and train the mind, through meditation discipline. Eventually this will allow a balancing of heart and mind and make one's life experience more sensible.

† Commentary No. 1442

The Grasping Mind

Another peril of mental development is the grasping mind. The grasping mind is one that exhibits a tendency to cling to ideas or concepts or beliefs or a subject with an almost unrelenting focus. The grasping mind tends to embrace many beliefs and opinions, with some (considerable) degree of attachment and rigidity. The grasping mind is usually so focused that it has difficulty being open to knowledge or truth or understanding that contradicts what is already believed or embraced. The grasping mind, despite its focus, tends to lack objectivity and tends to cling to beliefs and opinions in spite of evidence to the contrary.

The grasping mind (or in some sense the opinionated mind) is the concrete mental analogy to attachment on physical or emotional levels, i.e., materialism and entanglement in the senses. In a sense, the grasping mind is one that is entangled in intellect or thinking, without having either objectivity or overall (balanced) discrimination. Indeed, grasping is also an extreme form of discrimination, where only what is grasped is embraced. Thus the grasping mind is also very separative. But the reliance on intellect, with rigidity and narrowness rather than flexibility and openness (broadness) means that feelings and other impressions (contrary thoughts, intuition) are usually discounted, consciously or unconsciously. Which means that balance is not possible. The grasping mind is capability of (facilitating) integration, although not in its proper sense, but the grasping mind precludes any possibility of alignment or balance.

The monkey mind is about the superficial quest for knowledge and understanding. The grasping mind is usually about focus and always involves

attachment. The grasping mind requires some if not a great deal of intellectual development, but can emerge as a consequence of (excessive) concentration exercises. The unfocused mind (including the monkey mind) needs to develop the ability to focus. Over time, concentration exercises help in this regard. But if the concentration practice does not move into (proper) meditation, the mind can become crystallized in its patterns and exhibit a tendency for grasping. And these tendencies (attachments) can be very difficult to overcome.

Of course the grasping mind may also be coincident with the monkey mind, in which case the combination is particularly devastating. The monkey mind is driven usually by an overdeveloped sense of curiosity, whether or not the intellect is developed, while the grasping mind is usually a consequence of an overdeveloped intellect. Consequently, the grasping-monkey mind is almost entirely insensitive and unresponsive to truth, to broader and deeper knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. The grasping-monkey mind suffers attachment without lingering focus, which means that a person with such a mind is almost continuously absorbed in fleeting mental attachments, to the exclusion of almost everything else.

In the final analysis, both the monkey mind and the grasping mind (and the grasping-monkey mind) involve habits of thinking that inhibit reasonableness (balance). Depending on the extent of these habits, a considerable trauma is generally required in order for the afflicted person to return to a more sensible development process. The habits must necessarily be broken, and the mind tempered in a more balanced manner. The mind that dominates the personality is a hard (concrete) mind and can exhibit monkey-mindedness and/or grasping. But the mind that is properly tempered can exhibit neither. The gentle mind is able to develop more properly.

The Advertent Mind

Yet another peril of mental development is the mind that tends to focus overly on details without any real appreciation for substance. Attention to detail can be helpful in some instances, especially where there is relevance and some sense of discrimination. But attention to detail without any real context or relevancy leads to senseless absorption in detail.

The problem of advertency is simply a lack of discrimination or discernment coupled with entanglement in intellectual (concrete mental) focus. The fact is, that details are only significant or important in some context, and only to some limited extent. Details are never important in themselves. So the mind that is overly fond of details, without any proper context (and especially without any real focus) is an advertent mind. Advertency may or may not accompany monkey-mindedness, but advertency does oftentimes accompany grasping. The monkey mind is not generally focused, or at least not for long. The grasping mind tends to be attached to whatever is focused upon or grasped. And the advertent mind tends to be entangled in details to the exclusion of sensibility. It is the seeing of the leaves without seeing the tree, and the seeing of the trees without seeing the forest. It is not about relevance or (true) significance. It is simply about details.

Advertency undermines both discrimination and reasoning. Instead of discerning distinctions and realizing both relative significance and context, the advertent mind simply embraces the details as ends-in-themselves. It is a losing of the mind, a lessening of reasoning ability. And of course it also undermines the intuition. The objective of mental development is the facilitation of learning and growing, in consciousness. If one is lost in the details then one cannot then learn or grow. The accumulation of data has no real value unless it is placed in context, and even then it is not the data or details that matter, but what can be gleaned, what has import in consciousness. Knowledge is properly much more than the details, but even knowledge is not carried forward to the next life. What conveys is understanding, even more so wisdom (conscience).

Details (and advertency) are necessarily superficial. The mind that is mired in detail is functioning at the lowest possible (functional) level. And because the mind is engaged at that level it cannot then really embrace anything on a higher (functional) level. But if the details are placed into perspective or context. If the details are seen merely as data to be sifted through rather than absorbed in. If the mind can get above and beyond the details, then there is hope for balance and eventual tempering of the mind. Then there is hope for a broadening and deepening of the mind. So that a larger, broader, deeper context can be apprehended. So the mind itself will not dominate. So the mind will then be merely an instrument (of higher consciousness) rather than an end in itself.

Many who suffer from monkey-mindedness or from the grasping mind or from advertency also suffer the delusion that they are seeking and embracing truth. When in fact truth is something else entirely. Details are not truth. Knowledge is not truth. Even understanding is not truth. All of these things are merely pointers to truth. If the mind (and heart) are truly open. But advertency (grasping) (monkey-mindedness) is often a means of evasion. Of avoiding truth. So the spiritual student should exercise considerable care in thinking, so that one is actually dedicated to truth rather than mired in the details or even in the intellectual process.

† Commentary No. 1444

Binding and Bondage

Everything within the field of manifestation is bound or limited or constrained in some sense, by karma, by dharma, and by other laws of evolution in consciousness which qualify and guide and encourage experience and learning. All are bound by natural law. This is not bondage. This is simply coherence. These natural laws provide context and meaning to life and consciousness. They do not in themselves convey bondage.

Bondage is being entangled in the lower worlds. The lower worlds exist only as an environment through which to learn and grow. But because the human being in incarnation is immersed in the lower worlds he (she) is usually blind to the underlying and overshadowing reality (and context). This blindness is also part of the process. Through experience (more properly through the assimilation of

experience) gradually comes clarity and understanding. The binding force of materialism and egoism is gradually overcome and (relative) freedom (enlightenment) is achieved. But in order to achieve this clarity and insight one must necessarily evolve to the point where one is less bound by circumstances. And this is achieved through experience, through assimilation of experience, through purification of the vehicles (body, emotions, mind), through growth in consciousness.

But in the meantime a person experiences a not inconsiderable extent of bondage, beginning with the initial immersion (the blindness of matter) and being compounded by one's own actions (attachments). Karma is the principal superficial binding force. It is the law of action and consequence and the means through which consequences are evoked which are needed for growth. Thus most human beings are bound in this lower sense primarily by their own actions, attachments, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, feelings, opinions, and thoughts. These personal bindings occur on physical levels (materialism), emotional levels (entanglement in the senses), and concrete mental levels (intellectualism and egoism). In the final analysis, all personal binding is a matter of both materialism and egoism.

Some people are also bound to some extent voluntarily or passively by secular laws or imposed (worldly and psychological) forces. But most are simply bound by their own entanglements and the lack of realization of underlying reality. Moreover, many suffer the delusion of self-control or self-mastery (freedom from any binding) and the delusion of self-indulgence. It is only the ego which can suffer these delusions, but most people live at the ego level and fail to realize that the ego (what they are identifying with) is itself an artificial entity and therefore not real (not enduring). The ego serves as an effective barrier between the bound consciousness (lower self) (personality) (ego) (intellect) and the higher self (reality) (truth).

And some are bound more nobly and more consciously, by ethics and principles and spiritual values, by understanding of natural law and the rules of the path (conscious evolution). Thus while most people are bound by the quality and level of consciousness and by karma, some are bound more so by dharma, which is a higher order (more voluntary, more noble) binding. It is of course all relative. There is an overall underlying coherence or context. And there is entanglement.

And everything in between. As the student evolves there is a lessening of the artificial (involuntary) constraints (karma) and a deepening of the less artificial bindings (conscious embracing of dharma). Enlightenment is a very gradual process, but as one becomes relatively more enlightened there is increasing freedom. For good.

† Commentary No. 1445

Crime and Punishment 2

In conventional terms, a crime is a transgression or violation of public or moral law and the offender is liable to punishment under the auspices of that law. In principle, "punishment" under law is intended to discourage such offenses, by the offender and by potential offenders. But in practice, "punishment" unfortunately also often involves either retribution or retaliation. None of these practices (punishment, retribution, retaliation) are in themselves proper in any deeper sense. In principle, public laws are reasonable and serve the public good. And "punishment" or incarceration is in principle both a learning and rehabilitative process. In practice neither is necessarily or generally true.

Thus in metaphysical terms, a crime is simply an action that is inherently counter-evolutionary and therefore a (moderate to serious) transgression from the karmic balance (progressive equilibrium), which necessarily evokes a progressive and restorative force. While public law generally has an intellectual basis, natural law is derived from the underlying purpose of life in this world, namely the evolution of consciousness. While public law and its enforcement depend upon human involvements (and human limitations (bias)), natural law is perfect and inexorable. Natural law (the restoration of balance) involves a natural underlying purpose and wisdom, without deliberation. Whatever action is taken, natural law encourages evolutionary growth and discourages counter-evolutionary practices. The problems of course are that natural law is not recognized consciously by many people in incarnation (who remain asleep) and that consequences evoked may be displaced in time and space and compounded by other actions and context such that correlation is not necessarily or even generally apparent.

Yet there is no punishment, no retribution, no retaliation, and no sense of these things, within the framework of natural law (metaphysics). Restorative (karmic) forces are evoked naturally and produce (ultimately, even unconsciously) understanding and insight, at least at the level of assimilation in consciousness, as the lesson is learned and adjustments are made. The process may involve pain or suffering or other unpleasant (but nonetheless consequential) factors, but these are (properly considered) the reactions of a person to the evoked circumstances. If a person is open to learning, truly open, then there is no substantive pain or suffering. Properly, the underlying lessons are learned and adjustments are made before the restorative force becomes intense.

If a person hurts or abuses another life (human, animal, plant, or mineral), either physically or emotionally or in some material or financial sense, then the consequences are naturally that that person should feel the pain or suffering that he or she has inflicted on others, so that he or she learns to be sensitive to the well-being of others. Ultimately one realizes that all lives are so interconnected that hurting or abusing someone (or some lifeform) is simultaneously a hurting or abusing of oneself. But this realization usually takes many lifetimes to emerge into the waking-consciousness. Which means that the restorative (encouraging) force is often persistently recurring and gradually increasing in magnitude or intensity.

All crime is based on ignorance. All evil is rooted in ignorance. If one really and truly understands the context (evolution) and the consequences (karma), then there is no crime. There is simply an expression of life (without harm) that engenders growth leading to deeper realization.

The Roots of Violence 1

In the mineral kingdom there is no violence per se and most “interactions” are relatively weak. But there are sometimes “strong interactions” that can be (wrongly) perceived as violent. These interactions are not violent, simply because there is no harmful intent. They are simply consequential. Indeed the entire mineral kingdom is inherently passive, though are some elements that are more aggressive than others.

Likewise in the plant kingdom there is (properly) no violence, though some species are more aggressive than others, and many species compete with one another, passively. Again there is simply no harmful intent. In both the plant and animal kingdoms there is a matter of conditioned behavior, of action, reaction, and consequence, but there is no conscious awareness of other lives or imports (effects). At a higher (group) level there is awareness, and there is collaboration. But virtually all of the behavioral characteristics of mineral and plant lives are inherently non-violent. But of the two kingdoms, the mineral kingdom has the positive polarity and an underlying potential for activity, which is not so for the plant kingdom.

The animal kingdom is another matter altogether. In the animal kingdom, animal lives develop a propensity for competition (and accompanying aggression), based in part on the (positive) polarity and in part due to the Fourth Ray conditioning (harmony through conflict). This is a Fourth Ray world and a Fourth Ray cycle, and so the animal kingdom is the (highly correlated) venue for conflict, where on a higher turn of the cycle it is more a matter of contrast than conflict, and ultimately a matter of harmony and contrast. But the animal lifewave would seem to bear the brunt of considerable karmic consequences, as violence plays out and through the more dominant (and relatively more coarse) species. And yet there is still no harmful intent. It is a matter of conditioning and instinctive behavior, based in coarseness of consciousness and the coarseness of the bodies through which that consciousness is expressed. Clearly the mineral and plant lives are asleep, with very limited awareness of other lives. Animal lives are also asleep, but less so in comparison with mineral and plant lives. Animal lives are more conscious of other lives, but their

behavior is dominated by conditioning and instincts rather than volition or intent.

The human kingdom is yet another matter entirely. Human beings are (nominally) self-consciousness. And yet human beings inhabit animal bodies which in turn have animal conditioning and animal instincts. Most human-animal bodies are relatively more refined than most strictly animal bodies (exceptions being domesticated animals who respond to expression of love). Thus some, rather coarse human beings are as violent or more violent than most animals, but most are much less so. The common links are the animal bodies and coarseness. But what separates the human and animal kingdoms (and lifewaves) is nominal self-consciousness (and accountability based on that self-consciousness). Thus the most primitive of human beings, who are barely human, are barely aware of their own propensity for violence, behave through violence almost passively. It is simply their (animal) nature.

But the human being who is relatively more aware, and relatively more deliberate in his or her behavior, is much more accountable. Violence at this level is much more pronounced, and much more intense. And evokes much more substantial karma (consequences). The greater the extent of consciousness, the more substantial are the consequences of violence.

† Commentary No. 1447

The Roots of Violence 2

For the human being violence is rooted in the animal body and its conditioning and instinctiveness (instinctivity), the relative coarseness of body and consciousness, selfishness (self-centeredness) (self-absorption), and the delusion of separateness (individuality) (ego) (lack of apprehension of underlying truth and reality).

Thus violence is fundamentally a matter of ignorance and lack of awareness (and lack of conscience). People who consciously hurt other lives (people, animals, the environment) do so without realization of harmfulness. They do not realize that they are hurting themselves. They do not realize that these

harmful expressions will return to them, magnified. Conscience is a product of evolution in consciousness. Conscience is conveyed from one life to another so that lessons learned in previous lives can influence the current life. Those who live without conscience are the most primitive of human beings (regardless of apparent intelligence). And those who live primarily through conscience are relatively more advanced.

But in order to develop conscience, in order to become more fully aware of the underlying truths, in order to achieve realization, one must first conquer the animal nature. The human being inhabits an animal body with all the associated animal instincts and conditioning. The human consciousness is imposed on that body, moderating and lessening the baser instincts. But for many people the animal nature dominates. As the individual progresses, through experience and expression, the consciousness becomes more refined and the person has relatively more control over the animal (base human) nature. This process of refinement ultimately involves the preliminary discipline of not smoking, not drinking alcohol, not using drugs, and not eating flesh foods, all of which practices are necessary in order for the student to conquer the lower nature and become relatively free from the animal conditioning.

But coarseness is not merely rooted in the animal nature, it is more fundamentally rooted in matter. So the process of refinement that lessens the animal influence is really a matter of qualification of matter at two levels, that of matter itself and that of form. The animal body is the composite form, made from matter but further conditioned by the experience of that form in the animal kingdom. Matter itself is enchanting and deludes the senses, but the composite form is much stronger than the underlying matter and has a life of its own. That "life" is artificial but nonetheless enchanting. The form is much stronger than merely the sum of its material components. So not only must the student purify and conquer matter per se, but the student must also purify and conquer the form, without damaging its capacity to serve.

Matter may be evil in the sense of its role (ignorance, delusion), but there is nothing inherently wrong with matter. It is as it needs to be. What is wrong is that people remain enchanted and deluded by matter (more properly form) at its three levels (physical, emotional, mental) and embrace matter generally unconsciously and quite passively. Thus violence derives from the animal

nature, the underlying coarseness (independence) of matter (form), and the illusion of separateness. Without that illusion violence is not possible. It is only in perceiving “others” as separate from oneself that a person can overcome conscience. The conscience provides potentially much in the way of insight and understanding. But the illusion of separateness does much to undermine the conscience. Thus it falls to karma, and the pain of consequences that follow from actions, to gradually reveal the truth.

† Commentary No. 1448

Thinking and Violence

Many people realize the futility and inherent harmfulness and separateness of violence. Violence is one of the most intense and intensive of causes, leading inevitably to intense and intensive consequences (karma). And those consequences are more often than not also a matter of violence in some way and on some level.

But few people appreciate that physical violence is related to what one thinks and how one feels and how one speaks, and that thinking and feeling and speaking “violence” or hostility are also quite harmful, both to the thinker-feeler-speaker and to the object of one’s thoughts and feelings and speech. Violence on any level is an outcome or expression of a number of factors, but mostly a matter of relative coarseness. Coarse people, those having relatively coarse consciousness, are simply more prone to engage in violent behavior, feelings, and thoughts. Unfortunate words are a violent projection of etheric energy. All of the negative emotions contribute to the projection of violent energy. And every manner of criticism or judgment of people is also a violent expression, whether or not it is actually verbalized.

To bully or tease or make fun of someone, privately or publicly, verbally or mentally, is to hurt someone. To criticize or judge someone, mentally or verbally, is to hurt someone. The victim may not consciously feel the pain or harm, but the damage is there. And the one who bullies or teases or criticizes and judges is nonetheless responsible and ultimately accountable. To feel hostility toward someone, likewise. The facade of pleasantness cannot hide one’s true feelings. For how one feels is a projection of energy on subtle levels,

as one feels and thinks so are energies projected that impact upon their object. So most of the realm of violence is not actually physical, but is mostly etheric, astral, and concrete mental. One's attitude toward someone constitutes an energy relationship. Thus the spiritual student is encouraged (urged) (trained) to soften the thinking and feeling, to look for the good in all and not dwell upon that which may not be so good. To not ever criticize or judge others, but simply accept and respect people as they are and not as one might wish.

But every projection of energy, every thought, every feeling, every word, every attitude, every action, every violence on every level, must inevitably return to the source, and the one who thinks or feels or speaks separatively must necessarily incur the assault (pain and suffering) of that return. The return of violent energy is cumulative in the sense that what one faces at any given time may come from any time in one's past, and through various means such as accidents, injuries, and illness. But the spiritual student is encouraged and urged and trained not only to (generally) avoid unfortunate projections, but to recall any that are inadvertently or otherwise released. The result is more intense than "normal" but facilitates the ability of the student to grow and learn and serve more effectively (through freedom).

The lesson may not be readily apparent in the consequences, but the lesson is there, and is assimilated eventually at some level or another. To assimilate consciously and deliberately is most effective. Otherwise, through pain and suffering one learns ultimately to be gentle in all things. To live harmlessly. To act and speak and think and feel constructively and harmoniously. To fully realize the oneness of all lives and that to injure anyone (and life) is to injure oneself, literally and figuratively. One must therefore live gently, in peace and harmony with nature and in peace and harmony with one's fellows.

The Spectrum of Christianity 1

Like most religions, Christianity exhibits a dynamic range or spectrum of forms or denominations. At one end of the spectrum are the more conservative churches which exhibit fundamentalism. At the other end of the spectrum are the most liberal churches where almost anything goes. One end is marked by exclusivity and rigidity, the other by uninhibited personal expression (flakiness).

At the most conservative end of the spectrum, the Christian "religion" is authoritative and prescriptive and adherents are told what to believe, what to think, how to groom themselves, and how to behave. Fellowship tends to be restricted to adherents only, and "outsiders" need to be saved and reformed (molded) before they are "acceptable" for membership. The world is divided into two well-defined groups, adherents and others (heathens). Even other Christian faiths are not considered to be truly Christian. Anyone whose beliefs are "different" is a threat and considered to be misguided or deluded at best, or servants of Satan at worst. In this extreme form of religion, scripture is considered to be literally and absolutely true and all other writings are considered to be uninspired at best and false at worst.

Religious leaders exhibit considerable power and influence, and even if sincere (as most are), their treatment of adherents and prospectives is equivalent to brainwashing. Adherents are not allowed to think for themselves. Education and worldly experience is discouraged because adherents might be corrupted by "other" teachings. They must give every question and every decision, however personal or petty, to God. Of course "true" answers are entirely conforming to the ways and means (doctrines and practices) of the church. In fundamentalism the emphasis is upon being saved, through God's grace, and not through good works. Which is rather like finding an unearned shortcut to heaven, restricted only to the chosen few. Except that "good works" are important to character-building, and one should emulate Jesus.

One might wonder how this fundamentalism is so appealing to so many people. The answer, perhaps, is that there is comfort in conformity. For many it is indeed comforting to not have to think, to simply acquiesce to church doctrine,

to conform. In such conformity one is accepted and “loved” and there are no threats to one’s well-being except from “outside” the restricted fellowship or close-knit community of the church. Fundamentalists are subtly discouraged from any experience or practice that is beyond the “control” of the church. The ways of the “outer” world are considered ungodly or unholy and threatening. The “us” and “them” of course is extremely separative. As is the presumption that one is right and everyone else (outside) is wrong.

There is of course a positive side to all this, namely a strong sense of ethics and morality and personal discipline (purity) and sense of devotion and service to God. The problem is that adherents cannot really experience much beyond the limited experiential framework of the church, and consequently there is little opportunity for learning or growing meaningfully. In separating themselves from “humanity” adherents are unable to realize the deeper, higher, broader dimension of God’s love, namely that all creatures are to be loved, respected, and accepted as they are, without coercion or judgment. But the fundamentalist tends to judge others based upon the (relatively narrow) church doctrine, and rigidly so. But in truth, it is not a human’s place to judge others, or to project his or her own truth and understanding and values upon others.

† Commentary No. 1450

The Spectrum of Christianity 2

Some fundamentalists actually divide heathens into two groups, namely those who are savable (or worthy of the attempt) and those who are not. The rules for this can be quite rigid. This can give rise to evangelism and similar practices, which however sincerely embraced, constitute imposition, which is (ultimately) a crime against God and humanity. From a metaphysical or theosophical perspective, adherents at this very conservative end of the spectrum are simply asleep. They may be “good” people but they are generally not very highly evolved because they are lacking the needed experience.

At the other end of the spectrum things are not necessarily much better. In the very liberal churches, while notably more inclusive, what one believes is determined more by trendiness and convenience than true realization, and how

one behaves is determined more by self-justification (whatever one wants is good) than by higher principles. There is there a feel-good fellowship that is also quite comforting, for it basically supports the “adherent” in whatever he or she wants to believe or do. While fundamentalism discourages ego development in some sense, the ego can nonetheless run rampant in the guise of leadership and evangelism. In liberalism, there is definite encouragement of ego in the guise of building self-esteem and through self-justification. Of course this self-reliance (in the lower sense) is not altogether or inherently “bad” but it does tend to undermine real spiritual growth (which is based necessarily in the combination of intelligence and humility).

So. Where is the middle path in this spectrum of Christianity. It is perforce a much more challenging journey than either acquiescence to fundamentalism or acquiescence to self-serving liberalism. The path of moderation involves intelligent balance, between guidelines and self-expression. The rules or encouragements are more basic (sensible) (understandable) (practical) and while not prescriptive or controlling, if properly embraced nonetheless facilitate growth. In the conservative extreme it is most important to be saved and to conform. In the liberal extreme it is most important to be true to oneself (in some lower, self-serving sense). But in the middle path of moderate and sensible Christianity, it is most important simply to embrace the ethics and morality of the church (teachings) to the extent that these principles and practices are understood. To be honest. To be kind. To be charitable. To respect all peoples, regardless of their faith, culture, race, etc. To embrace God’s love for all creatures. To encourage learning and growing (deepening) and serving, without prescription or coercion or imposition or judgment or even expectation. To actually forego criticizing (mentally or verbally), to forego judging others. To be gentle in all things. In other words, to embrace God’s nature.

And this ultimately requires only one thing, which is God’s love or grace. Embracing God’s love. Which can also be perceived as two things, namely intelligence and humility. Intelligence and humility are both the result of embracing God’s love, of deepening in the spiritual sense. Of approaching the God-Christ within. Of working through and transcending the illusions of materialism, the senses, and the ego (evil). Of realizing that “moderate”

Christianity is essentially the same as the moderate component of every other major religion.

Ultimately, intelligent people think for themselves. But really intelligent people transcend thinking altogether, and rely on the intuition, which is the voice of the God-Christ within, however it is labeled or perceived.

† Commentary No. 1451

The Spectrum of Christianity 3

There are several other dimensions of Christianity in addition to the primary spectrum that ranges from conservative fundamentalism to liberalism. There is also a relatively moderate conservatism, e.g., in the Episcopal Church. And there is some dynamic range even within the conservative fundamentalism that embraces both evangelism and Pentecostalism.

Fundamentalism is a movement within Protestantism which emphasizes a number of fundamental teachings, such as the literal inerrancy of scriptures, the second coming, the virgin birth, physical resurrection, and substitutionary atonement. Within fundamentalism there is an evangelical dimension. Evangelism embraces the zealous winning of souls and the revival of personal commitments to Christ (in this fundamentalist sense). In evangelism there is salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ. In evangelism there is emphasis on salvation through personal conversion, the authority of the scriptures, and the importance of preaching as contrasted with ritual. Perhaps the extreme of evangelism is found in Pentecostalism, where revivalist methods typically include great emotionalism.

As is the case for most belief systems, there is an underlying truth for each of the Christian teachings, even those of the two extremes of fundamentalism and liberalism. But the specific teachings are tailored to the needs of particular peoples and they serve a purpose. The various teachings are simply framed in the language that people can understand. The more fundamentalist teachings discourage thinking, while the least fundamentalist teachings encourage mindless self-expression. The problem with fundamentalism is narrow-

mindedness, which precludes or inhibits any real spiritual growth. Fundamentalists tend to be so attached to their truth that they cannot accept or embrace any broadening or deepening. At the other extreme, people tend simply believe whatever is convenient, and this also precludes or inhibits any real spiritual growth.

It is in the middle ground that truth is found. Without unreasonable attachment to beliefs, and without the bias of self-serving beliefs, the middle path affords opportunity for learning and growing. Provided the seeker is genuinely seeking the truth. Many simply stay where they are, comfortably believing whatever they have come to accept, wherever they are in the spectrum. But the earnest seeker must study more broadly, and ultimately must go within in order to realize the truth. One of the biggest revelations for many Christians comes from understanding that many of the scriptures and "teachings" are more symbolically than literally true. That the message is contained in the symbol, not in any historical fact. And as one studies the various religions, one finds essentially the same teaching, provided one goes deep enough into the scriptures (and deep enough into oneself).

The second coming, the virgin birth, resurrection, and substitutionary atonement are all primarily symbolic events. But if they are interpreted literally or out of context, then the substance of the message is missed. Instead of looking outside to (presumed) literal (narrow) significance, the student needs to look inside and see how these ideas have meaning in the greater context (evolution in consciousness). There are no shortcuts to self-realization (salvation). Being saved is about preparation and approaching Him in consciousness. The spiritual path is a process and requires effort. We are saved and redeemed through that process, through growth in consciousness, through achieving mystical union with God within.

The Trinity Correlation

The Trinity consists of three aspects of God which correlate to the three aspects of the human being and this correlation provides for human participation in the Trinity. The three aspects of God are the Father, the Son or Christ consciousness, and the Holy Spirit. Although these particular names are associated with the conventional Christian formulation, they are known by many other names in formulations other than that of conventional Christianity. The human trinity consists of the monad, the soul, and the personality.

The lowest aspect of Trinity is the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost. This is the intelligence inherent in matter, which underpins all of manifestation. The lowest aspect of the human trinity is the personality or form that provides a basis for experience and expression in the lower (material) worlds. If one works through the personality consciousness one can embrace the Holy Spirit in various ways. But this is relatively dangerous, for there are few if any safeguards at this level. The Holy Spirit is a source of tremendous power, but it is the power of matter. And unless the participant is properly trained and qualified, that power or potency is often and generally unable to be controlled.

Moreover, if the student is properly trained and properly qualified, then there is no appeal to working at this level. Thus those who do work at this level are those who are ignorant, untrained, and unqualified. This is where great damage can be done to the human form and lower consciousness. This is where most "possessions" occur. The fundamentalist Christian practice of Pentecostalism, speaking in tongues, etc., is not a genuinely spiritual experience, but is rather a matter of getting entangled in the realm and world of demons (the lower astral). Any intense and untempered (unbalanced) emotional practice leads to increased and increasing psychic vulnerability. The Holy Spirit is "intelligent" but very substantially conditioned by matter (indeed it is matter).

The middle aspect of Trinity is Christ or Christ-consciousness. This is the forum through which God embraces all life in the lower worlds. It is the realm of consciousness and the means of salvation (in the sense of facilitation of evolution in consciousness). The corresponding aspect of the human being is

the soul (atma-buddhi-manas), and it is the soul that is wholly “connected” to Christ consciousness. Thus the real work of the human being (waking-consciousness) is to transcend the lower self (personality) and connect with the soul. This is the proper role of religion and spiritual practice. To temper and qualify the lower self. To achieve alignment with the higher self (soul) and be receptive and responsive to God in this second aspect. The lower self is artificial. It is form. It is matter. The ego is an illusion, born of matter. The soul is real and endures from life to life. The soul remains with God-Christ. And the student does not properly participate in God (higher consciousness) until and unless the lower self is properly purified, tempered, uplifted, and transcended.

The highest aspect of Trinity is the Father or spirit. The highest aspect of the human being is the monad. The monad stays on its own level, with God the Father. It does not participate directly in the lower life (consciousness or matter). Consequently, the spiritual student is not generally concerned with the monad except to realize its presence deep within. It is properly the soul that matters, in practice, not the monad. But finding the soul and embracing the soul are very, very difficult. Because matter (form) (personality) (mind) (ego) all exhibit independence and separateness.

† Commentary No. 1453

Humility and Graciousness

Humility is perhaps the most potent aspect of spirituality, but it is not so easy to understand and practice. Graciousness without condescension provides a focus for beginning to embrace humility, in a way that is perhaps easier to understand and practice for most people.

Humility is a matter of being, in relation to God, the transcendence of ego, while graciousness is a matter of practice and relationships with other people. Graciousness is characterized by kindness, warm courtesy, tact, and propriety. Graciousness implies mercy and compassion. Graciousness is “marked by kindness, sympathy, and unaffected politeness.” Inherent graciousness implies or conveys poise under duress, genuine appreciation for others, and a non-judging, non-imposing, non-separative manner. It is not properly about

conforming to social standards, but about being kind and gentle. It is not about responding in kind, but responding with kindness. It is a benevolence and affability in relationship that builds or encourages comfort, considerateness, harmony, and respect for one another. The original meaning of the word (graciousness) is godliness, a generosity of spirit.

One might think that love or compassion is the most important quality to be cultivated by the spiritual aspirant, and indeed it is. But love and compassion are rather qualitative and subjective and neither love nor compassion tempers the ego. It is the ego that is the single most formidable barrier to higher consciousness. And it is humility that provides a means of transcending that barrier. So while humility is the quality to be cultivated in approaching and embracing higher consciousness, it is graciousness that is the quality to be cultivated in approaching and embracing humanity. Love is so all-embracing that it tends to lack the focus required for substantive progress. Humility provides a viable (essential) inner focus, while graciousness provides a viable (essential) outer focus.

Some think that approaching God is all there is to the mystical journey, but this is not entirely correct. One cannot effectively separate oneself from the world, from humanity, and simply approach God. For God lives as much through the world, and through humanity, as God lives within. Approaching God through the inner experience needs ultimately to be balanced with approaching God through embracing the world and humanity, gently, graciously, humbly. This is not embracing the world in its worldliness or humanity in its humanness, but embracing the world as a manifestation of God, and embracing humanity in its higher sense. Being gentle and civil toward people engenders harmonious and respectful relationships, and helps to transcend the separative tendencies of the ego. Judging and criticizing are separative. Feeling superior likewise. But seeing or feeling God within every human being, within every lifeform, respecting that divinity within all, is essential. But this cannot be simply an intellectual accomplishment. To be truly effective it must be (made) real, embraced physically and emotionally as well as mentally.

This means living in harmony in the world and with people, without being absorbed by the superficial aspect of the world, without becoming or remaining part of the mundane world and having superficial relationships. It means

having genuine, gracious relationships with all peoples. It means remaining awake and aware while embracing people who are asleep, without that distinction being separative. This is a great challenge. But with both graciousness and humility the spiritual student is enabled to proceed much more deeply within the higher consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1454

Salvation

Salvation refers to the means and process and state of “liberation from clinging to the phenomenal world of appearance and final union with ultimate reality” (God). In the more fundamental (fundamentalist) (superficial) Christian interpretation, salvation is “the saving of man from the powers and effects of sin” by virtue of the saving grace of Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection.

Sin is based in materialism and includes egoism. In this sense all human beings live in sin to some extent, for all are separated from God in consciousness in the sense of being immersed in the material and phenomenal world. Many Christians believe they are saved by virtue of professing their sinful nature and accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. That Christ died for their sins, through substitutionary atonement. These things are true, symbolically. But the greater truth is that Jesus became the Christ (achieved union with God) and through his life demonstrated the ways and means of salvation, through the processes of self-purification, through embracing higher principles, and through deepening in consciousness. The life of Jesus is quite symbolic and filled with lessons for all of humanity (which is also true of other great ones). But salvation does not come easily or quickly or through some great-and-wonderful emotional experience. It comes only through growth and deepening in consciousness, through evolution. Salvation comes only when one has mastered all the principal lessons that this world has to offer. When one has achieved both goodness and wisdom.

Salvation comes necessarily gradually as one emerges from sleep (the sleep of materialism, immersion in the senses, egoism). Living in the world a person is naturally influenced by the illusions of separateness, and through the process of

liberation (salvation) a person gradually realizes the higher, deeper truths, and attains freedom. That freedom is indeed through Christ (higher consciousness), in the sense that as one becomes more purified, as the personality is tempered, one becomes more responsive to higher, deeper, inner guidance (of the true soul or higher nature which is one with the God-Christ within). Salvation is indeed the process of self-mastery and self-realization, and can occur through any of the various religious and spiritual frameworks. Thus all true religions offer the means and encouragement.

The related notions of eternal life in heaven compared with eternal life in hell are also true, symbolically. Life is eternal. Heaven and hell are both here on earth. Realms of consciousness. If a person transcends the lower self and achieves communion (union with the soul) then one lives in the higher self (heaven). If one has not yet done this, then one lives in the lower self (hell) (ignorance) (evil) (sin). This is not bad. It is simply a matter of consciousness. But God is above all a God of love-wisdom. There are no chosen people. There are no shortcuts to heaven. Eternal damnation refers properly only to those souls which ultimately cannot progress, which are completely corrupted by materialism (sensationalism) (egoism), which are very, very few. Eternal life is eventually earned by almost everyone.

But the keys to salvation are simply learning and growing and serving, for it is through growth in consciousness, through embracing the ethics and principles demonstrated by Jesus and other enlightened souls, that one is enabled to see and embrace the truth and reality of one's own nature, one's condition on earth, and the path (and process) of salvation. There are no shortcuts or tricks or exclusive means or easy paths.

Communion

Communion is defined in conventional Christianity as “a Christian sacrament in which bread and wine are partaken as a commemoration of the death of Christ.” The symbolic food and drink represent the body and blood of Christ. It is a potentially powerful ritual in which the adherent (potentially) participates consciously in communion with God and Christ.

The problems of communion in this conventional sense are several. Wine is wrongly inferred from scripture, and consequently many properly substitute grape juice in lieu of (alcohol) wine. The word in the Bible interpreted as “wine” originally meant “drink” and the consumption of alcohol was never even implied. But this is a minor issue. The spiritual student who understands these things is not tempted by alcohol, not even in small doses or through the ritual of communion. The larger issue is that any ritual loses its significance if the connection in consciousness is not properly understood and maintained. Many think that simply performing the ritual (mindlessly) is sufficient. But this is not true.

The intent of the ritual is to symbolize and encourage actual communion. To remind the adherent of the work to be done, of the practices to be undertaken. To renew one’s commitment to the process of communion. Sacraments only have genuine value if the deeper meanings are actually embraced in consciousness, in practice, not merely through ritual. All of the scriptures of the various religions proper encourage communion. Perhaps one of the most poignant examples is conveyed through the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. But even Christian “yoga” or mystical practice is powerful, if it is understood for what it is, a means and process for achieving actual communion, through purification (refinement) and through contemplative prayer and meditation.

Communion proper is the conscious union of heart and mind and soul with God (through the intervening consciousness of Christ (the soul)). In order to achieve this one must emulate the life of Jesus in the sense of embracing the principles and practices of his spiritual life, in terms of ethics and morals and other spiritual practices. One must also move above and beyond the barriers created

and sustained by the ego or artificial self. The heart must be purified and uplifted to God. The mind must be purified and clarified and in quiescence reflect the intuition of the higher self. The soul is already in communion, so it is a matter of the waking-consciousness (mind) discerning the distinctions between the lower (personality) consciousness and the higher (soul) consciousness, and transcending identification with the lower. That is what spiritual practice, spiritual discipline, etc. is all about. Facilitating the removal of artificial (perceptive) barriers between the human being and the higher, divine nature.

One cannot simply say that one is a whole and achieve communion. One must work through the distinctions and move beyond the illusions and barriers and actually achieve communion. It is a letting go of the lesser self which impedes communion. It is a letting go or emptying of oneself of the attachments of living in the world (materialism, egoism). It is achieving a quiescence in which there is no lesser self. There is there only God. One communes with God simply by being. Not by thinking or even feeling. Indeed, it is not simply a matter of approaching God, but also of relating to other souls. For one communes properly with other souls only through this communion with God. In communion there are no distinctions among peoples, individually or collectively. It is a communion that embraces all of life. At the highest, deepest level.

† Commentary No. 1456

Intimacy 1

Intimacy is defined conventionally as the shared state of being familiar with one another's deepest nature. In practice, intimacy generally refers to superficial familiarity. Most people are rather superficial creatures, without much in the way of spiritual depth. Consequently, intimacy is generally a matter of sharing physically or verbally what is merely otherwise personal and private. But at the other end of the spectrum, true intimacy is a merging in consciousness, a communion of bodies and emotions and minds and souls, without any loss whatsoever.

In the context of friendship-relationship-partnership, there is this spectrum or continuum of intimacy, from very superficial and casual, to profound depths of sharing in genuine union. At the most superficial level, there is casual physical or conversational intimacy that does not require or convey any emotional connection. The spiritual student generally eschews physical intimacy unless there is both depth and breadth of intimacy and a genuine commitment.

At the next level there is an emotional connection or bond, in which some of the ordinary psychological barriers are lowered. At this level there is potentially a genuine sharing of feelings and a provisional mutual trust that strengthens the connection. There is at this level sufficient commonality of values or interests to draw two people together and indeed remain together for as long as there is mutual interest and benefit. This connection is limited primarily by the remaining psychological barriers and the ordinariness of consciousness, e.g., self-centered people are limited in their capacity for intimacy, people who are egoistic or materialistic or otherwise independent and separative, likewise. This is the deepest level of intimacy that most people can achieve, mainly because most people are simply not interested in nor psychologically capable of going any deeper.

A deeper level of intimacy is possible only for those who have and are in touch with their own deeper nature. One cannot share something that one has not found. Many people talk about depth and intimacy without being able to comprehend either depth or intimacy. There are so many barriers in consciousness, that few are able to be honest enough with themselves, and both honest and open enough with others, to achieve any real rapport. These psychological barriers are simply the ordinary defenses of people who are entangled in the world, entangled in their sense impressions, and entangled in their own thinking. The delusions of the world, of separateness through materialism and egoism, cause people to not realize the underlying unity, of God and humanity.

But the spiritual student is somewhat different in the sense of being dedicated to the journey in truth. In striving to be honest with oneself about one's own nature and circumstances. In striving to embrace truth and reality. In striving to embrace God, deep within one's own nature. True intimacy emerges through the grace of God, as one finds oneself. True intimacy is communion with God.

Consequently, true intimacy in friendship-relationship-partnership requires both an openness one with another, and a mutual embrace of the God within. This is, ultimately, what communion is all about. But in order to achieve this communion, with God and with one another, the spiritual student must first overcome much of his or her own nature. One must recognize and discern one's own limitations, one's conditioning. The student must face in turn each of the barriers in consciousness and overcome them, gently and sensibly.

† Commentary No. 1457

Intimacy 2

For some this is a solitary journey in consciousness and intimacy is strictly between God and the adherent. For others it is a journey shared and enhanced through partnership. In partnership, the barriers to intimacy in this deeper, multi-dimensional sense are all a matter of ego and conditioning and relative sensitivity. Among the greatest of these barriers are self-absorption, self-centeredness, and selfishness; lack of honesty, lack of fidelity, lack of genuine acceptance, appreciation, consideration (considerateness), and respect. Any aspect of personality that places a higher priority or stronger focus on something other than God and the relationship will tend to undermine or preclude genuine relationship. Anything that strengthens the ego and personality will limit a person's ability to commit to and engage in a true (deeper) relationship.

It is ultimately a matter of what is important and what is actually committed to. What must be important are the relationship to God, the relationship to each other, and the loving inclusion of immediate family members (children). It is a matter of embracing God's love and allowing that love to enfold these three relationships and the immediate environment and community (and ultimately the world). In which case there is no inherent conflict and there are no inherent barriers in consciousness. Conflicts and barriers in consciousness arise entirely from ego and personality, the illusion of separateness from God and from each other.

Thus a successful (deepening and enduring) relationship is one that is focused on spiritual growth, on learning and growing together, even serving together in

some sense or another. True partnership involves and requires true intimacy and true intimacy involves and requires true partnership. Each partner contributes according to his or her experience and abilities, equally but not identically. It is a sharing of all of one's nature. Which is physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. It is a merging of spirits such that the relationship itself acquires an aura and permanence. It is an allowing of God to work through the relationship, without substantive impediment of ego or personality. It is about finding and growing the harmony of inner truth and realization in shared experience and commitment. It is about not allowing the lower nature to interfere in what is most important (relationship with God and relationship with each other).

One cannot expect to achieve this greater intimacy without considerable effort, either in preparation or development. But where two spiritual students have done much of the preparatory work, where there is already genuine conscious relationship with God, and where there is a natural chemistry or rapport, then a true partnership can emerge and develop relatively easily. In true partnership (true intimacy) there is never any sacrifice, for the spiritual partnership itself is sacred, and everything else is secondary. This allows the quality of the partnership to affect every aspect of one's daily life and other human relationships. It allows and facilitates conscience (God's will and inner senses) to guide.

True intimacy is both sacred and a very safe place. Where there are no substantive barriers. Where there is mutual acceptance, adoration, appreciation, considerateness, and respect. In this deeper love and compassion and adoration there is shared participation in God's love and wisdom. It is a place of healing, a place of deeper learning and growing, together and in consciousness.

Content and Context

In art, metaphysics, nature, philosophy, psychology, religion, and theosophy, there is a challenge of both content and context. Content refers to the substance and essential meaning or significance of the material, the ideas and insights, the lessons inherent in or implied by the substance or presentation. Context refers to the environment or framework or perspective in which the content is placed, which both enriches the content and provides a basis for both application and understanding.

Content is necessarily related in some sense or another to the context. Every aspect of truth (relative content) is found within a relativistic framework (relative context). The same truth may be found in more than one framework, in which case that truth is relatively more significant, for each context provides additional insight and depth. There are personal and community (cultural) and psychological frameworks. And there are philosophical, religious, and scientific frameworks. Each contributing something to the whole. One cannot properly (fully) apprehend content (truth) without also understanding and appreciating the context(s). The broader and deeper one looks, the broader and deeper is truth then and thereby revealed.

A problem is the tendency of many (most) people to interpret content within the relatively narrow context of their own relatively limited experience and considerable conditioning (bias). It is difficult for many people to apprehend and appreciate that experience beyond their own can contribute significantly to understanding. If one interprets experience or content in a relatively narrow framework or context, then there is at best only a (rather) partial and limited understanding. If one embraces or intuitively experiences or content in a relatively broader sense, then there is a deeper and broader understanding. All understanding is necessarily partial, but embracing truth in a relatively broader and deeper sense leads to a necessarily greater understanding.

Physical scientists tend to see content only or primarily in the context of the material world. People of a given culture who have limited experience with other peoples or cultures tend to see content only or primarily in the context of

their own culture. People of a given religion (denomination) tend to see spiritual content only or primarily in the context of their own faith. Men tend to see content according to their own, masculine context. And similarly, women tend to see content according to their own, feminine context. Intellectuals tend to see content according to context of their own intellectual biases. While people of less-intellectual basis tend to see content according to the context of their own feelings. One's own experience and knowledge provide a considerable and potentially (generally) considerably limiting context.

As one deepens in experience, as one evolves in consciousness, as one approaches God (truth) with increasingly clarity (based on refinement of consciousness), then the context for truth is necessarily broadened and deepened. The spiritual student embarked upon this quest (for truth leading to conscious union or communion with God) learns not to be attached to knowledge or ideas, not to have opinions. The spiritual student learns to realize that the immediate context is only part of the whole. The spiritual student learns to see things in an increasingly broader framework. And the spiritual student learns to overcome or transcend all or most his or her conditioning and all or most of the ordinary psychological barriers to greater apprehension. Unfettered, the self-realized student is simply more effectively able to embrace truth.

† Commentary No. 1459

Religion and Spirituality

Many people confuse religiousness with spirituality. Religion and religiousness are expressions of the Sixth Ray and include the process and cultivation of aspiration, devotion, and friendship. Religion provides a means and process for preliminary relationship between a human being and the indwelling God, based primarily on faith or reasoning. Spirituality is an expression of the Second Ray and is primarily a matter of love-wisdom, of developing and actually achieving a proper relationship with God, one that is based in conscious realization (buddhi) rather than one based on faith or reasoning.

Religion in its highest sense includes genuine spirituality. Spirituality however does not necessarily or generally include any conventional or orthodox religious

expression. The organized (conventional, doctrinal) churches serve a purpose and help to prepare many people for spiritual growth, but religion per se is not a prerequisite for spiritual growth. And spirituality is, in its proper sense, not a matter of embracing the senses but a matter of embracing one's deeper nature. The word "spirituality" is often used in its lowest sense of embracing one's senses or feeling, when, in contrast with materialism and sensualism and egoism, spirituality more properly means embracing higher principles.

In religion there is a tendency to confuse the symbols with truth and reality. It is the role of religion to encourage spiritual growth, to encourage a more personal relationship with God. But it is not the (proper) role of religion to engage in practices related to conversion. The beliefs of a particular religion or denomination are not true to the extent of the numbers of adherents. There are no such correlations. Religious beliefs are only true to the extent that they are (actually) true. Regardless of the number of adherents or the prominence (or even efficacy) of a faith in a given cultural context. And "conversion" based on intensity of emotional experience or extent of conviction derived from reasoning (or emotional-intellectual coercion) is simply artificial, however meaningful it may be on a personal level. Such a conversion may indeed have some benefit, but it is neither the truth nor the reality of a genuine spiritual experience. Genuine spiritual experience is based on self-reformation and (ultimately) on self-realization. Conversion is a characteristic of narrow-minded Sixth Ray idealism, while reformation (more properly, self-reformation) is a characteristic of broader-deeper-minded Second Ray wisdom.

The Sixth Ray is the reflection of the Second Ray into matter. As such, the Sixth Ray does not contain the Second Ray, although there are links between the two rays. The Second Ray, however, does contain the Sixth Ray. Ultimately, (Sixth Ray) religion is limited by its personality-centeredness, while (Second Ray) spirituality is an embracing of the higher consciousness (the soul) and not so limited. The Second Ray tends toward and ultimately embraces inclusiveness, while the Sixth Ray tends toward exclusiveness.

Many who have witnessed or suffered the abuses of religion (blindness, narrow-mindedness, imposition, separativeness) feel repelled by religion and religious adherent. But the spiritual student is urged and encouraged to work within the framework of (organized) religion, to foster harmony among the various peoples

and religions, to foster moderation and broader-mindedness, and to foster more genuine spiritual growth. Quietly, gently, and with the inner sense of the higher self (the God-Christ).

† Commentary No. 1460

The Alchemy of Life

Life and purpose are about the evolution of consciousness (and evolution in consciousness). For the human being that evolution in consciousness comes about naturally through the process of assimilation of experience into knowledge, the assimilation of knowledge into understanding, and the assimilation of understanding into wisdom. Another way of looking at this is to see the human being as a alchemical focal point, a place in consciousness that attracts and wields various transformational forces.

The human being is a means of experience, a place where experience can be assimilated and where the instrument (human being) can be transformed into something greater (something more responsive to higher consciousness) in order to be more effective in serving this purpose. Most people see themselves as human beings, identifying with the instrument of consciousness, with experience, with thinking and feeling and doing things. But in fact, the enduring part of the human being is the soul which simply utilizes the person (human being in the lesser sense) as an instrument for experience and expression. But even experience and expression are merely symptoms, activities. The greater reality is that the human being processes experience. The human being is a focal point for transformation based on that experience. This involves self-transformation to the extent that the waking-consciousness is actively and intelligently engaged in the process, otherwise it involves simply a more passive and indirect alchemical transformation orchestrated by the soul.

Alchemy involves a synthesis of forces and these forces are really quite potent. Thus alchemy poses a not inconsiderable strain on the elements or aspects of the human being (personality), on the body, on the emotions, and on the concrete mind. To minimize this strain, and to improve the effectiveness of the personality for experience and expression (and assimilation (and transformation)) the personality and its components must be suitably and

properly purified and qualified and refined and sublimated and tempered and uplifted in the context of higher consciousness. This process (refinement) occurs naturally as a consequence of experience (through activity and consequences of activity (karma)), but is hastened in the case of the spiritual student who is consciously embarked upon the spiritual path.

The spiritual student who is consciously engaged in this process generally achieves a place (in consciousness) where there is relative immunity from disease and discomfort. Disease and discomfort are generally evoked in order to get the attention of the underlying consciousness, in learning the needed lessons and making the needed behavioral and attitudinal adjustments. The student who actively engages the alchemical process generally has no need for these intrusions. But to seek some sort of magical cure from disease is inappropriate for the spiritual student. It is also futile. There are no shortcuts to either health or immortality.

Health is a consequence of harmonious living, which is in part living in harmony with others, and in part living in harmony with dharma (which implies and conveys growth in consciousness). Immortality is achieved by almost everyone who passes through this world, at least eventually. But it is never a matter of immortality for the personality. That is simply neither possible nor desirable. Life and death are aspects of the natural cycle of learning and growing (evolving) in consciousness. Alchemy does indeed facilitate the transformation of the personality, but it is what is transformed in consciousness that matters, what actually goes forward to the next life.

Intensity

Intensity is defined in conventional terms as the quality or state of being intense, in having a relatively large (intrusive) magnitude of strength or force or energy. In somewhat more psychological and metaphysical terms, being intense is simply allowing the personality strength to dominate rather than allowing one's inner, higher nature to demonstrate. The spiritual student is necessarily strong, but that strength is not properly based in the personality and that strength is not properly manifested through the independent and separative personality or outer nature. It is properly manifested gently, through a tempered personality.

Intensity varies, from person to person and from time to time, and often intensity is based on circumstances. Of course one is responsible for one's actions and attitudes (demeanor) (relative intensity), regardless of circumstances, but circumstances are often a contributing factor in intensity. Intensity usually has a number of contributing factors, such as the stress (lack of harmony) arising from one's relationship to one's environment, e.g., job, family, congestion, and other pressures of worldliness or ego. But the fundamental factor in intensity is the presence and manifestation of ego or strength of personality. It is natural for an evolving person to become personality-centered, to have strength of personality, and therefore to be intense. But the spiritual student must necessarily move beyond this. To a (much) more gentle place.

The spiritual student is properly not intense. Intensity arises from the head-centered nature, and not (ever) from the heart. Intensity arises from strength of personality, and as the personality (and ego) is (are) tempered, then one becomes naturally more gentle, and less intense, physically, emotionally, mentally, psychically. Intensity is not a function of being emotionally polarized or mental polarized, for both emopols and menpols can be intense, or not. But a truly heart-centered person, actually living from the heart, cannot be intense.

Intensity is not the same thing as being focused. One can be focused and intense. One can be focused and not intense. Intensity is a lack of awareness.

Awareness is cultivated as the personality is refined and the ego tempered. One simply becomes more and more aware as one becomes less intense, and more heart-centered. One can be really quite very nice, and still be intense. One can be caring and still be intense. But one cannot be truly living from the heart and be intense. Intensity arises from a strong mental or emotional nature. The spiritual student properly thinks gently, not intensely. The spiritual student properly feels gently, not intensely. The objective of the spiritual student is to be receptive and responsive to the soul, to one's spiritual depth. Which is inconsistent with being intense.

Intensity is a barrier to one's inner senses and higher guidance (soul impression). One cannot embrace (higher) intuition while being intense. Intensity is inherently separative, and is in some sense (emotionally, mentally) violent. Not by virtue of intent, which may be quite honorable. But by virtue of the separative nature of intensity. Intensity is therefore also a barrier to gentleness. Intensity can manifest in obvious ways and intensity can also manifest in subtle ways. Thus the spiritual student must be vigilant and honest about his or her own outer nature (relative intensity) and cultivate gentleness (lack of intensity) in all regards and at all times, physically, emotionally, and mentally, psychologically, psychically, and spiritually.

† Commentary No. 1462

Sensitivity and Insightfulness

Sensitivity and insightfulness both expand and deepen to the extent that the lower nature is properly tempered and the ego and mind become relatively quiescent, allowing impressions to be embraced from a higher and deeper place in consciousness. This proper sensitivity should not be confused with personal sensitivity, which tends to be somewhat defensive and reactive and is based on egoism, nor with the (ordinary) psychic sensitivity in the sense of being able to see, hear, or feel things in the non-physical worlds. Proper sensitivity is spiritual sensitivity and emerges as a consequence of real growth in consciousness.

The truly spiritually sensitive person may or may not be psychic in the conventional sense of being clairaudient or clairvoyant, but the spiritually

sensitive person is generally able to perceive the subtle realms rather keenly, intuitively and subjectively and qualitatively, sensing the character and quality of the various energies and forces (and people) that (who) are encountered, sensing the underlying reality (truth) (both content and context), and also sensing cause and effect relationships wherever pertinent. The most insightful spiritual student is one who is both heart-centered and impersonal, which is a rare combination of qualities and attributes (impersonal in the higher sense of being heart-centered but without being personality-centered). Head-centered methods can evoke to some extent the power of the divine nature, but only the heart-centered nature can evoke both the power and the quality (wisdom) of the divine nature.

With wisdom, the spiritually sensitive student is able to live in accord with the flow of life, even if it appears otherwise to those less able to sense these things (and who tend to mislead themselves on the basis of what they want to see and on the basis of superficial indications rather than underlying energies (truth)). The presence of ego precludes any real spiritual sensitivity. And the presence of ego generally leads one to distrust or resent anyone who is actually sensitive and insightful, leading in turn to rationalization and (somewhat specious) judgment. Consequently, the spiritually sensitive person (student) tends to be relatively quiet and unobtrusive.

The ego does not really want to know or understand anything other than that which enables it to sustain and entertain itself. So the ego will not naturally embrace the truth about itself, evoking all sorts of defensive, evasive, and subtle barriers to prevent or inhibit realization. The spiritually sensitive person is one who has passed beyond the personality-centered stage, and therefore tends to be resented by those who perceive themselves as spiritual students but who are, in fact, yet personality-centered and largely driven by their own egos, even while being sincere, charitable, and dedicated (intellectually and behaviorally) to the path (and service).

The spiritually sensitive person is still human and imperfect, and may not realize how his or her talents are resented, but eventually one learns not to speak or share from insight unless there is a clear indication of appreciation and receptivity (and not merely proclamations to that effect, no matter how sincerely). This can be difficult because there is a natural forthrightness to the

spiritual nature and this must be tempered with discretion and wisdom (and not rationally so). Of course one can never be entirely sure that one's insight is true (if one is sure then one is still functioning at the ego level). True spiritual sensitivity conveys true insightfulness and true insightfulness conveys both discretion and humility and wisdom.

† Commentary No. 1463

Cremation

Cremation is the process of reducing a dead body to its basic elements by the action of fire, preferably in a furnace at relatively high temperatures, and preferably during a period of time some three-to-five days after physical death. The interval of time from physical death to disposition of the body is actually important. Cremation of the body too soon after death tends to disrupt the transition process, making it relatively more difficult for the newly departed to focus on initial assimilation. And cremation later than five days after death tends to inhibit the passing on of the newly departed to the next stage of transition.

During the period of time immediately following physical death there is necessarily a period of several days of retrospective focus. During this period it is best to have no interference with the body or that retrospective process, i.e., no autopsy, no embalming, no cremation. Autopsies are invasive and disruptive and should be avoided if at all practicable. Embalming is simply neither necessary nor desirable for cremation. After the period of retrospective focus, cremation is the most effective way of reducing the influence of the body on the newly departed, allowing the person to move on. Cremation is the proper and traditional means of body treatment. Burial of uncremated remains is rather unsavory in the sense that an uncremated body takes a relatively long time to decay which encourages the departed spirit to linger and in the sense that cemeteries tend to attract all manner of etheric and astral creatures who feast upon the remains.

During life in the objective world most people identify to some extent with their body, their feelings, and their mind. At death, the "spirit" takes leave of the physical body and stands in the etheric double. As the body decays so is the

spirit freed from the etheric double. Cremation simply allows that process to proceed without distraction. Once the body is cremated the spirit is no longer tied to the physical body or the etheric double, and progressively is freed from both the emotions and the mind. Moreover, an uncremated body allows the possibility of appropriation of the etheric double by some other entity. Cremation simply facilitates transition.

Cremation per se is the process of incinerating the body, which is not necessarily coincident to a memorial service or funeral or actual disposition of the remains. Cremation is consistent with the teachings of all the world's religions, although some people interpret this rather narrowly and exclusively. In the Christian faith, for example, the "body of resurrection" is not the same as the body that has died. The tendency toward Christian "burial" is mostly a reaction to pre-Christian traditions and sustained by Christian (low church) superstitions. Cremation offers no impediment to resurrection. Indeed, cremation facilitates both transition and rebirth (resurrection). Of course the most significant aspect of the dead body is that it is not the consciousness or spirit. It is simply the physical vehicle that has served its purpose and is no longer needed and which should then be disposed of properly, in such a way that environmental impact is minimized and in such a way that transition is facilitated.

Psychologically, it is generally a person's identification with and attachment to the body that favors burial rather than cremation. But those who realize the truth about the body and consciousness (and transition) clearly prefer cremation. And for those who remain cremation offers no less opportunity for sentiment and remembrance than burial.

Approaching the Masters

One of the most vain and most futile of notions is that there are ways and means of approaching the masters without actually becoming a master. Another of the most vain and most futile of notions is that one can become a master through some quick-and-simple means.

The fact is that (true) masters are only approachable or accessible through resonance in consciousness. One can only approach a master on his or her own level, through the entire process of purification, integration, and alignment with the soul. Indeed, the spiritual student can have no ambition or desire to approach the masters. The spiritual student is motivated by the path itself, by learning and growing and serving, by evolving in consciousness, not through being enamoured with those who have gone before (or who are perceived rightly or wrongly to be masters). If a spiritual student achieves a certain level and quality of consciousness he or she is naturally and inevitably linked in consciousness to everyone at that level. And that is the only way to approach the masters. Except that the very seeking to approach them undermines the process, because that seeking necessarily evokes glamour and entertains the ego. If one believes that one is worthy of approaching the masters then one is necessarily vain and self-deceived (and not worthy).

Of course any self-proclaimed master is not a master. Nor is anyone who allows others to proclaim them so. There are many sincere and insincere people who consider themselves to be masters, or whose adherents believe they are masters. But all of these are self-deceived. Or they understand "master" in some very lesser sense. The true masters are those who have graduated from the school of humanity, who are no longer obliged to incarnate in this world, who even if they do appear in this world do not draw attention to themselves nor make any such proclamations. They simply work behind the scenes, quietly and gently. The elder brothers and teachers (masters) do not approach students on the student's own level. Indeed, they only respond to the student when the student has approached them on their level and on their terms, never on the student's terms. Otherwise the masters remain elusive.

Many naive “students” consider themselves “chosen” by the masters for special treatment, but this is all through vanity and self-deception. There are no such chosen ones. There are no such special circumstances. There are no short-cuts or accelerated paths to self-realization or enlightenment. There are no masters walking the earth engaging students in this process (evolution in consciousness). The masters remain on their own level, gently encouraging all who can respond to their quality of consciousness, who can respond to the underlying divine purpose. It is simply the role of the spiritual student to seek union with one’s own soul or higher self. And it is through that union (communion) (yoga) that one is linked to everyone at that (soul) level.

The master lives within. The true master is the God-Christ who lives within all. The “masters” are simply those who have gone before us and achieved that divine marriage (union) and have thereby graduated from this world. The masters do work with humanity and other lives, but from their own level, which is the level of the soul (atma-buddhi-manas), not (ever) at the level of the personality. Contact at the personality level is left to disciples of various sorts. Who serve the masters (more properly, who serve divine purpose) according to their capacities and their calling. Who simply encourage evolution in consciousness at the personality level. Mostly by their presence in the world, by their embrace of higher values.

† Commentary No. 1465

Form and Binding Forces

The unity of form exists where sufficient force binds (holds) (qualifies) (sustains) the coherence (stability) (integrity) of the form. Relatively simple forms are thus bound by relatively simple forces, though higher forces may have shaped the form and established the binding force. Relatively more complex forms, which involve various elements or aspects, require more complex binding in order to sustain the harmony (unity) of the form. Such (complex) forms generally require continuing qualification of a higher order, e.g., indwelling consciousness as a binding force for the material form (body).

The human form (body) (personality) consists of four parts, namely the physical body, the etheric double or energy (vital) body, the astral body or vehicle for

emotional experience and expression, and the mental body or mind or vehicle for mental (intellectual) experience and expression. Each of these components is a complex form in itself, but it is the four-fold form as a whole that is linked to the personality matrix or archetype. The mental body or mind is the highest component of the personality and is the first to be created and the last to be destroyed. Similarly, next comes the astral body. Then the etheric body. And finally the physical body. The shaping force is the human soul, which creates the four-fold (complex) form and then incarnates through its instrumentation. The sustaining force is both relatively simple and relatively complex. As long as the soul is present there is evoked thereby a sustaining force. When the soul withdraws the form dies, progressively, beginning with the physical body and culminating with the mind. But there are also all manner of competing and contrasting forces (karma and dharma) which influence the binding of the form.

The state of the form is a consequence of both internal binding forces (dharma) and the influence of external forces (karma). Dharma provides purpose and conditioning for purpose, based on atma (the will of the soul). Karma provides contrast leading to learning and growing, based on the diversity of actions on physical, emotional, and mental levels and their accumulated unfulfilled consequences. Disease is simply the lack of harmony in the body at some level, an imbalance of internal and external binding forces, stress imposed on or through the mind and emotions that has an effect on the physical body and its etheric counterpart. Disease is a lack of ease of coherence in the (overall) binding force.

Disintegration is a progressive release of the various binding forces, resulting whenever the unifying force is not itself coherent or stable. The body (personality) is generally relatively coherent in the early stages of life and at maturity begins to disintegrate as the soul anticipates withdrawal (indeed disintegration begins almost immediately upon birth, except that the sustaining force tends to be stronger in the early stages of life). Disease and injury are simply imposed upon the disintegrating force and this further weakens the vehicle. Disease and injury are actually a matter of attracted vulnerability, a minor or major disruption of the binding force depending on the severity of the karmic impulse and the extent to which a person is susceptible to learning (greater susceptibility to learning lessens the destructive or weakening import).

Health is simply a balancing of forces, maintaining the form in harmony with its purpose and context. The various stresses encountered convey opportunities for learning and growing. But eventually the soul begins to withdraw, and the forces of disintegration begin to dominate, culminating in death.

† Commentary No. 1466

Signs and Houses 1

The most fundamental facet of astrology is the background consisting of twelve zodiacal signs and twelve houses. The twelve signs (and the constellations from which they are derived, no longer in "place" due to precession) are relatively fixed in space. They do not change appreciably over the course of a lifetime, indeed they do not change appreciably over the course of an era (aeons). The earth moves relative to the zodiac, but the zodiac is for all intents and purposes a fixed background. Of course from the perspective of one standing upon the earth the stars (signs of the zodiac) move, completing a minor cycle every twenty-four hours and a major cycle every year.

The circle of the zodiac is divided into twelve equal arcs, corresponding to the twelve signs of the zodiac and more loosely to the twelve constellations. The solar (zodiacal) (astrological) year begins when the sun crosses the celestial equator at the spring or vernal equinox. The twelve signs exhibit well-defined relationships one with another according to several patterns or divisions. There are four seasons with three signs (trinities) in each. The three spring or intellectual signs are Aries, Taurus, and Gemini. The three summer or maternal signs are Cancer, Leo, and Virgo. The three autumnal or reproductive signs are Libra, Scorpio, and Sagittarius. And the three winter or serving signs are Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces.

There are four basic groups of signs corresponding to the four elements with three signs (triplicities) in each. The three fire or inspirational signs are Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius. The three earth or practical signs are Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn. The three air or mental signs are Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius. And the three water or emotional signs are Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces. Finally, there are three types or qualities consisting of four signs each. The four

cusps of the cardinal or initiative signs correspond to the cardinal points of the compass. Aries in the east. Cancer in the north. Libra in the west. And Capricorn in the south. The four fixed or conceptive or executive signs are Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Aquarius. And the four mutable or common or deductive signs are Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces.

Taken collectively or holistically, these groupings are perfectly and progressively balanced. There are 30 degrees between each cusp (sign). There are 120 degrees between each fire (earth) (air) (water) sign (respectively). There are 90 degrees between each cardinal (fixed) (mutable) sign (respectively). And each sign is a unique combination of element and type (quality). Only one sign is both of fire and cardinal. Only one sign is both of earth and fixed, etc. Consequently, each of the signs of the zodiac exhibits a generally well-defined quality and character. This quality and character is itself a combination of inherent quality and character and the relationship imposed by the zodiac (which relates or places the twelve "sources" into a relatively fixed or stable context or background). In graphical or tabular form these major groupings and symmetries and balance should be quite apparent.

The major groupings simply provide more depth and significance. Cardinal signs are characterized as leading, movable, acute, changeable, and initiating. They are the more active signs and relate more strongly to the nature of the ascendant. Fixed (grave) (executive) (foundation) signs help to stabilize the cardinal signs and provide power and energy. Mutable signs represent "the arcs in which there is a perpetual condition of slowing down in readiness to turn a corner" or otherwise characterized as mediators and facilitators, with "quickness and versatility."

Signs and Houses 2

The earth signs correlate to some extent to needs and functions of the physical body. The air signs correlate to some extent to the intellectual or conceptual nature. The water signs correlate to some extent to the aesthetic or emotional nature, to yearnings. And the fire signs correlate to some extent to the aspirational or moral nature, to conduct and character. The four elements also correspond to the four suits of the tarot and to its modern (mundane) derivative (clubs and fire, diamonds and earth, hearts and water, spades and air). Astrological triplicities and quadruplicities abound with symbolic correlations and derivatives. Even as a whole there are correlations, e.g., the twelve disciples, the labors of Hercules, the twelve gemstones or layers of the foundation walls of the New Jerusalem.

There are also many other groupings of signs according to quality and character that are more or less apparent than the major groupings. The ascending signs proceed counter-clockwise from Capricorn to Gemini, while the descending signs proceed from Cancer to Sagittarius. Some signs exhibit long ascension and some short ascension, "due to the obliquity of the ecliptic." In the northern hemisphere the ascending signs have short ascension and the descending signs exhibit long ascension. The reverse is true in the southern hemisphere.

Some signs (Gemini, Leo, and Virgo) are considered relatively more barren or sterile and others (Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces) are considered relatively more fruitful. Yet others are considered moderately barren or moderately fruitful. There are bestial signs (Aries, Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Capricorn) and there are human signs (Gemini, Virgo, and Aquarius). There are bicorporeal signs (Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces). There are bitter signs (Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius) and there are sweet signs (Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius). There are boreal or commanding or northern signs (Aries to Virgo). There are changeable signs whose nature seems to change according to their position. There are hot signs and cold signs. There are dry signs and moist signs. There are equinoctial signs (Aries and Libra) and there are tropical signs (Cancer and Capricorn).

Odd-numbered signs (fire and air) “are considered to be more fortunate when rising, and are spoken of as the positive, masculine, diurnal, or fortunate signs.” Even-numbered signs (earth and water) “are termed the negative, feminine, nocturnal, or unfortunate signs.” There are strong signs (Scorpio and Aquarius) and there are weak signs (Cancer, Capricorn, and Pisces). There are sympathetic signs, “those of the same polarity, consisting of each opposition sign: air and fire, or earth and water.” But while all of these groupings reflect some sense of quality or character or tendency, all things are necessarily relative and require context.

The zodiacal signs provide the overall background or context. The location and passage of the various planets provide content and relativity, respectively. But it is relationship among planets and their placement in signs and houses that provide the real content and context. The signs divide the zodiac into twelve arcs from a spatial perspective, while the houses divide the heavens into twelve arcs from a temporal perspective. Each house represents two hours and on average thirty degrees that are interpreted against the background of the signs. And the various planets are interpreted both against the background of signs and the background of houses. Where a planet is positioned within a sign and within a house makes a difference.

† Commentary No. 1468

Signs and Houses 3

Knowing the date of birth can determine the background and context of the slower planets in their relationship to the signs. But in order to appreciate the relationship of the faster planets to the signs and all planets in relation to the houses one needs to know the time of birth relatively accurately. It is the time of birth and the geographical place of birth that determine where the houses are placed relative to everything else. The “signs are divisions of an annual cycle, beginning with the spring equinox, while the houses are divisions of a daily cycle of apparent motions resulting from the earth’s own daily rotation on its axis.”

“In considering the divisions of the horoscope (figure) as consisting of signs, the figure is deemed to stand still while one contemplates the actual motions of the

planets in their orbits around the sun, in a counter-clockwise direction. In considering the divisions as houses, the observer deems the planets to stand still while the figure (earth) rotates in a counter-clockwise direction, thus causing the planets to appear to move in a clockwise direction at a uniform rate, one after another passing from below the horizon to above it, and on through the mid-heaven to the descendent, just as the sun rises and sets." Consequently, the configuration of signs and the configuration of planets in the context of signs is common to everyone on earth born at a particular time (indeed more or less for an entire day with the exception of the place of the moon). But the configuration of houses and the configuration of planets in the context of houses are limited to the precise time and place of a particular birth, and that configuration determines the various angles of incidence that constitute the uniqueness of a given figure (horoscope) (chart) (map).

The ascendant is the beginning of the first house, or "the degree of the zodiac which appeared on the eastern horizon at the moment for which a figure is to be cast." It is both that degree and the entire (rising) sign that are significant. The remainder of the houses are determined by two-hour intervals from the moment of the ascendant. The point opposite the ascendant is called the descendant, while between these two points is the mid-heaven. These three points added to the point opposite the mid-heaven constitute the four angles of the figure. "The houses which fall away from these angles are termed the angular houses" followed respectively by the succedent houses and the cadent houses (collectively comparable and respectively to the cardinal, fixed, and mutable signs). Thus the angular houses are the first, fourth, seventh, and tenth. The succedent houses are the second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh. And the cadent houses are the third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth.

Similarly, comparable and respectively to the four elements, are the personal, possessive, relative, and terminal houses. The personal houses are the first (body), fifth (soul), and ninth (spirit). The possessive houses are the second (wealth), sixth (household), and tenth (honor). The relative houses are the third (consanguine), seventh (conjugal), and eleventh (congenial). And the terminal houses are the fourth (grave), eighth (paradise), and twelfth (heaven).

There are other less apparent groupings of houses. The eastern houses (the third, second, first, twelfth, eleventh, and tenth) contain "planets rising toward

the mid-heaven" while the remaining are the western houses. Oriental houses "extend clockwise from the horizon to the meridian, while the occidental houses "extend clockwise from the meridian to the horizon." All houses are considered to be mundane.

† Commentary No. 1469

Signs and Houses 4

Most of (popular) astrology is mundane and applies primarily to the unenlightened personality. For mundane people, compatibility is generally a matter of simple astrological relationships, e.g., compatibility of sun signs. For people of more (psychological but personality-centered) depth it gets more complicated and there are many factors of potential significance. For spiritual students it gets much simpler, because the mundane astrology offers less and less significance as the student progresses.

The most obvious astrological indicator is the sun sign, the sign in which the sun appears at the moment of birth. The sun may appear on the cusp of the sign (0 degrees) or within any of the three decans (ten-degree arcs) (1-10 degrees, 11-20 degrees, 21-30 degrees). In some sense the actual degree also has significance. The second most apparent astrological indicator (in this mundane sense) is the rising sign or ascendant and its degree. From there are the placement of planets in the various signs, the placement of the houses, the placement of planets in the various houses, the relationships (aspects) between the various planets, etc. Each of these placements and aspects has relative and interpretable significance. But only in the context of the particular mundane personality. Astrology is both an art and a science, but the scientific (analytic) (objective) foundation of astrology is not sufficient. Understanding (proper interpretation) comes only through (proper) (refined) intuition.

At the objective level, some things are more apparent than others. Cardinal signs are square to or in opposition to each other. Similarly, fixed signs are square to or in opposition to each other. And mutable signs are square to or in opposition to one another. There is more apparent (superficial) compatibility among the signs of a given element, e.g., among the earth signs, among the air signs, among the water signs, and among the fire signs. But this understanding

is quite superficial. Everything associated with the signs and houses (and planets) (and relationships) is merely apparent, with regard to mundane astrology.

And yet each of the signs and each of the planets has a definite but subjective quality and character (influence), and each of the houses has a definite but subjective context. And every relationship (aspect) (angle) has a definite but subjective influence. The problem is in part that the keywords used to describe and reveal this subjective quality and character are simply words or symbols that mean different things to different people. And in part the problem is that people interpret things in their own ways, through the bias of their experience and conditioning. However, through proper intuitional insight the true nature is revealed, even if it cannot be demonstrated effectively through words.

Thus while each sign and house and planet has a distinct (yet subjective) nature, the combinations are almost infinite and each combination must be considered in the context of every other factor in the figure. For example, a sign has some character and a given planet in that sign suggests a particular (yet subjective) influence in the context of that character. And that influence is modified by the position of all the other planets and relationships among them, where they are in the various houses, etc. So while each "source" provides qualified energy, what influence actually reaches a person (in this natal context) is modified or constrained or enhanced by many factors. On the other hand, if one ignores astrology altogether and relies entirely on intuition, the "influence" may be more readily apparent.

Astrology and the Seven Rays

Astrology is a framework or context. The seven rays simply provide a more powerful (esoteric) and more natural framework. But each framework offers insight and any principle or process can be embraced and understood in either framework. Each of the astrological signs is formed by one or a combination of the seven rays. And each of the rays can be perceived as embracing three of the astrological signs. Astrology is clearly the more popular (profane) framework and has been exposed since its inception. The seven rays framework has for the most part been revealed through deeper, less public teachings. But even the seven rays framework is now being misinterpreted and misunderstood by those who lack the proper training and insight, much like has astrology. But both frameworks remain valid for those who do understand them.

Aries is formed by a combination of the first and seventh rays and is linked to Cancer (3,7), Leo (1,5), and Capricorn (1,3,7). Taurus is formed by the fourth ray and is linked to Scorpio (4) and to Sagittarius (4,5,6). Gemini is formed by the second ray and is linked to Virgo (2,6) and Pisces (2,6). Cancer is formed by a combination of the third and seventh rays and is linked to Aries (1,7), Libra (3), and Capricorn (1,3,7). Leo is formed by a combination of the first and fifth rays and is linked to Aries (1,7), Sagittarius (4,5,6), Capricorn (1,3,7), and Aquarius (5). Virgo is formed by a combination of the second and sixth rays and is linked to Gemini (2), Sagittarius (4,5,6), and Pisces (2,6).

Libra is formed by the third ray and is linked to Cancer (3,7) and Capricorn (1,3,7). Scorpio is formed by the fourth ray and is linked to Taurus (4) and Sagittarius (4,5,6). Sagittarius is formed by a combination of the fourth, fifth, and sixth rays and is linked to Taurus (4), Leo (1,5), Virgo (2,6), Scorpio (4), Aquarius (5), and Pisces (2,6). Capricorn is formed by a combination of the first, third, and seventh rays and is linked to Aries (1,7), Cancer (3,7), Leo (1,5), and Libra (3). Aquarius is formed by the fifth ray and is linked to Leo (1,5) and Sagittarius (4,5,6). And Pisces is formed by a combination of the second and sixth rays and is linked to Gemini (2), Virgo (2,6), and Sagittarius (4,5,6).

The first ray embraces and qualifies Aries (1), Leo (1,5), and Capricorn (1,3,7). The second ray embraces and qualifies Gemini (2), Virgo (2,6), and Pisces (2,6). The third ray embraces and qualifies Cancer (3,7), Libra (2,6), and Capricorn (1,3,7). The fourth ray embraces and qualifies Taurus (4), Scorpio (4), and Sagittarius (4,5,6). The fifth ray embraces and qualifies Leo (1,5), Sagittarius (4,5,6), and Aquarius (5). The sixth ray embraces Virgo (2,6), Sagittarius (4,5,6), and Pisces (2,6). And the seventh ray embraces and qualifies Aries (1,7), Cancer (3,7), and Capricorn (1,3,7). At first glance it would seem that Taurus and Scorpio should be quite similar as they are both formed by (only) the fourth ray, but they do in fact reflect different aspects of the fourth ray. The similarity is more esoteric than apparent in any mundane or exoteric sense. Likewise for Virgo (2,6) and Pisces (2,6), where each embraces a uniquely different combination of the same two rays.

In another sense, astrology is a mask that obscures the seven rays. It allows people to deal with influences in a relatively more understandable (conventional) (mundane) framework, without (necessarily) the spiritual context. But the seven rays are nonetheless underlying all of astrology. And the seven rays reveal the true potency of (esoteric) astrology, which is not an analytical science at all.

† Commentary No. 1471

The Zodiac 1 • Aries

The first of the twelve zodiacal signs is Aries, the ram. As a solar sign, it follows Pisces, begins about March 21st, ends about April 21st, and is followed by Taurus. Aries is the only sign that is both a fire sign (inspirational group) and a cardinal (initiative) sign. It is also the first of the spring or intellectual signs. Aries is a masculine sign and is ruled by Mars. The Aries nature is expressive of personal activities and is balanced by its opposite or complement, Libra. The keynote of Aries is "I am."



Among the keywords associated with Aries are activity, arrogance, aspiration, courage, competitiveness, creative energy, enterprise, enthusiasm, impatience, initiative, leadership, and strength. Those with a strong Aries influence tend to be relatively adventurous, aggressive, ardent, argumentative, demanding, direct, dominating, energetic, extroverted, generous, imposing, impulsive, loyal, opinionated, outspoken, pioneering, self-serving, and willful. Aries is the point of all beginnings. Aries is an energy that is generally both self-centered and self-directed. A planet in Aries will demonstrate its nature assertively.

Esoterically, Aries is formed by a combination of the first and seventh rays and is linked to Cancer (3,7), Leo (1,5), and Capricorn (1,3,7). Aries therefore embraces to some extent both leadership (purpose) and organization, especially in the more overt or manipulative sense. Esoterically, Aries is ruled by Mercury and there is a more subtle quality underlying the mundane-but-imposing outer nature. The soul revealed through an Aries personality tempers the more mundane Aries nature and adds subtle (spiritual) strength.

The principle of Aries is action; the quality of Aries is initiative; the positive expression of Aries is vitality; and the negative expression of Aries is impulsiveness. In Aries a person learns to temper the self-will and strength of personality, allowing the inner, spiritual strength to emerge. In Aries a person learns to become more collaborative and less dominated by self-will.



In the broader, less personal sense, Aries starts the annual planetary cycle (year) and begins that evolutionary cycle with purpose and leadership (activity). It also inaugurates the first of the four seasons (northern hemisphere spring).

Being formed by two of the seven rays, Aries is relatively complex, and requires a balancing of those two rays (first and seventh). Moreover, given that they are

both head-centered rays, there is a considerable challenge to temper the head-centered and head-strong nature.

† Commentary No. 1472

The Zodiac 2 • Taurus

The second of the twelve zodiacal signs is Taurus, the bull. As a solar sign it follows Aries, begins about April 21st, ends about May 22nd, and is followed by Gemini. Taurus is the only sign that is both an earth sign (practical group) and a fixed (executive) sign. It is also a spring or intellectual sign. Taurus is a feminine sign and is ruled by Venus. The Taurus nature is expressive of personal activities and is balanced by its opposite or complement, Scorpio. The keynote of Taurus is "I have."



Among the keywords associated with Taurus are attachment, conservation, endurance, grasping, integration, jealousy, loyalty, possessiveness, practicality, purposeful determination, reliability, security, stability, and steadfastness. Those with a strong Taurus influence tend to be materialistic, and relatively slow, steady, and stubborn. Taurus is the money sign of the zodiac. A planet in Taurus will demonstrate its nature possessively.

Esoterically, Taurus is formed by the fourth ray and is linked to Scorpio (4) and to Sagittarius (4,5,6). Taurus therefore embraces to some extent harmony through conflict, practicality, and devotion, especially in the more self-centered sense. Esoterically, Taurus is ruled by Vulcan and there is a more subtle quality underlying the earthy outer nature. The soul revealed through a Taurus personality tempers the more mundane Taurus nature and adds flexibility.



The principle of Taurus is reaction; the quality of Taurus is appreciation; the positive expression of Taurus is stability; and the negative expression of Taurus is obstinacy. In Taurus a person learns to overcome materialism and become more responsive to higher, deeper energies. In Taurus a person harnesses the energy and vitality of Aries.

In terms of the annual evolutionary cycle, Taurus builds upon the preceding sign (Aries) and provides some balance (given that Aries is masculine and Taurus is feminine).

Being formed by only one of the seven rays, Taurus is relatively stable and coherent. But given that that ray (fourth) is heart-centered, there is a considerable challenge to develop the mind in a meaningful way and to bring the head-centered and heart-centered natures into balance.

The Zodiac 3 • Gemini

The third of the twelve zodiacal signs is Gemini, the twins. As a solar sign it follows Taurus, begins about May 22nd, ends about June 22nd, and is followed by Cancer. Gemini is the only sign that is both an air sign (mental group) and a mutable (deductive) sign. It is also the last of the spring or intellectual signs. Gemini is a masculine sign and is ruled by Mercury. The Gemini nature is expressive of personal activities and is balanced by its opposite or complement, Sagittarius. The keynote of Gemini is "I think."



Among the keywords associated with Gemini are agility, classification, duality, education, identification, imagination, learning capacity, mentality, moodiness, nervous awareness, nervousness, speech, variety, versatility, and vivification. Those with a strong Gemini influence tend to be relatively imaginative and dramatic, and tend to think and act quickly. In Gemini we balance the male and female aspects of ourselves and ultimately we balance the human and divine. Gemini is the sign of non-conformity. A planet in Gemini will demonstrate its nature with communication and versatility.

Esoterically, Gemini is formed by the second ray and is linked to Virgo (2,6) and Pisces (2,6). Gemini therefore embraces to some extent both love-wisdom and devotion, especially in the more human sense. Esoterically, Gemini is ruled by Venus and there is a more subtle quality underlying the more mundane airy and changeable nature. The soul revealed through a Gemini personality tempers the more mundane Gemini nature and adds subtle stability and consistency.

II

The principle of Gemini is interaction; the quality of Gemini is awareness; the positive expression of Gemini is versatility; and the negative expression of Gemini is superficiality. In Gemini a person learns to balance the male and female aspects of the personality archetype. In Gemini, as the awareness matures, a person grows in depth. In Gemini action and reaction give way to interaction.

In terms of the annual evolutionary cycle, Gemini builds upon the preceding two sign (Aries and Taurus) and completes or concludes the first of the four seasons (northern hemisphere spring).

Being formed by only one of the seven rays, Gemini is potentially relatively stable and coherent, but given that that ray (second) is heart-centered, there is a considerable challenge to develop the mind in a meaningful way and actually bring about the latent stability.

† Commentary No. 1474

The Zodiac 4 • Cancer

The fourth of the twelve zodiacal signs is Cancer, the crab. As a solar sign it follows Gemini, begins about June 22nd, ends about July 23rd, and is followed by Leo. Cancer is the only sign that is both a water sign (emotional group) and a cardinal (initiative) sign. It is also the first of the summer or maternal signs. Cancer is a feminine sign and is ruled by the moon. The Cancer nature is expressive of personal activities and is balanced by its opposite or complement, Capricorn. The keynote of Cancer is "I feel."



Among the keywords associated with Cancer are adaptability, appropriation, diplomacy, domesticity, egoism, emotion, expansion, imagination, intolerance, maternal nature, moodiness, passive resistance, patriotism, protectiveness, responsiveness, restlessness, sensitivity, sympathy, tenacity, vagueness, and vanity. Those with a strong Cancer influence tend to be complex, loving, and nurturing, well-intentioned but relatively self-centered. Cancer is the most subconscious (indirect) and the most feminine of all the signs. It is the sign of emotional sensitivity. A planet in Cancer will demonstrate its nature with sensitivity and protection.

Esoterically, Cancer is formed by a combination of the third and seventh rays and is linked to Aries (1,7), Libra (3), and Capricorn (1,3,7). Cancer therefore embraces to some extent both strength and balance, boldness and discretion, especially in the personality-centered sense. Esoterically, Cancer is ruled by Neptune and there is a more subtle impersonal quality underlying the more maternal and personal nature. The soul revealed through a Cancer personality tempers the more mundane Cancer nature and adds subtle (spiritual) strength.



The principle of Cancer is containment; the quality of Cancer is reserve; the positive expression of Cancer is protection; and the negative expression of Cancer is covetousness. In Cancer a person learns to transform the superficial sensitivity of the personality to a responsiveness to the higher, deeper sensitivity of the soul. In Cancer a person learns to temper the emotions and achieve some balance with the mind.

In terms of the annual evolutionary cycle, Cancer builds upon the preceding season and inaugurates the second season (northern hemisphere summer), bringing an emphasis on growth rather than activity.

Being formed by two of the seven rays, Cancer is relatively complex, and requires a balancing of those two rays (third and seventh). Moreover, given that they are both head-centered rays, there is a considerable challenge to develop that head-centered nature in a meaningful way. The maternal nature and sensitivity of Cancer come from the higher dimension of the third and seventh rays.

† Commentary No. 1475

The Zodiac 5 • Leo

The fifth of the twelve zodiacal signs is Leo, the lion. As a solar sign it follows Cancer, begins about July 23rd, ends about August 24th, and is followed by Virgo. Leo is the only sign that is both a fire sign (inspirational group) and a fixed (executive) sign. It is also a summer or maternal sign. Leo is a masculine sign and is ruled by the sun. The Leo nature is expressive of personal activities and is balanced by its opposite or complement, Aquarius. The keynote of Leo is "I will."



Among the keywords associated with Leo are assurance, attachment, authority, confidence, (reckless) courage, dominion, enthusiasm, faithfulness, generosity, inertia, leadership, loyalty, magnanimity, nobility, personal independence, power, practicality, philosophy, regality, self-expression, and vitality. Those with a strong Leo influence tend to be dramatic and opinionated yet relatively warm, and need to be the center of attention. A planet in Leo will demonstrate its nature with creativity and joy.

Esoterically, Leo is formed by a combination of the first and fifth rays and is linked to Aries (1,7), Sagittarius (4,5,6), Capricorn (1,3,7), and Aquarius (5). Leo therefore embraces to some extent both leadership and intellect, especially in the more mundane sense. Esoterically, Leo is also ruled by the sun and there is a more subtle quality of sensitivity underlying the more mundane-and-worldly outer nature. The soul revealed through a Leo personality tempers the more mundane Leo nature and adds higher heart quality to the natural warmth.



The principle of Leo is individuation; the quality of Leo is centeredness; the positive expression of Leo is dominion; and the negative expression of Leo is imperiousness. In Leo a person learns to become less self-centered and more selfless. In Leo a person transforms self-will into responsiveness to the will of God (in the sense of the evolutionary plan).

In terms of the annual evolutionary cycle, Leo strengthens the work of the second season and provides some balance (given that Cancer is feminine and Leo is masculine).

Being formed by two of the seven rays, Leo is relatively complex, and requires a balancing of those two rays (first and fifth). Moreover, given that they are both head-centered rays, there is a considerable challenge to temper the head-centered and head-strong nature.

The Zodiac 6 • Virgo

The sixth of the twelve zodiacal signs is Virgo, the virgin. As a solar sign it follows Leo, begins about August 24th, ends about September 23rd, and is followed by Libra. Virgo is the only sign that is both an earth sign (practical group) and a mutable (deductive) sign. It is also the last of the summer or maternal signs. Virgo is a feminine sign and is ruled by Mercury. The Virgo nature is expressive of personal activities and is balanced by its opposite or complement, Pisces. The keynote of Virgo is "I analyze."



Among the keywords associated with Virgo are assimilation, attention to detail, chastity, communication, discrimination, healing, mentality, methodicalness, modesty, neatness, organization, perfection, practicality, precision, propriety, purity, and work and service orientation. Those with a strong Virgo influence tend to be relatively critical and impatient. Virgo represents the hidden Christ. A planet in Virgo will demonstrate its nature critically and with detail.

Esoterically, Virgo is formed by a combination of the second and sixth rays and is linked to Gemini (2), Sagittarius (4,5,6), and Pisces (2,6). Virgo therefore embraces to some extent both love-wisdom and idealism, especially in the more religious sense. Esoterically, Virgo is ruled by the moon and there is a more subtle quality underlying the outer idealism. The soul revealed through a Virgo personality tempers the more mundane Virgo nature and adds subtle (spiritual) qualification and (subtle) leadership.



The principle of Virgo is differentiation; the quality of Virgo is analysis; the positive expression of Virgo is discrimination; and the negative expression of Virgo is criticism. In Virgo a person learns to discriminate in a much more intuitive, non-judgmental sense. In Virgo the sense of perfection becomes less a personal matter and more a matter of appreciation of the underlying perfection.

In terms of the annual evolutionary cycle, Virgo builds upon the preceding two sign (Cancer and Leo) and completes or concludes the second of the four seasons.

Being formed by two of the seven rays, Virgo is relatively complex, and requires a balancing of those two rays (second and sixth). Moreover, given that they are both heart-centered rays, there is a considerable challenge to develop the mind in a sensible manner and to bring the head-centered and heart-centered nature into balance.

† Commentary No. 1477

The Zodiac 7 • Libra

The seventh of the twelve zodiacal signs is Libra, the balance. As a solar sign it follows Virgo, begins about September 23rd, ends about October 24th, and is followed by Scorpio. Libra is the only sign that is both an air sign (mental group) and a cardinal (initiative) sign. It is also the first of the autumn or reproductive signs. Libra is a masculine sign and is ruled by Venus. The Libra nature is more expressive of activities relating to other people rather than more personal activities, and is balanced by its opposite or complement, Aries. The keynote of Libra is "We balance."



Among the keywords associated with Libra are balance, charm, companionship, communicativeness, diplomacy, duty, equilibrium, grace, love of harmony, justice, partnership, balanced relationship, and responsibility. Those with a strong Libra influence tend to be relatively friendly and out-going but secretive and self-willed. Libra is the turning point in the evolutionary process. A planet in Libra will demonstrate its nature with harmony and union.

Esoterically, Libra is formed by the third ray and is linked to Cancer (3,7) and Capricorn (1,3,7). Libra therefore embraces abstract intelligence with additional head-centered factors. Esoterically, Libra is ruled by Uranus and there is a more subtle quality underlying and balancing the outer nature. The soul revealed through a Libra personality tempers the more mundane Libra nature and adds heart quality.



The principle of Libra is equilibrium; the quality of Libra is harmony; the positive expression of Libra is diplomacy; and the negative expression of Libra is opportunism. In Libra a person learns to balance the higher and lower natures, bringing selflessness and heart-quality.

In terms of the annual evolutionary cycle, Libra builds upon the preceding two seasons and inaugurates the third season (northern hemisphere autumn or fall), which is an extended time of bringing matters to fruition.

Being formed by only one of the seven rays, Libra is relatively stable and coherent. But given that that ray (third) is head-centered, there is a considerable challenge to find the natural (deeper, higher) balance of the Libra

energy and to bring the head and heart into balance. Thus in Libra a person achieves balance in a number of different aspects.

† Commentary No. 1478

The Zodiac 8 • Scorpio

The eighth of the twelve zodiacal signs is Scorpio, the scorpion. As a solar sign it follows Libra, begins about October 24th, ends about November 23rd, and is followed by Sagittarius. Scorpio is the only sign that is both a water sign (emotional group) and a fixed (executive) sign. It is also an autumn or reproductive sign. Scorpio is a feminine sign and is ruled by Mars and Pluto. The Scorpio nature is more expressive of activities relating to other people rather than more personal activities, and is balanced by its opposite or complement, Taurus. The keynote of Scorpio is "I create."



Among the keywords associated with Scorpio are creativity, desire, the emotions, healing, the inner struggle between the higher and lower nature, passion, pride, regeneration, resourcefulness, power, possessiveness, secrecy, strength, strong opinions, transformation, and will. Those with a strong Scorpio influence tend to be passionate, reserved, and relatively unstable. Scorpio is the sign of mystery. A planet in Scorpio will demonstrate its nature with passion and penetration, secretively.

Esoterically, Scorpio is formed by the fourth ray and is linked to Taurus (4) and Sagittarius (4,5,6). Scorpio therefore embraces to some extent harmony through conflict, especially in feelings (compared with the more head-centered balancing of the Libra nature). Esoterically, Scorpio is ruled only by Mars and there is a more subtle quality underlying the outer emotions. The soul revealed through a Scorpio personality tempers the more mundane Scorpio nature and adds subtle (spiritual) depth.



The principle of Scorpio is regeneration; the quality of Scorpio is penetration; the positive expression of Scorpio is renewal; and the negative expression of Scorpio is ruthlessness. In Scorpio a person learns to temper and overcome the passion of the lower (desire) nature, becoming more and more receptive to higher impression.

In terms of the annual evolutionary cycle, Scorpio strengthens the work of the third season and builds upon and balances the preceding sign (Libra).

Being formed by only one of the seven rays, Scorpio is relatively stable and coherent. But given that that ray (fourth) is heart-centered, there is a considerable challenge to develop the mind in a meaningful way and temper the emotions.

The Zodiac 9 • Sagittarius

The ninth of the twelve zodiacal signs is Sagittarius, the centaur. As a solar sign it follows Scorpio, begins about November 23rd, ends about December 22nd, and is followed by Capricorn. Sagittarius is the only sign that is both a fire sign (inspirational group) and a mutable (deductive) sign. It is also the last of the autumn or reproductive signs. Sagittarius is a masculine sign and is ruled by Jupiter. The Sagittarius nature is more expressive of activities relating to other people rather than more personal activities, and is balanced by its opposite or complement, Gemini. The keynote of Sagittarius is "I perceive."



Among the keywords associated with Sagittarius are abstraction, administration, aspiration, experience, exploration, idealism, insight, love of freedom, honesty, perception, procrastination, profundity, straight-forwardness, and versatility. Those with a strong Sagittarius influence tend to be relatively aggressive, energetic, independent, opinionated, out-going, and yet understanding. A planet in Sagittarius will demonstrate its nature broadly, with freedom and depth.

Esoterically, Sagittarius is formed by a combination of the fourth, fifth, and sixth rays and is linked to Taurus (4), Leo (1,5), Virgo (2,6), Scorpio (4), Aquarius (5), and Pisces (2,6). Sagittarius therefore embraces to some extent balance, intellect, and devotion, especially in the more personality-centered sense. Esoterically, Sagittarius is ruled by the Earth and there is a more subtle quality underlying the more worldly nature. The soul revealed through a Sagittarius personality tempers the more mundane Sagittarius nature and adds subtle (spiritual) stability and momentum.



The principle of Sagittarius is direction; the quality of Sagittarius is planning; the positive expression of Sagittarius is wisdom; and the negative expression of Sagittarius is hypocrisy. In Sagittarius a person learns to transform knowledge into understanding and understanding into wisdom.

In terms of the annual evolutionary cycle, Sagittarius builds upon the preceding two signs (Libra and Scorpio) and completes the third of the four seasons.

Being formed by three of the seven rays, Sagittarius is more complex than any of the other signs save Capricorn. And given that those rays (fourth, fifth, and sixth) include both head-centered and heart-centered energies, there is considerable opportunity or potential in Sagittarius for developing a higher sensitivity.

† Commentary No. 1480

The Zodiac 10 • Capricorn

The tenth of the twelve zodiacal signs is Capricorn, the goat. As a solar sign it follows Sagittarius, begins about December 22nd, ends about January 20th, and is followed by Aquarius. Capricorn is the only sign that is both an earth sign (practical group) and a cardinal (initiative) sign. It is also the first of the winter or serving signs. Capricorn is a feminine sign and is ruled by Saturn. The Capricorn nature is more expressive of activities relating to other people rather than more personal activities, and is balanced by its opposite or complement, Cancer. The keynote of Capricorn is "I use."



Among the keywords associated with Capricorn are ambition, caution, conscientiousness, conservatism, development, discrimination, dogmatism, faith, limitation, loneliness, materialism, money, organization, practicality, security, sense of responsibility, and tradition. Those with a strong Capricorn influence tend to be methodical, prudent, persistent, and worldly. A planet in Capricorn will demonstrate its nature with prudence and aspiration, coolly.

Esoterically, Capricorn is formed by a combination of the first, third, and seventh rays and is linked to Aries (1,7), Cancer (3,7), Leo (1,5), and Libra (3). Capricorn therefore embraces to some extent both leadership (purpose) and active intelligence, and organization, especially in the head-centered sense. Esoterically, Capricorn is also ruled by Saturn and there is a more subtle quality underlying the mundane intellect. The soul revealed through a Capricorn personality tempers the more mundane Capricorn nature and adds heart quality.



The principle of Capricorn is crystallization; the quality of Capricorn is responsibility; the positive expression of Capricorn is orderliness; and the negative expression of Capricorn is rigidity. In Capricorn a person learns to be more flexible and responsive to higher impression. In Capricorn a person learns to take ideas and evoke meaningful things. In Capricorn a person learns to practice what Sagittarius preaches.

In terms of the annual evolutionary cycle, Capricorn builds upon the preceding three seasons and inaugurates the fourth season (northern hemisphere winter) which is an extended period of assimilation and preparation for the next annual cycle.

Being formed by three of the seven rays, Capricorn is more complex than any of the other signs save Sagittarius. But given that those rays (first, third, and seventh) are all head-centered rays, there is considerable challenge to overcome the head-centered nature and allow their higher expression to emerge.

† Commentary No. 1481

The Zodiac 11 • Aquarius

The eleventh of the twelve zodiacal signs is Aquarius, the water-bearer. As a solar sign it follows Capricorn, begins about January 20th, ends about February 19th, and is followed by Pisces. Aquarius is the only sign that is both an air sign (mental group) and a fixed (executive) sign. It is also a winter or serving sign. Aquarius is a masculine sign and is ruled by Uranus and Saturn. The Aquarius nature is more expressive of activities relating to other people rather than more personal activities, and is balanced by its opposite or complement, Leo. The keynote of Aquarius is "I know."



Among the keywords associated with Aquarius are companionship, detachment, discrimination, eccentricity, friendship, gravity in the sense of inertia, humanitarianism, impersonality, independence, individualism, loyalty, originality, rebelliousness, strong opinions, reformation, rigidity, and spiritual rebirth. Those with a strong Aquarius influence tend to be argumentative, critical and demanding, creative and inventive, and forward thinking yet stubborn and inflexible. Aquarius is the sign of brotherhood and fraternity. A planet in Aquarius will demonstrate its nature with detachment, scientifically.

Esoterically, Aquarius is formed by the fifth ray and is linked to Leo (1,5) and Sagittarius (4,5,6). Aquarius therefore embraces to some extent the intellectual and head-centered nature. Esoterically, Aquarius is ruled by Jupiter and there is a more subtle quality underlying the intellect. The soul revealed through an Aquarius personality tempers the more mundane Aquarius nature and adds heart quality and balance.



The principle of Aquarius is distribution; the quality of Aquarius is universality; the positive expression of Aquarius is liberality; and the negative expression of Aquarius is eccentricity. In Aquarius a person learns to overcome the head-centered nature and its judgmental tendencies, building bridges with other peoples and enabling the distribution of higher energies.

In terms of the annual evolutionary cycle, Aquarius strengthens the work of the fourth season and builds upon and balances the preceding sign (Capricorn).

Being formed by only one of the seven rays, Aquarius is relatively stable and coherent. But given that that ray (fifth) is head-centered, there is a considerable challenge to develop the heart nature and allow that heart nature to temper the mind.

The Zodiac 12 • Pisces

The twelfth and last of the zodiacal signs is Pisces, the fishes. As a solar sign it follows Aquarius, begins about February 19th, ends about March 21st, and is followed by Aries. Pisces is the only sign that is both a water sign (emotional group) and a mutable (deductive) sign. It is also the last of the winter or serving signs. Pisces is a feminine sign and is ruled by Neptune and Jupiter. The Pisces nature is more expressive of activities relating to other people rather than more personal activities, and is balanced by its opposite or complement, Virgo. The keynote of Pisces is "I believe."



Among the keywords associated with Pisces are adaptability, aloofness, appreciation, compassion, duality, the emotions, helpfulness, idealistic service, imagination, impressionability, the intuition, moderation, pride, renunciation, sensitivity, sympathy, and universality. Those with a strong Pisces influence tend to be moody and stubborn. A planet in Pisces will demonstrate its nature with appreciation of the intangibles, often with confusion.

Esoterically, Pisces is formed by a combination of the second and sixth rays and is linked to Gemini (2), Virgo (2,6), and Sagittarius (4,5,6). Pisces therefore embraces to some extent both love-wisdom and idealism, especially in the sense of expressing idealism leading to realization. Esoterically, Pisces is ruled by Pluto and there is a more subtle quality underlying the worldly idealism. The soul revealed through a Pisces personality tempers the more mundane Pisces nature and adds subtle (spiritual) focus and harmony.



The principle of Pisces is redemption; the quality of Pisces is synthesis; the positive expression of Pisces is compassion; and the negative expression of Pisces is confusion. In Pisces a person learns to stabilize the lower nature and begin to qualify and uplift that lower nature with more refined energies. In Pisces a person learns to focus his or her energies in more meaningful ways.

In terms of the annual evolutionary cycle, Pisces builds upon the preceding two signs (Capricorn and Aquarius) and completes the fourth of the four seasons, in preparation for a new year of activity, growth, nurturing, fruition, and assimilation of experience.

Being formed by two of the seven rays, Pisces is relatively complex, and requires a balancing of those two rays (second and sixth) (like Virgo). Moreover, given that they are both heart-centered rays, there is a considerable challenge to develop the mind in a sensible manner and to bring the head-centered and heart-centered nature into balance.

† Commentary No. 1483

Working with Devas

Many human beings are intrigued by or enamoured with the angels or devas, based mostly on superstition and their own imagination, and without any real understanding of what the devas are or the role that they play. Thus many people attempt to approach the devas without success.

The main problem is two-fold, namely (1) the angels or devas work much more passively, much more uncontrivedly, than do human beings and (2) human beings tend to push angels away simply by virtue of their (human) physical, emotional, and mental activity (personality-centeredness) (self-centeredness). The devas are very (very) gentle creatures. They do not resemble human beings, either in form or in personality, but they are very sensitive to human presence because humans tend to be noisy, much more so than even the animals. Indeed, given the sensitive nature of the devas, human beings are considered to be inherently violent. Any disharmonious emotion is a violent projection of energy. Every thought, no matter how gentle, is inherently separative. So in order to approach the devas and to work with them, one must understand that one must not in any way interfere with their presence or their work. Indeed, one must learn to be very (very) gentle in all regards.

One must also understand that the devas do not need the help of human beings and that they are somewhat averse to human presence (activity). The devas work naturally with energies at all levels, from the etheric upwards, by embodying energy, by being part of the flow of energy. They channel energy in the most harmonious ways and serve needs that are simply sensed. They work with nature, with the mineral kingdom, the plant kingdom, and to some extent the animal kingdom, rarely with the human kingdom except to provide healing energies. They guide and nurture evolution in consciousness, but work primarily in the sub-human kingdoms. Their nature is to restore the balance, to heal rather than to contrive. They are not themselves creative beings, but they embody creative energies in intelligent ways.

There are of course guardian angels, or devas who are attuned to people and who exert some beneficial influence. But these devas only work with people who are receptive to them on some level, usually emotionally or mentally. These guardian angels are stronger than most devas and are not as averse to human beings. They do not communicate with human beings, but they help in subtle ways (and sometimes in not so subtle ways). More prevalent are the healing angels or devas who work fairly closely with people who are diseased or injured on some level (physical, etheric, emotional, mental). These devas also do not communicate with human beings, but simply offer healing energies which facilitate the healing process (learning, growing, adjusting in consciousness). But again, one must be receptive and responsive on some level in order to benefit

from their presence. But most prevalent are the vast numbers of nature spirits, devas who work with the more fundamental lifewaves, especially those in the plant kingdom. The plant kingdom has a special affinity for the deva kingdom.

It is not really the place of human beings to approach the devas directly. But it is wise simply to embrace gentleness and facilitate the work of the devas by not being disruptive. And in gentleness one becomes more receptive and responsive to the healing forces provided by the devas, thereby enabling a more direct channeling of healing energies. One does not need to be consciously attuned to the devas, one only really needs to be gentle and caring, and the healing energies will be provided, naturally.

† Commentary No. 1484

Healing Places

There are both physical and non-physical (super-physical) places of healing. The most poignant places of healing are deep within the human being, far removed from the illusions of personality, places where one can touch the innermost being through genuine humility.

These are (non-physical) places where most people cannot go, and where very few can go consistently, because there are so many (ordinary) psychological barriers to contend with. People are simply generally unable to be entirely honest with themselves. Most people simply do not have the understanding or ability to find the truth within themselves. And yet for those who can find these places in consciousness, deep within themselves, there is an immediate and almost overwhelming release of healing energy that pervades the whole person, providing ease (harmony) (lack of disease) at all levels, physical, etheric, emotional, and mental. More importantly, this phenomenon reveals to the conscious mind (waking-consciousness) the adjustments (reformation) that are needed in activity (action, attitude, behavior, feeling, thinking) in order for the healing to endure.

These deep places are places where one's own consciousness is brought into harmony with the divine consciousness and with the healing consciousness of the deva kingdom (which are one and the same). It is only in these deep and

(very) gentle places that true realization is achieved. And it is only in these deep and (very) gentle places that one is real. Everything else is part of the (ordinary) world of shadows (illusion) (self-deception). Healing is fundamentally an embracing of truth and reality. For disease and injury arise only from the lack of embracing of truth and reality. But one must work very hard in order to be able to embrace truth and reality. One must achieve progressive refinement on all levels. And most people are unable or unwilling to do this. Because they do not understand either the truth about themselves (content) or the truth about the world around them (context).

There are also healing places in the physical world. Places where there is an extraordinary measure of magnetic (healing) qualification. These are generally places that are relatively remote, though some are in more populated areas, but each is nonetheless a place (magnetic vortex) of retreat (withdrawal from the ordinary world) and renewal. These physical healing places are simply places in the physical world where healing is facilitated by virtue of the nature of the etheric web. Places of great resonance, where devas and people are attracted, the devas to work with the healing energies afforded, people who are drawn for the purpose of healing. The (planetary) etheric web is not quite uniform. There are places of greater and lesser efficacy. Places where people are more vulnerable, and places where people are more amenable to healing. But healing takes place not because of the healing energy available, but by virtue of one's receptivity and responsiveness. And healing endures only to the extent that one is truly reformed in some (substantive) manner. It is not enough merely to be exposed. One must also adjust, and learn, and grow. If the truth is embraced, then healing is facilitated. If one is simply exposed to healing energy, then the healing will not endure.

There are actually many healing places, both within and without. Most peaceful places have a certain healing and magical quality, usually enhanced by elemental magnetism (earth, air, fire, water). Thus one need look not far for a place of healing. And where one can also be honest with oneself, then the healing process is enhanced.

Truth and Awareness

Perhaps most people think that because they are self-conscious in the ordinary (superficial) sense, they have therefore awareness. But this is not awareness in the higher sense of perceptive realization. It is simply the crude awareness of the physical plane, dimmed by conditioning and one's expectations. It is also not the crude awareness of non-physical levels exhibited by untrained and unqualified psychics. True awareness requires some not inconsiderable development in consciousness, and not inconsiderable refinement of consciousness. And true awareness does not necessarily involve any form of psychic or super-physical awareness, which is after all, only a wider range of superficial awareness. True awareness is something much deeper. Much more based in quality of (higher) consciousness. Based in realization rather than perception.

One of the most significant keys to this (proper) awareness is embracing truth, being dedicated to embracing truth and actually embracing truth. It is not sufficient merely to be so dedicated or to believe that one is embracing truth. One must actually develop and embrace all of the prerequisites (such as honesty and humility) and be actually open to truth. Most people are not really open to truth, even though they are more or less honest. They think they are open-minded but in fact most people are simply conditioned to see what they want to see, whatever is comfortable to see. Most people do not realize that their illusions and their assumptions and their biases and their conditioning are all barriers to their being truly honest, with themselves and with others. And this is a great preclusion of (true) awareness.

Knowledge is a barrier to awareness simply because most people are unconsciously attached to what they know, instead of being free to embrace the truth. Even understanding is a barrier to awareness, if one thinks one understands something then that is a barrier. If one is truly humble, then one is not attached to either knowledge or understanding. A humble student has no opinions or other attachments or delusions. But most people suffer the ordinary delusions of physical existence, the illusion of the physical world, which is real, superficially, but actually merely only a shadow. Most people suffer the illusion

of independence, of separateness, even if they believe otherwise. The barrier of (the illusion of) separateness is compounded by ego and personality-centeredness. An intellectual understanding of these illusions is helpful, a stepping-stone, but it is not the same as perceiving and realizing things without having the actual illusions.

Most people think that “little white lies” are not harmful, or that inaccuracies are not significant. But these are barriers to truth. And to awareness. Indeed, inaccuracies are not really significant any more than details are significant in some broader perspective, except to the extent that they undermine one’s ability to perceive the truth. Inaccuracies, exaggerations, distortions do undermine things, subconsciously. It does not mean that one must be always accurate, only that one must understand, really understand, that what one says may not be entirely accurate, i.e., being honest with oneself, striving to be as honest as one can be, is important. It is about overcoming one’s conditioning (illusions) (biases). Only if one is as honest as one can be is there then the possibility of greater realization.

The purpose of life is evolution in consciousness. And that evolution is perhaps best measured or manifested through deepening and broadening awareness, based on both honesty and humility.

† Commentary No. 1486

Ethics and Awareness

Ethics are a behavioral extension of actually embracing truth that is also quite important. In a sense ethics amount to truth-in-action on all levels. One’s ethics are both a reflection of quality of consciousness (and conscience) (and understanding) (and wisdom) and potentially a limitation in consciousness that undermines awareness.

If one’s ethics are not consistent with the truth that is embraced and understood, then that inconsistency tends to undermine one’s (deeper) awareness. If one’s ethics are questionable in the context of the spiritual path, then that also tends to undermine awareness. It is a practical matter, in the sense that one’s behavior has import in consciousness. And the propriety of

one's behavior likewise. It is also a matter of becoming and remaining awake, which is the real import of (true) awareness. Most of the people in the world are of the world and are asleep. Their perception, their awareness is really quite limited (to immediate personality-consciousness and proximate environs conditioned by that personality-consciousness). To begin to awaken to the underlying reality and to begin to awaken to truth requires a considerable impulse in order to overcome the very substantial (ordinary) conditioning that binds most people to their routine patterns of behavior.

One's ethics can have a potentially considerable influence on one's conditioning. One's ethics can either strengthen one's place on or approach to the spiritual path, or one's ethics can weaken one's place or undermine one's approach. It is not about the details of how to behave in particular circumstances or how to interpret anything. It is not even ultimately about judgment. It is about being true to one's conscience (insight) (understanding) (wisdom) (higher senses). Of feeling or sensing what is right, and living accordingly. If one is dishonest in any way, to oneself or others, then that dishonesty creates a psychological barrier that in turn undermines the embracing of truth and being (more) aware. If one is harmful in any way, to oneself, to others, or to other lifeforms, then that similarly creates a psychological barrier that dulls the (inner) senses or sustains the sleeping state. If one is killing animals and/or eating their flesh then that generally precludes any real understanding of propriety with regard to humanity and the animal kingdom. One's actions, one's ethics are driven by one's values, however unconsciously and self-serving.

Of course ethics are inclusive of thinking and feeling. One must not only behave in an ethical (harmless, honest, humble) manner on physical levels, but also be ethical on emotional and mental levels. Every feeling and every thought is a projection of energy which evokes force. And every such evoked force has consequences, effects on the immediate environment and upon the object of one's feelings and thoughts. For the spiritual student ethics therefore include the ethics of feelings and the ethics of thinking. Ultimately, one learns how to feel deeply and harmlessly and honestly and with humility, and to think not at all (but simply to be aware and to act from that awareness).

So the spiritual student is ever encouraged to embrace the truth at all levels of his or her capacity. The spiritual student is ever encouraged to embrace ethical behavior to the extent of his or her capacity (conscience). And to improve one's ethics according to spiritual teachings even before there is conscious realization of their import. Ethical behavior, and understanding of ethical behavior goes a long way toward encouraging deepening of consciousness and greater awareness (realization).

† Commentary No. 1487

Disease and Injury 2

Disease and injury are rooted in consciousness and behavior. All aspects of disease and injury are karmic in nature. One simply attracts vulnerability based on one's actions over time. It is really quite simple in principle, but complicated in practice due to the coincidence and variety of consequences and intended lessons from various origination times (and lifetimes) and the moderation of consequences due to whatever is learned in the intervening periods and the attitude (receptivity to learning) that is exhibited at the time of consequence.

If one is truly open to learning and growing (and serving) then there is generally no need for either disease or injury, and the intermediate (karmic) forces get resolved before they can manifest through the body. But few people, even spiritual students, are completely open. And few are yet perceptive enough and intelligent enough to preclude discomfort. Plus there is a collective karma such that even those who are relatively enlightened suffer some of the karma of their species (because in the final analysis, evolution in consciousness is more properly and generally a collective phenomenon than a matter of individual growth).

Given the underlying karmic basis for disease and injury, the mechanics of disease and injury are relatively straightforward. Disease (lack of harmony) begins on etheric, emotional, or mental levels, and grows to the point where there are physical-etheric effects. These effects are typically a lessening of one's vitality in some relatively specific sense, which allows disease or injury to strike. The distinction between disease and injury is not really significant, but injury is based on disease in the sense that there is an underlying vulnerability

that attracts whatever circumstances and forces are needed. The resulting incident is simply an explosion of psychic force. And the injury itself is simply an expression of the underlying lack of harmony on some level. Even genetic predisposition is simply an expression of one's underlying karma, an intermediate consequence and not a cause in itself (nothing is actually a cause in itself except at the highest levels of (divine) creativity).

Disease is literally dis-ease, a lack of harmony and a depression in the body's vitality at some place (or generally) and on some level. One is generally healthy to the extent that one thinks and feels and acts (behaves) gently and with consideration for all (lives). Disease results from harmful behavior (even from lifetimes removed from the present) and the need for the student to learn not to engage in harmful behavior. Disease also results from delusion, illusion, and the failure to perceive and embrace the truth. Our whole (ordinary) world existence is based on illusion (materialism, egoism) (the illusion of separateness), and given the preponderance of ego it should not be surprising that most people are deluded in some ways or another. And most people engage in harmful practices without realization. The lack of consistency between what is known (believed) (practiced) (understood) and what is true is a disharmony that breeds vulnerability to disease and injury.

Thus the spiritual student is encouraged both to embrace harmlessness and truth (honesty) and to be as open to learning and growing as is possible given one's circumstances and consciousness. Disease and injury attract healing energy. But the issue is much more a matter of receptivity (openness) than availability. Most people are simply not really receptive or responsive to healing energy, and the process (learning, adjusting) is relatively slow.

Objective Awareness

Awareness generally means conscious objective awareness, perceiving the external world, through the physical senses, subject to one's various biases and conditioning, but without conscious awareness of those limitations or biases. Most people take their conscious objective awareness for granted, without appreciating that true awareness is both conscious and unconscious, objective and subjective, and that what most people exhibit is very limited and conditioned awareness.

Objective awareness is in principle both common and verifiable perception of the external environment. But objectivity is variable and subject to conditioning, so that not everyone perceives the external world in the same way or to the same extent and that perception is not "processed" in the same way or to the same extent by everyone. Highly objective awareness is more consistent, more rationally definitive, than less highly objective awareness. Highly objective awareness is simply less distorted by bias and conditioning, by feelings and values. But objective awareness is still a matter of being focused on the external environment, perceiving or sensing people and places and processes external to one's inherent consciousness. Some people are more focused in this sense than others, and some people are focused in this sense only some of the time or to some extent. In short, some people are more aware of their external circumstances than others, and some people are more objectively aware of those circumstances than others.

So the main variables in objective awareness are the extent that one is conscious in one's objective awareness, the extent that one is objective in one's conscious awareness, and the extent that one is focused in one's objective awareness. Many are not really conscious in this sense, and perceive things more or less passively. Many have perception that is substantially biased by attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and values, such that there is little in the way of objectivity. And some people are simply not really focused. But those who are more fully conscious, who are more properly objective, who are focused, are much more able to embrace experience and expression meaningfully, in the sense

that they are much more effective in learning and growing and doing useful things.

Another aspect is the physicality of one's objective consciousness. Most people have sense perception that is consciously or objectively limited to the dense physical world, without appreciation for or cognizance of etheric or astral (emotional) or concrete mental levels. Psychic awareness is simply the extension of the (limited) objective awareness to these higher, non-physical levels. Psychic awareness in itself does not convey any understanding or wisdom and so virtually all who have psychic awareness are substantially untrained and lack objectivity. Most people have some psychic awareness, but usually they are not conscious of this. If a person is consciously psychic, but untrained, then the psychic impressions have relatively little intrinsic value because they cannot be placed properly into context, despite whatever is believed.

Almost everyone has some (limited) objective awareness. Almost everyone has some (limited) (unconscious) psychic awareness. But few have the experience and training and understanding to effectively process objective sense impressions. Most people are simply asleep. They think they are conscious (self-conscious) but they are not. They think they perceive things accurately but it is not so. It is the challenge of the path to overcome these limitations and embrace awareness in some deeper, broader sense.

† Commentary No. 1489

Subjective Awareness

In addition to objective awareness or realization of one's surroundings, there is subjective awareness. This should not be confused with a lack of objectivity in awareness. Most people exhibit objective awareness with a lack of objectivity. Subjective awareness is another dimension altogether, being aware in the inner sense of one's deeper nature, feelings, connectivity, and the workings of the mind.

Most people have some subjective awareness but are largely unconscious of this. They are not consciously aware of their feelings or what the mind is actually doing. They tend to identify with the mind so much that there is no conscious realization of the distinction between themselves and the mind. The spiritual student is trained to make this distinction and to more fully realize the artificial nature of the ego, the entangled nature of the mind, and the proper place of the personality. The spiritual student is encouraged not only to be more conscious, more objective, and more effective (less biased) in his or her objective awareness, but also to be more conscious in subjective awareness. Indeed, it is the combination of conscious awareness on objective and subjective levels that is most effective. But while objective awareness can be improved even with the presence of ego (personality-centeredness) (illusion), subjective awareness cannot properly be improved without the tempering of the ego, without a considerable refinement in consciousness.

That refinement in consciousness helps with objective consciousness as well, but especially in the sense of achieving balance and allowing the inner senses to emerge into the arena of waking-consciousness. It is not enough simply to have feelings. One must also recognize them and understand them. One needs to see where feelings come from, either induced by the outer senses (experience, sense impressions, thinking, and conditioning) or evoked through higher consciousness (conscience, intuition in the higher sense). When the two aspects of awareness are working properly, in balance (with the ego and mind and personality tempered at least somewhat), then one can become consciously aware of one's true state in consciousness. One can begin to see how the mind actually works and achieve more effective tempering (true mental quiescence that allows the (true) intuition to shine through unimpeded).

If one relies almost entirely on objective awareness, whether or not one is actually objective, then one is nonetheless relatively shallow. If one relies largely on subjective awareness, then one is relatively isolated and ineffective. But where both are properly developed and balanced then one can embrace oneself in the higher sense. One can deepen in consciousness. One can find God-Christ within and bring that divine nature (energy) (qualification) to the surface. Without some competence at objective levels, and without the depth of subjective awareness, this is simply not possible. Depth is not about education

or intellect (or even what passes for ordinary human intelligence); depth is about finding and embracing and exhibiting higher, deeper consciousness.

In the final analysis, most people are simply not much aware of themselves or their context. Their thinking and feeling and behavior are largely conditioned by their biases and illusions. They suffer the illusion of self-consciousness. They remain asleep. But through the process of evolutionary experience there is a gradual awakening, and through the more conscious process of evolution embraced by the spiritual student, there is real progress. And greater and deeper awareness, on all levels.

† Commentary No. 1490

The True Mystic

A mystic is one who follows or expounds a mystical way of life, without necessarily achieving conscious communion with God. A true mystic is one who actually embraces mysticism, the path and the condition in consciousness, who embraces and communes with the God within, and allows that God-Self to effuse every aspect of his or her life in this world.

The true mystic is one who can discern the distinction between the higher and lower selves and embrace the higher Self relatively if not perfectly unimpeded by the lower. The true mystic is one who has conquered the lower self to a large extent, and allows the higher to shine through much of the time. Whose mind and personality are refined and tempered, and whose ego is all but destroyed. The true mystic lives in the world, but is not entangled in the world. The true mystic lives among humanity, feels genuine compassion for humanity, indeed communes with humanity, without any sense of separateness and without any expression of separateness, yet rises above the ordinary human (sleeping) consciousness into a greater reality. The true mystic does not confuse experience with being. The true mystic embraces experience without being entangled, and yet completely embraces being without any real isolation from humanity.

The true mystic feels the greatest joy, evoked through communion with God. Yet also feels the pain and sadness of humanity in its isolation in consciousness

from God. The true mystic is awake and surrounded by those who sleep, embracing true compassion and offering gentle encouragement. The true mystic is consciously one with humanity in the highest and deepest sense, and walks among outer humanity as a pilgrim in the wilderness. The true mystic is consciously and objectively aware of his or her place in the world and his or her surroundings. And the true mystic is consciously and subjectively aware of the inner truth and reality. The true mystic does not embrace either materialism, or entertainment of the senses, or egoism. The true mystic is often misunderstood in his or her non-conformity, but that non-conformity is gentle and merely unconventional, not threateningly so. The true mystic has uncommon character and principles and values and lives among humanity without ever seeking to impose in any way.

The inner life of the true mystic is both rich and deep. He or she knows the depths of despair and loneliness, as well as the greatest of joy in finding the true Self. The true mystic may or may not live alone in the world, but recognizes kindred spirits along the way. Above all the true mystic is gentle and quiescent. There is no outer coarseness to impede. There is no recourse to or reliance upon thinking, though there may be thoughts here and there. Similarly there is no recourse to or reliance on sense impressions. There are feelings, from both external and internal sources, but there is no entanglement in feelings. There is activity in the world, without intensity or entanglement. There is simply a serving of humanity, in necessarily small ways.

The true mystic is not entirely free from karma, but his or her karmic experience is relatively gentle and modest. There is a not inconsiderable embrace of harmlessness, honesty, and humility. There is a deepening communion with the God-Christ (by whatever name it may be known in whatever conceptual framework), even while there are no words or even symbols to express this experience to others. It is sufficient for the true mystic to simply walk about the wilderness of humanity, remaining unrecognized and unacknowledged, embracing the grace of God.

Alcohol 2

Alcohol is the intoxicating agent in fermented and distilled liquors, such as beer, wine, and whiskey. Some “drinks” contain more alcohol than others, but even so-called non-alcoholic beer contains some alcohol. Alcohol is in fact a recreational drug which helps people to relax or to “feel good” in some superficial sense. Alcohol is embraced by many people as harmless in moderation. Indeed, in moderation, alcohol has a relaxing effect on most people. And in moderation, alcohol indeed evokes “good” feelings. Alcohol is popular because it is an easy way to become relaxed, an easy way to achieve a “good” feeling, an easy way to “fit in” socially, and an easy way to avoid whatever it is that needs to be avoided. Alcoholic use tends to be habitual, a matter of habit or conditioning, a matter of social convention, although for some it is more or less occasional. And for some (relatively few) it simply has no place at all.

Most people who are intelligent in the ordinary sense realize that alcohol can be abused and that it can be addictive, indeed that some people are alcoholics and should not drink alcohol because they are unable to control their drinking. The continued excessive or compulsive recourse to intoxication by means of alcohol is considered more a matter of “disease” than a lack of self-discipline. Consuming large amounts of alcohol can be fatal or injurious, either through the inability to metabolize it quickly enough, or to damage to various internal organs. Indeed, consuming large amounts of almost anything can be fatal or injurious, but alcohol (and other recreational drugs) are dangerous at almost any level of consumption. And consuming even moderate amounts of alcohol can be fatal or injurious to oneself and to others in the sense of resulting behavioral and perceptive impediments.

These dangers of consumption of alcohol are only the superficial or readily apparent dangers, that many people recognize and acknowledge. For most people, who are not embarked upon a spiritual path, who are in the experiential phase of life on earth, drinking (alcohol) in moderation is okay. But for someone who is embarked upon the spiritual path, it is a different matter altogether. For even in moderation, alcohol is inherently counter-evolutionary. That does not

matter for most people, but for the spiritual student it is important. The spiritual student must learn to temper the personality, and integrate the personality, and align the personality with the soul. Alcohol undermines that process of tempering. Alcohol prevents integration and alignment is simply not possible without both tempering (refinement) and integration (coherence).

It is also essential for the spiritual student to deepen and broaden his or her awareness, and alcohol undermines and prevents that from happening. Alcohol dulls the senses, impairs perception, and places the most superficial part of the person "in control" of the personality. Even in small amounts, alcohol undermines the spiritual focus that is necessary for the student to be more properly aware, of oneself, of one's environment and circumstances. Moreover, the spiritual student must necessarily be dedicated to embracing the truth, and alcohol undermines even this. Alcohol leads to greater self-deception, a blurring of the ability to recognize the truth.

For the spiritual student, the consumption of alcohol, even in small and occasional amounts, is simply a matter of engaging and encouraging one's fundamental weakness, which is personality-centeredness. Properly, the spiritual student embraces the natural discipline of the path, and avoids alcohol and other recreational drugs, unquestionably.

† Commentary No. 1492

Astro-Generalization

One of the real problems in astrology is the tendency of most people, and most astrologers, to over-generalize, e.g., to read too much into a given sign or circumstance, and to apply that generalization to a particular person or situation.

The twelve astrological signs, for instance. Each of the signs has a particular character, nature, and quality. That character, nature, and quality is then a force in some chart (context), resulting in some definite-but-qualitative bias, conditioning, influence, or tendencies. If one considers the sign from first principles, then the quality (influence) is really (actually) relatively well-defined. But the actual consequences (bias, conditioning, influence, tendencies) depend

on very much more than that, i.e., they depend on the context and framework (consciousness and circumstances of the person or place under consideration).

For example, the astrological sign of Aries. From first principles, Aries has a definite character, nature, and quality, that can only properly and truly be perceived qualitatively and subjectively. At the level of second principles, Aries is a (unique) combination of masculine, fire, and cardinal properties. That is all. Everything else that one can apprehend about Aries is a matter of interpretation and inference (and hopefully intuition), in some context. To say that Aries "people" have courage is to over-generalize. It may be that most Aries "people" are relatively more courageous than others, but this is an over-generalization, one that is simply not (ever) applicable to all. Because Aries itself has nothing to do with courage. Courage is induced or indicated (as an influence) as a consequence of Aries qualification (energy) being applied to a particular person in particular circumstances. And how one embraces or is influenced by this factor (Aries qualification) depends a lot on a lot of other factors.

But most astrologers (and most people who consider these things, necessarily superficially) base their interpretations of the Aries "nature" on what they have read or been taught, or on their own experience in the way of observations of people. And the problem with this is that it (what is written, what is observed) is all biased and conditioned by the astrologer's own nature, no matter how objective he or she is trying to be. And no matter how objective the observer may be, he or she cannot apprehend every instance of the Aries nature nor properly generalize from those observations. In part because the observer is biased and conditioned by his or her own character, consciousness, culture, experience, perspective, and values; in part because the observer can only observe a relatively small percentage of cases; and in part because the period of time in which the observations take place is also biased or conditioned. So even while many astrologers reach the same conclusions as to what is the Aries nature, one must properly realize that these conclusions are simply inferences that are necessarily limited in correctness (value). That all the "best" astrologers may say the same thing does not in itself make something true. It is true only if it is true.

However, on a practical level one must simply see these things as inferred tendencies. Yes Aries "people" tend to be adventurous. So when one is reading

(or hearing) about some sign (or other factor) one should view what is written (or said) in some under-generalizing way, with conscious caveat, with conscious realization that these influences are inferred and do not apply to all, and may or may not apply to the subject (person or place) under consideration.

† Commentary No. 1493

Being and Experience

There is a considerable difference between being and experience. Experience is necessarily superficial; it pertains to the personality, to the mind and the feelings and the body. It is the relationship of a person (personality) to the world (lifetime) (incarnation). Being is something much less superficial, something much deeper, much more real. But most people do not care to realize that their main focus in life is superficial and based largely on illusion and self-deception.

Many people thus confuse being with experience. Most people consciously or unconsciously identify themselves primarily or even exclusively with the personality and/or the experience of the personality in the world, without any conscious realization that it is so, and are therefore entangled in these (false) identifications. Most people cannot even sense the presence of their own being, because they wrongly identify themselves with their own transience (transient projections), and because they are so entangled in the superficial dimension of life. And even when eventually there is an intellectual realization of these distinctions, there is no real apprehension of their own condition (entanglement) (illusion).

Experience is important. It is the means by which people learn. The assimilation of experience and the assimilation of knowledge leads to understanding (and growth in consciousness). And being entangled in experience is okay, for a while, as there is much to be learned from being so entangled. But being entangled in experience leads or strengthens being entangled in false identification, of perceiving of oneself as one's experiential consciousness, without realizing that one is truly something much greater, much deeper, and much more real (enduring). Thus much of experience is entangling,

but eventually leads through pain and suffering to greater realization. Then the student is able to begin the process of disentanglement, of learning to distinguish between the surface layers of their person and their real being. The body, the emotions, and the mind, are all part of the superficial aspect that engages experience, the personality which is immersed in the material world, in the senses, in the mind and ego.

Eventually there comes a time when the (now) spiritual student has experienced pretty much all that needs to be experienced, and the focus shifts to assimilation and (true) development (deepening). Of course assimilation generally accompanies experience, but conscious assimilation requires much more effort, and much more insightfulness, than is possible living superficially in the world. It is through assimilation of experience that the spiritual student eventually becomes aware of being, and not simply in the intellectual sense. Once a person senses the higher presence (being) and can distinguish between the lower and higher selves, one can begin to embrace being. One can begin to move beyond experience, beyond having things and doing things, to simply being.

Being is not at all a passive or inactive state. Neither is it at all an active state, though it may evoke activity at times. Being is simply a non-active place (presence), where there is both higher and lower awareness, both objectively and subjectively. If one is living at the being place, then one is not entangled in experience or even the mind, but one is able to assimilate experience without being entangled. Experience is thereby substantially enhanced. But from the being place, experience tends to be more subtle. Embracing the learning, growing, and serving process in gentle and subtle (and more meaningful) ways.

Perplexity and Wisdom

Perplexity suggests a state of confusion or bewilderment, being disturbed or puzzled by something, a lack of peacefulness of feeling and thinking. Perplexity also suggests "involvement" in the sense of being entangled in experience without requisite understanding or wisdom. And perplexity implies complication and difficulty and uncertainty.

Perplexity arises from the engagement of the mind and senses, which tend to complicate experience and hinder (deeper) understanding. If one is entangled in life, then life is relatively complicated. If one is entangled in thinking about something, then likewise it is relatively complicated. For entanglement and thinking are more or less the same phenomenon, one on more emotional levels and the other on more concrete mental levels. If one is perplexed by life or events or experience, then one is simply not apprehending life (events) (experience) as it is (as they are). There is uncertainty, in details, but there are no real mysteries, for life is (truly) relatively simple and straight-forward. It is only how people engage life that makes it complicated, and potentially perplexing.

Perplexity is also a function of the delusion of the senses and the illusion of separateness (physical reality) (materialism) (ego). Perplexity in the form of contradictions and complications arises from inconsistencies between what is believed or understood and what is perceived, and on a higher level, between the illusion that is embraced and the (actual) truth or reality. Perplexity is good, in the sense that it suggests that one is not simply passive or acquiescent with regard to experience. If one is not challenging anything, mentally or emotionally, then one can hardly be perplexed. And in being perplexed there is the possibility of actually learning something. Indeed, perplexity (apparent contradiction) (paradox) can be quite revealing, if one is open to learning. Most people who are perplexed simply try to fit the pieces into a conventional framework, and if they are successful (deluded) then avoid for the time being the opportunity to learn. But those who are interested in the (actual) truth, rather than something relatively more comfortable, look deeper or broader, and

potentially begin to see the cause and effect relationships that explain things, at least in principle.

Wisdom comes from actually embracing what is understood, and understanding comes from actually embracing what is experienced or known. If one embraces experience with an open mind, (substantially) unfettered by preconceptives (beliefs) (bias) (conditioning) (knowledge) (opinions) (presumed understanding), and without being entangled, then there is the possibility of real insight. Of course one must be properly qualified and receptive, unattached either to what is being apprehended or to the outcome, in order to truly understand something. Indeed, the spiritual student who embraces wisdom does not seek intellectual understanding and is therefore not perplexed. The spiritual student realizes the limitations of reasoning, and the limitations of intellectual understanding, and is therefore able to embrace experience and learning more subjectively and more deeply.

Of course the only real impediment is delusion, which is based primarily in the ego and the need of that artificial self to defend and promote its own existence. Thus one of the keys to embracing wisdom is the transcendence of intellect and ego. If one is able to rely on intuition rather than intellect, on the higher self rather than the lower, artificial self, then there is no perplexity. Things are simple. And straight-forward. There is Tao.

† Commentary No. 1495

The Spectrum of Buddhism

In some sense each religion or moral philosophy has a spectrum or dynamic range through which it is embraced by various peoples and communities. Buddhism in practice exhibits a range from conservative, through moderate, to liberal Buddhism. Moreover, there are healthy and unhealthy (counter-evolutionary) aspects throughout that range.

Like most religions, the greatest contribution of Buddhism is its moral philosophy. These (proper) principles of Buddhism can be (properly) embraced regardless of where the adherent fits on the scale from conservative through moderate to liberal Buddhist. Indeed, the "labels" and schools of Buddhism are

not really important. The only part that is truly important are the moral principles. And like most religions, there are lesser aspects. The "organized" dimension of any religion offers encouragement to those who need such organization in order to consider the teachings, but this dimension also generally evokes separativeness within the religion. Indeed, unlike Christianity, organized Buddhism is generally benign with regard to other religions, but like Christianity it can be actually quite hostile in its factional sense. Sadly, the factional "arguments" are almost entirely (needlessly) specious and not really important.

Most religions focus properly on the relationship of the human being to God, and this is also true in the various aspects of Buddhism, even if the "God" word is not used. Buddhism properly encourages meditation, which in principle engenders that relationship. Buddhism properly encourages the embracing the various moral precepts, which leads to refinement and potential for enlightenment. And overall Buddhism encourages a deepening spirituality that leads eventually to enlightenment. But along the way there are many pitfalls, not the least of which is the tendency of some elements within Buddhism to promote egoism or reliance on the personality instead of the underlying spiritual nature. That many Buddhist teachers do this without consciously realizing that it is egoistic is also problematic. It is always the personality-centered aspect of any religion that is its greatest weakness, and in Buddhism that is reflected in the egoism of self-reliance in the lower sense and in the glorification of so-called "masters" and in the reliance upon lineage for authority.

Within the dynamic range that is Buddhism there is religious Buddhism which is the more conservative element, with its priesthood and reliance on presumed authority. This is where the factional problems arise, consequential "actions" over matters inherently inconsequential. At the more liberal end of the spectrum are isolated adherents who are free to explore their higher (deeper) (inner) nature without much constraint other than their own conditioning. The problem with liberal Buddhism is that there tends also to be a weakening of focus and loss of momentum. In moderate Buddhism there is appreciation for tradition without entanglement in tradition, and (potentially) freedom without diffusion. But this requires dedication and commitment.

But the highest aspect of Buddhism, like the highest aspect of any religion, is its mystical tradition. Embracing the moral philosophy conscientiously and sensibly, while relying on deepening meditation to evoke the conscious awareness that is needed to achieve mystical union. Indeed, much of the essence of Buddhism is relatively unique (in the sense of openness and prominence of the teaching, not of the actual teaching, which is common to the mystical dimension of all the various religions).

† Commentary No. 1496

The Responsibility Paradox 1

A paradox is defined as something that is "seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true" and as "an argument that apparently derives self-contradictory conclusions by valid deduction from acceptable premises." The responsibility paradox arises from common beliefs in specious cause and effect relationships.

A person is (definitely) responsible and accountable for his or her own actions, attitudes, behaviors, feelings, and thoughts. A person is also responsible and accountable for the consequences of those actions, attitudes, behaviors, feelings, and thoughts. But many people attribute consequences speciously, falsely, without understanding the actual cause and effect relationships that bind all things together. Most people make assumptions, draw conclusions, make judgments, based on appearances and conditioned thinking, without apprehending the underlying reality. Consequently, many people attribute blame (responsibility) where none is actually warranted (and similarly, seemingly (self-deceptively) avoid responsibility when indeed they are responsible).

For example, in medical research. If a scientist discovers a cure for cancer, he would be (falsely) (wrongly) considered (by most people) to be responsible for saving many lives. And if someone in authority were to ban stem cell research, he would similarly be (falsely) (wrongly) considered to be responsible for much suffering and many deaths. But these beliefs are based on false assumptions in cause and effect relationships that are simply not valid.

First of all everything is inter-related. No one discovers a cure for some disease on his own. It happens only when and where and how it is allowed to happen, according to (individual and collective) karma. The cure is already existent (extant) and the understanding of this "cure" is available in higher consciousness. Thus it is a matter simply of embracing that consciousness and then proceeding in accord with karma. The person who "discovers" this may be engaged in noble work, but he is not in any real sense responsible. He is simply an agent of karma. It is not his intelligence, nor his work, nor his insight, that results in a cure. Nor that of his colleagues. He is simply a catalyst. And the outcome (cure) could not (ever) occur unless the collective consciousness was consistent with that cure.

Similarly, an action that seems to prevent a "cure" is also not a matter of responsibility for the consequences of the lack of a cure. A person who acts is simply responsible for the rightness or wrongness of that act. Which is simply the best that a person can do given his understanding, sense of ethics, conditioning, etc. A person who fails to act, has not committed any grievous crime, unless that inaction is in itself dishonest or injurious. If people suffer or die seemingly for lack of a cure, the truth is that they suffer and die consequentially from their own actions, mostly in previous lifetimes, and not by virtue of lack of cure. This in no way justifies lack of compassion for those who suffer. And much of suffering is collectively consequential, which means that those who do not suffer are also responsible in some sense for the collective consequences. We are all responsible, collectively.

Moreover, true responsibility (and accountability) is not a matter for human judgment. It is a matter of karma, of divine law (of action and consequences), of learning from experience, of learning from the consequences of our actions (and inactions). Individually and collectively. What matters is that we learn and grow. What matters is that we embrace compassion for others.

The Responsibility Paradox 2

Another example has to do with inaction. If a person is faced with a situation, where taking action might (seem to) save a life or reduce suffering, then indeed a person is responsible for his decision, action or inaction as the case may be. To act with compassion, to seek to reduce suffering, is noble. But the decision, to act or not to act, is a matter of conscience, and adherence to conscience. If one acts (or not) with good conscience (not with mere rationalization of propriety) then one is responsible for acting in good conscience. If one acts (or not) contrary to one's conscience, then one is responsible for acting contrary to one's conscience. If some person's suffering is relieved seemingly by virtue of one's action, then one is not responsible for that relief, even while it is "right" to act virtuously. Similarly, if someone suffers seemingly by virtue of one's action (or inaction), then one is not responsible for that suffering, unless there is malicious intent or carelessness.

What is important is developing one's conscience, which is the (higher) sense of righteousness and propriety and wisdom. What matters is learning and growing from our experiences. What matters is serving others, and contributing to the collective evolution in consciousness. Every opportunity to act or not to act is a test of conscience, of consciousness, of ethics and principles and values. The consequences for which one is responsible are what happen to oneself, and what is imposed upon others. Thus (directly) causing suffering or injury to others (human, animal, environment), by virtue of intention or carelessness, is something for which one is indeed responsible. But one is not inherently responsible for what happens to others. One is only responsible for what one does, or says, or thinks, or feels.

Many people play the what-if game and punish themselves for consequences that were never actually within their own control. If what one does and says and feels and thinks is honorable, then one is not responsible for any adverse consequences to others. If a person turns left instead of right, and someone dies who seemingly would not have died if one had turned right, then that death is not at all a consequence of one turning left. Because there is nothing "wrong" with one turning left or right. As long as one proceeds sincerely, without

intending to hurt anyone, and without being imprudent or careless, then one is not responsible or accountable for what happens to other people.

On the other hand, much that a person does (says) (feels) (thinks) is based in ignorance and illusion, and a person is ultimately responsible for learning and growing and overcoming that ignorance and illusion. If a person does not realize that something (action) is harmful, then the responsibility is for lack of realization, not for actually causing harm. The actual harm arises from the collective karma, for which one is responsible collectively, and not from lack of realization. Much of the environmental damage that has occurred in this world is a matter of collective ignorance and the illusion of human superiority. Similarly for much of the damage that is done to the various animal lives. The actual damage (to the environment, to the animal lives) is consequential in terms of collective conscience, but the real import is learning that one's actions can be harmful and changing one's actions accordingly, to be helpful (respectful) to the environment, to be helpful (respectful) to animal lives.

Responsibility is ultimately a paradox. One can rationalize whatever one wants to, without really understanding. So the spiritual student is simply urged to live sincerely and nobly, according to conscience.

† Commentary No. 1498

The Responsibility Paradox 3

The human being is ultimately responsible for his or her own condition in consciousness, physically, emotionally, and mentally, objectively and subjectively, and for the direct consequences of every action, every word, every feeling, and every thought. The problem is that one can never actually measure those direct consequences, since all actions (from all times) (and from all peoples (relationships)) contribute to the outcome, individually and collectively. So the focus should be upon embracing the principles that facilitate growth in consciousness, e.g., ethics, rather than simply being entangled in experience.

The human being is responsible for living without harming anyone or any living creature, to whatever extent that is possible or practicable. And for compassion

toward all creatures. And for acceptance of responsibility where one's actions cause harm, even incidentally. With increasing and deepening awareness, the spiritual student becomes aware of the effects of his or her actions on every level, in principle, and then modifies his or her actions accordingly, so that every action (and every inaction) is in harmony with the flow of life, i.e., embracing gentleness, humility, honesty, and harmlessness. Once these principles are embraced on a continuous basis, then the student can focus more so on learning and growing and serving, with frequent retrospective visits to strengthen one's commitment to gentleness, humility, honesty, and harmlessness.

Of course responsibility includes one's relationships in the world, to one's immediate family and friends, to one's community, to the human race as a whole, and to all of life. To one's (noble) profession and colleagues. This does not mean attempting to impose one's insights upon others, or (necessarily) doing what others wish for us to do, but it does mean living ethically and responsibly, embracing the higher principles and values and living (encouraging) simply by example, by virtue of how one lives in the world. There is for the spiritual student necessarily a spiritual focus, but that focus is two-fold: learning and growing on the one hand, and serving on the other. And service is primarily through the way one's life is lived, gently, graciously, honestly, helpfully, and harmlessly.

There is ultimately only one thing that a person can take to the next world (incarnation), and that is character or quality of consciousness (wisdom). All of life is designed to provide the experience that is needed in order to learn and grow in character and quality of consciousness. Thus in the final analysis, the ultimate responsibility is to embrace the purpose of life, to learn and grow and serve, to engage the evolutionary process as consciously and as effectively as one can. To eschew whatever is counter-evolutionary and to embrace whatever is evolutionary. This does not mean embracing whatever "people" think is progressive, but learning to sense what is truly evolutionary and then embracing that to the best of one's abilities. It means learning what are the higher principles and values, understanding them, and embracing them.

The spiritual student is responsible for living in accordance with his or her understanding. With conscience. With whatever wisdom is apparent. And deepening in that wisdom. The student should eschew whatever practices are

known or sensed to be unhealthy, even if those practices are embraced by most other people. And the student should embrace whatever practices are known or sensed to be healthy, without imposing or promoting, even if that means being unconventional.

† Commentary No. 1499

Refinement and Development

There are of course many ways to formulate or express what is necessary in order to properly and fully embrace the spiritual path, but the basics are relatively straight-forward and involve primarily various practices of refinement and development. These practices are both necessary and common to all (truly) spiritual paths at some point.

Refinement involves preliminary practices that prepare the body, the emotions and the mind for enlightenment. Since evolution in consciousness is continuous, so is refinement. The spiritual student, one who is evolving consciously and deliberately, never actually takes leave of the process of refinement. So the various practices continue, indefinitely. And because (commitment to) refinement becomes part of one's nature, there is no implied burden. Refinement at the physical level means taking care of the physical body. Not smoking. Not drinking alcohol. Not taking recreational drugs. Not eating flesh foods, i.e., meat, fish, and fowl. Not over-eating or placing any substantive burden on the physical body. And it means maintaining some reasonable level of physical fitness. In short, it means cultivating a healthy physical body and refining that body so that it serves as an effective instrument for experience and expression. And all of these practices are necessary to serve as a basis for refinement on emotional and mental levels. Without embracing these practices the student cannot progress beyond simply being spiritually-minded, which is not at all being spiritually-realized. So there is no basis for compromise.

Refinement also means tempering and refining the emotional nature. Not being entangled in the senses. Calming the emotional nature. Allowing the emotional body to simply reflect higher impressions rather than being entangled in various astral phenomena. And it means tempering and refining the mental

nature. Of becoming more open-minded, less biased, less conditioned, less materialistic, less entangled in beliefs and opinions. More open to truth. Indeed, it means embracing truth, being dedicated to being truthful in all regards, and to seeking truth, through meditation and through studying philosophy, psychology, religion, and theosophy. Seeking to learn and grow and serve. It also means embracing progressively higher standards of ethics. Including harmlessness. Being considerate toward all lives, human, animal, plant, and mineral.

Development involves various intermediate practices. In a sense refinement is a matter of refining the pieces of the human personality, while development is refining and integrating the whole of the personality. In a sense, refinement leads to development and development requires continual refinement. Continuing and building upon the framework of the preliminary practices, the spiritual student must then temper the personality as a whole, becoming much less self-centered, becoming much less personality-centered, becoming much less head-centered. Many people "think" they are heart-centered when in fact they are head-centered but emotionally-polarized. The spiritual student must become mentally-polarized and truly heart-centered, before the student can truly become intuitively aware.

Thus development involves the cultivation of gentleness and humility, conquering and transcending the ego and the intellect, in the process becoming truly heart-centered and selfless. Cultivating awareness, embracing God in every sense. Embracing love, light, and healing energy. Sharing that love, light, and healing energy. Without imposing in any way.

The Price of Awareness

For the spiritual student there is no burden involved in committing to the process of refinement, development, and service, to the spiritual path, to evolution in consciousness. Embracing the various necessary practices and principles may not be easy, but it is not ever a burden for anyone who is actually "called" to the path.

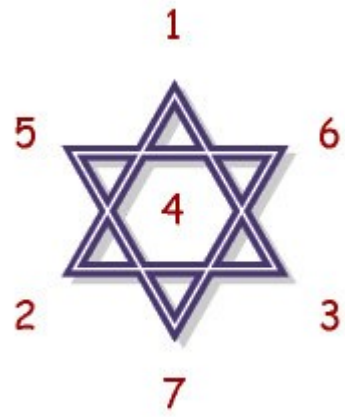
As one progresses along the way (spiritual path) there is great (gentle) joy in increasing and deepening awareness, realization of oneself, one's immediate environment, and people in that environment or context. But there is also great pain, as one passes through the dark night of the soul, as one realizes the extent to which (almost) everyone is asleep and unaware of underlying truth and reality. One naturally develops compassion, and feels a great connectedness with humanity and with all life, but that connectedness is interior, a matter of higher consciousness. Externally, it is as if we are alone, self-realized and isolated within the sea of unenlightened humanity. While there is great joy in being consciously connected at the higher levels, there is great sadness and compassion for the condition in consciousness that almost everyone suffers, i.e., self-absorption, ignorance, unenlightenment, entanglement, and sleep (unconsciousness, lack of any real awareness).

One might look about for kindred spirits. And realize that there are very, very few. And consequently, being somewhat enlightened but still functioning at human levels, there is also likely an accompanying great sense of isolation and loneliness. Of course there are many who are religious without being spiritual. And there are many who are spiritually-minded without being spiritually-realized, or even spiritually-committed. So there are many who seem to be kindred spirits until one realizes that their participation and commitments are relatively superficial. They embrace only those of the various practices that are convenient, or what appeal to them. And consequently, they (well-intended but not serious students) make little progress in relation to depth of consciousness.

The (true) spiritual student is different. The true spiritual student is called to the path, by a soul in resonance with the path. And that resonance gradually

engulfs and embraces the entire lower nature. And as the awareness grows there are times of particular feelings of isolation and loneliness, as well as an overall, more subtle sense of isolation and loneliness. There is also some sense of frustration, in the sense that with awareness of conditions in consciousness there is also apprehension of the lack of awareness of others and the inability of the spiritual student to appreciably help them. One cannot convey insights to another. At best there would be an intellectual understanding. But real insight must be self-realized, else it is transient and not actually realized. One cannot heal another. At best one can offer healing energy and hope that others are responsive to that energy. But ultimately, people attract and embrace healing energy because they are responsive, not merely because they need healing.

The price of awareness is simply to suffer these realizations, and to continue to serve humanity with whatever humility, compassion, and consideration can be evoked.



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