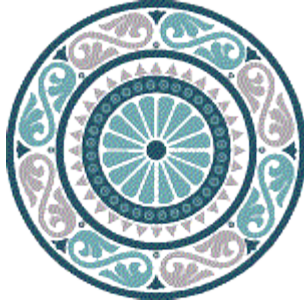


The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 0.3

Articles 1

The Purpose of Life



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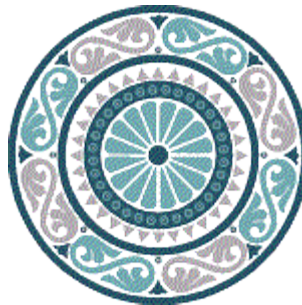
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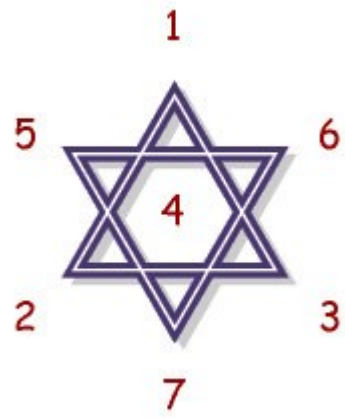
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Chapter 0.3

Articles 1



The Purpose of Life

- The purpose of life is the evolution of consciousness. This occurs through a broad framework of cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis, as the lifewave evolves through a considerable diversity of experience and expression. Each soul incarnates time and time again, gathering and assimilating experience, gradually evolving, ever onward and upward. In each successive lifetime, much of the assimilated experience and conscience (wisdom) of previous lives is available. All proceeds in accordance with natural law (karma) which provides experience as a consequence of action (behavior, feelings, thoughts).

The Purpose of Life

From the time ages ago after the germ of mind began to unfold and man began to become a thinking being, certain eternal questions about the mysteries of existence first began to be asked and considered by the more progressed members of mankind. "What is the purpose of life?" "Who am I?" "Where did I come from?" "What is my reason for being?" For those early seekers, insights into the answers were eventually realized through earnest reflection, contemplation, and meditation, and by exposure to the Ancient Wisdom teachings concerning the mysteries of life. Though many thousands of years have passed, the process today remains very much the same. But first one must ask the questions.

And interestingly, not that many people do. Most of humanity remain asleep, absorbed in mundane consciousness and daily living, never stopping to even pose the questions. Those who do usually become satisfied with orthodox doctrines and dogmas. Only a few resolutely search more deeply for answers to the meaning of life. But when the effort is intensified, and the questions asked with openmindedness, sincerity, and dedication, the searchers of today also begin to realize answers which have long been available to serious spiritual seekers.

Much of the hidden knowledge of the ages can be found in the Ancient Wisdom teachings which explain the source and purpose of life, and the metaphysical laws which govern the universe. Aspects comprise the inner, essential basis of religion, philosophy, and science, although the external expressions of these are often quite distorted. The Ancient Wisdom was once taught to the most evolved of humanity in the various mystery schools. Today as humanity's consciousness has improved and expanded, much more of the preliminary information has been made publicly available by the inner guardians of the teachings. But there is ever a deeper, hidden core which is not revealed until humanity is greatly more evolved, for knowledge is power, and it would be misused by the selfish and unqualified. The deeper wisdom is available only to the more (properly) qualified spiritual students.

The Ancient Wisdom teachings which are disclosed have been greatly valued by many illustrious and profound thinkers over the course of history, but the teachings are not meant to be blindly accepted as truth unless they ring true to the individual seeker. Some ideas may seem relatively strange at first, but with an open mind, a person can initially consider them as interesting hypotheses until he is better able to evaluate them. At some point in a person's development, there will be an inner intuitive knowing as to what is true and meaningful, or otherwise.

The Ageless Wisdom teaches that the purpose of life is evolution of consciousness through experience, expression, and growth. The ultimate goal for man at this stage is human perfection, although as that is achieved ever greater vistas and possibilities become apparent, for evolution is never-ending and human perfection is only a relative perfection. Man (humanity) is a part of the one life (God) which is eternal, immutable, and boundless, from which the universe and all that is in it arises. The One Life differentiates itself into many lives, forms, and consciousness that operate within a great plan of cyclic evolution which proceeds progressively onward and upward. The ancient teachings state that everything in the universe including seemingly lifeless matter is conscious to some degree on its own level and is evolving. The consciousness in matter, however, is rather limited and dull compared with that of humanity.

It is not possible for human minds to understand this absolute creator, God, the infinite all, the "omnipresent, eternal, boundless, immutable principle, on which all speculation is necessarily limited, since it transcends the power of human conception." But it is possible for man to understand that there is a true unity and oneness of all life, because God is in all life in the universe (all life in the universe is in God), and yet God transcends it and is more than it. It is also possible for man to understand aspects of that part of the plan of God in which humanity has a role.

The problem of life in the human condition is man's inability to see through illusion, realize this reality, and understand what truth actually is. Truth is relative to the stage of a person's consciousness, awareness, and perception. In the world of ordinary personality existence, an individual's perception is clouded by illusion and by his personal desires, thoughts, and feelings which distort

matters. These illusions can be dispelled only by self-refinement which enables a person's higher self or divine aspect to begin to be expressed and a clearer understanding revealed. Thus self-improvement and the overcoming of illusion are significant goals in life.

Those who seek to know more about the purpose of life may be prompted by their higher self through a variety of life experience. They may be experiencing much limitation, suffering, or hopelessness in their lives, and unable to find a reason or meaning for it all. Or they may have much opportunity, with an abundance of material things and myriad worldly experiences, yet wonder, "Is that all there is?" They may be scientifically oriented and seeking answers to these questions for which science (also religion) is poorly equipped to address. All of mankind is enrolled in the school of life, with its variety of experiences reflecting many different classrooms, with many different grades and levels of learning. Not everyone is the same age and not everyone was enrolled at the same time, but all learn through the same process of observing and assimilating cause and effect. The young ones are not very aware of cause and effect, but as they gain more experience they note that certain actions bring certain results. If they consider those results pleasant, they will want to continue the actions. However if the results are viewed as unpleasant, they will want to modify their actions.

The process of cause and effect is known as karma, and it is the great teacher. It is a universal natural law that encourages proper adjustment, learning, and progress. Through it a person realizes that the energies he sends out come back to him; as he sows, he reaps. Karma is not punishment nor is it reward. It is the fruit of our actions, impersonally providing the lessons and opportunities of life. We can improve our opportunities or conversely increase our limitations by how we respond to it. It is up to us.

But why, one may wonder, is life sometimes such a struggle, filled with so much seeming adversity, crisis, and limitation? The ancient teachings suggest that this is a forcing process to compel our development and provide the opportunity for learning. If life were always easy, it is suggested that mankind's growth would be much less, for there would be nothing to challenge and thereby develop or expand our abilities and capabilities. It is a way of learning in this school of life. It also reflects the type of energy that is indicative of the human lifewave,

that of the quality of harmony through conflict. Thus out of conflict comes eventual harmony, realization, and progress. Our problems are our opportunities.

The experiences of life are merited no matter how unjust or severe they may seem to be to the normal observer, for the law of karma takes into consideration all causative factors and moderating influences. A person is responsible for all he experiences in life. His attitude toward those experiences often determines the degree of pain and suffering experienced, if any. When he is responsive to learning the lessons afforded (of circumstances), then insights can be more readily achieved and much distress avoided. But with resistance comes a prolonging of the situation which often produces pain and discomfort.

Man has free will in proportion to his stage of development and in accordance with the bounds of karma. It is appropriate for him to endeavor to change and improve adverse situations if possible. However if the conditions simply will not change regardless of effort, then he must accept it and make the best of it. A life of seeming ease may appear on the surface appealing, but it may offer little progress if it contains only little challenges to be met. A life filled with crises may represent much achievement in growth of consciousness if the problems and stresses faced are new and stimulating. However, if they are simply recurring variations of old problems (lessons) that one refuses to meet, little progress will be achieved.

As an individual evolves and gains skill in handling the challenges of daily living, his problems and tensions become more subjective and subtle and are not as apparent to observers. But tensions and stresses of an ever higher order will remain a part of the life process, encouraging, prodding, and impelling the student of life onward to greater heights of consciousness and realization. Eventually the real goal of life becomes not avoiding living in the world, but progressing beyond the limitations of the world so as to be able to help others in the human family and in the lower kingdoms.

Reincarnation

With so much to learn in the vast school of life on earth, and with human perfection as man's goal for graduation, it seems unlikely that man could master all the lessons and accomplishments in merely one lifetime. It seems especially impossible when one considers how short the length of a human lifetime can be, such as for an individual who dies prematurely (for whatever (karmic) reasons). Nor does it seem fair (at first glance) that one might have a few years of experience (opportunity) while another might have many. Even a full lifetime seems too short a period of time for individual evolution.

The issue of justness also brings into consideration the extremes of opportunity and abundance versus deprivation and limitation which exist in the world. The learning conditions in one lifetime appear to be so unequal for men, that unless man had more than one set of circumstances for schooling, life would seem incredibly unfair and God very unjust.

The Ancient Wisdom teaches, in fact, precisely that idea that man does have the opportunity of more than one lifetime on earth to master the lessons of life. The teachings state that human evolution is a series of rebirths on earth until all that is necessary for man to experience and to learn and develop has been completed. Thus a myriad of conditions and circumstances are faced by each man which contain all the opportunities for necessary growth. The degree of effort that a man applies to his schooling determines how long (the number of incarnations) it takes for him to complete the various grades and levels.

The aspect of a man that is reborn or reincarnated into earth life is his personality. The ancient teachings state that man is composed of three different aspects. (1) The highest aspect of man is the spirit aspect, which is composed of a divine spark of God known as a monad. The spirit or monad is beyond man's real understanding or accessing until he is fully evolved in human consciousness. (2) The intermediate aspect of man is a reflection of the monad, which is the man's soul, also called the higher self. The soul and its wisdom and guidance can be accessed and known by man as he purifies and refines himself. (3) The lowest aspect of man is his personality, known as the lower

self. The personality consists of a man's physical body, his emotional nature, and his concrete mind.

Who and what is man? Most people (and modern science) only recognize and deal with external man, the lower man (the personality). But man is much more than that -- he is divine. However, this divinity exists as a yet unfulfilled potential waiting to be developed and unfolded. Man's personality is the aspect of himself that dies after death, but his immortal soul remains to absorb the wisdom assimilated from the earthly experiences. The soul is the repository of all talents, virtues, and development. These will be used again as the soul creates another personality for yet another incarnation in life on earth. The process continues again and again until the need for further experience, learning, and incarnations has been met and human perfection is achieved.

The evolution of consciousness is a glorious and progressive process, moving ever upward and onward. A distortion of this concept called transmigration exists in which a human soul is said to be reborn into sub-human forms instead of human. But that is simply not possible, as it would be a step backward not forward.

Reincarnation (rebirth) goes hand in hand with karma, as the law of cause and effect draws a soul back repeatedly into physical expression to learn more and to balance the effects the individuality has created in previous lifetimes. Because of this, an observer cannot always recognize the karmic cause of a particular result in an incarnation if the causative factor occurred in a previous lifetime.

And many effects are the composite consequences of more than one cause, which further complicates the delineation of cause and effect. One can only know that there is perfect justice under the law of karma, and the cause exists even if he cannot perceive it currently. There is an accumulation of karma to be carried over into future incarnations because less evolved man has little wisdom and creates many more inappropriate results than he can offset in one lifetime.

For the generally materialistic Western man, ideas about karma and reincarnation may seem quite new and foreign (although nonetheless intuitively valid). Western man might be surprised to know that a lot of the world already believe in these concepts. They are taught in Eastern religions such as

Hinduism and Buddhism, and have been accepted by many great thinkers throughout history.

In the process of reincarnation, the soul is the aspect of man which before rebirth subjectively (qualitatively) outlines in a broad manner the plan of life, what lessons are to be learned, what qualities are to be strengthened, what failings are to be overcome, and what ideally should be accomplished in an upcoming incarnation. The soul has within itself the necessary wisdom for the personality to deal with any challenging situations if the personality can refine and quiet itself enough to achieve a measure of alignment with the refined soul consciousness. Daily meditation is a process by which this connection can begin to be bridged.

The soul may program for inclusion in the incarnation certain talents, abilities, and encouraging circumstances, all earned and merited by karma. Conversely, it may plan certain physical, emotional, or mental limitations or defects to be experienced by the individual to prompt growth in some area of the personality. Thus a blind person, for example, might develop an exceptional sense of hearing or touch. Or such a handicap may draw forth outstanding inner awareness, and heart qualities such as love, compassion, and goodwill. Then the "handicap" becomes an opportunity for growth because of the individual's (appropriate) attitude and response to the challenge.

Living in poverty, or in a family, work, or national situation where there is strife and oppression may not be easy. But the lives of numerous men and women in the past have shown how much stronger and more aware they became for having experienced and surmounted the more difficult problems. And in doing so, they no doubt balanced some of their individual karmic debt as well.

Additionally, in certain cases of national or group strife, the more evolved individuals might even have helped offset a small measure of group karma as well, for all groups, including humanity as a whole, experience the karmic consequences of their actions and learn through the effects. As the more spiritually aware individuals balance their own karma, they naturally become service oriented and deal with group karma.

Opportunities small or great must be used and not ignored or they will result in further limitation. Whether there is abundance or scarcity, a person is responsible for using resources as wisely as possible in accordance with his quality of consciousness, his awareness, and consistent with his potential for service to others.

Since evolution in a new incarnation generally takes up at the stage it ended in the previous one, the factors of heredity and environment are dictated largely by past karma (and for the more evolved individual, considerations of spiritual service obligations to be met). The soul selects the physical plane parents according to the quality of parents merited by the individual and the quality of parents available. The incarnating individual brings forward a combination of hereditary factors both from the parents and himself. Frequently members of a person's family or some of his new associates will be individuals he has met and known before in previous lifetimes. Bonds of love or of hate draw them back together, as do unresolved energies where debts remain to be paid and energies balanced.

The soul also chooses the astrological factors, the time and place of birth, which set into motion the environmental circumstances and potentials to unfold. Because man has free will in accordance with his karma and quality of consciousness, much of what unfolds will be in like measure subject to self-determinism. After he has reincarnated, it is up to the individual to study himself and ascertain his strengths, weaknesses, and what might be the purpose of the incarnation. He must endeavor to know himself. Meditative reflection is quite helpful in the undertaking.

A person may wonder if he has indeed lived many lifetimes on earth, why doesn't he remember it? The memory of the previous existences remains with the soul consciousness. In each rebirth, the personality is a new one, with a newly created physical body and a new brain. Since the new brain has not recorded the previous past life experience, it cannot remember it. Moreover, the details of past lifetimes are not that important. What is significant are the virtues, talents, and quality of consciousness developed in them. All of that is assimilated into the soul to be added to its accumulation of wisdom and quality.

If man were aware of all the details of his past lives, he would be overwhelmed with all that he has experienced -- the memories, the pain, the suffering, the anguish, the unfortunate matters that he can no longer do anything about, in addition to the happy occurrences that are past. It would distract him from his current life and events and relationships that he can and indeed should have an impact on now. He must currently do what is before him to do. Man must achieve the most he can from his present incarnation, and know that in doing so, the past and the future will take care of themselves. For by living a spiritual life in the present, he will assuredly balance the misdeeds of the past, as well as appropriately create bountiful opportunities for the future.

† Article No. 41

The Seven Planes of Consciousness

As man seeks to understand more about the purpose of life (the evolution of consciousness), he eventually realizes that human life functions on more than the physical plane of consciousness, that there exist more subtle levels of consciousness.

There are seven planes or levels of consciousness, each one less dense and of a higher vibration and finer quality than the lower one. The matter that composes the seven planes accordingly is progressively less dense and more refined. When a person is in physical incarnation he is normally aware of only certain physical plane matter (solid, liquid, and gaseous matter). But the other less solid levels (dimensions) are there also, as they interpenetrate the physical plane (to whatever extent the physical plane is being manifested). To function on these additional levels of consciousness, a person utilizes a vehicle or body of matter corresponding to each plane.

Each of the seven planes of consciousness can be considered a world or dimension in itself, with its own distinct polarization and vibration, yet each plane or level coexists with the other six planes as well. Because the matter within each plane is vibrating at a frequency different from the other planes, the various planes do not interfere with each other. This is similar, for example, to the different frequencies of radio waves which are unseen and which can be

individually tuned into if one has a receiver set to the right frequency (or vibration). They, like the seven planes, also exist together but can be differentiated. In reality, all is energy (and resulting vibration). Spirit and matter represent the two opposite poles of energy, with spirit being the highest point of matter, and matter being the lowest (by degrees of density) point of spirit.

Accordingly, just as man, the microcosm, wears seven sheaths of matter and consciousness, so does the earth itself. The earth thus is comprised of seven concentric planes, worlds, or dimensions of matter and consciousness. The more refined matter (on the higher planes) is thought of as having greater spatial extent or being "above" the denser matter (the denser, less refined or lower planes), but in fact there is no spatial extent or "altitude" except for perspective convenience. In this context, the word "lower" denotes substance (or consciousness) that is more dense and less pure in quality, with a lower rate of vibration.

Of the seven planes of consciousness, an average man typically expresses himself only on the lower three planes of consciousness. He does not have access to the higher four planes until he has achieved additional development of consciousness resulting in the building of the appropriate higher vehicles of consciousness.

The three lower planes of consciousness (commencing with the lowest, most dense) are: (7) the physical plane, (6) the emotional (or astral) plane, and (5) the mental plane, known also as the manasic plane. These correspond to the physical body, the emotional nature (or emotional body), and the mind (or mental body), comprised of the concrete and the abstract mind.

Most of ordinary man's mental activity consists of concrete thinking on the (lower) concrete region of the mental plane. It is only as man embarks on developing and expanding his mind that he begins to utilize his (higher) abstract mind and functions in the abstract region of the mental plane. These three bodies (or vehicles) of man, excluding the abstract mind, compose man's personality or lower self.

The two higher aspects of man, his soul and his monad, which in reality comprise the real man, dwell on the higher planes of consciousness. The four higher planes consist of: (4) the intuitional (or buddhic) plane, (3) the plane of spiritual will, known also as the atmic or nirvanic plane, (2) the monadic plane, and (1) the world of God, from whence all the lower planes of manifestation are derived.

A man's soul or higher self dwells in the realms of the abstract mental plane, the intuitional plane, and the spiritual plane, utilizing the causal body. The monad, man's spirit or divine aspect, is found on the monadic plane. To achieve direct contact with the soul, a man must raise (develop, purify, and refine) his consciousness to at least the abstract mental plane, which is the lowest region of the soul. As he purifies the vibration of his lower self (the personality), it becomes more in harmony with and responsive to his higher self (the soul), and the bridge of consciousness between the two is gradually built.

To link with his monad or divine spark, man must first have progressed and evolved in spiritual quality to the point of achieving lasting (continual) soul consciousness. Only after that, developing access to the monadic plane of consciousness becomes possible. As this is accomplished, man can then actually realize and express the true divine nature that is the ultimate basis of who and what he really is.

Each of the seven major planes of consciousness is divided into seven sub-planes, with every sub-plane characterized by a specific polarization and density. On the physical plane, for example, the three lower sub-planes consist of solid, liquid, and gaseous matter (not respectively), which compose the dense physical region. Interpenetrating and extending beyond that is the (higher) etheric region of the physical plane, comprised of four etheric, less solid sub-planes, invisible to normal human perception. The etheric region is the realm of physical plane forces and energies.

This consistency is reflected in the human body. The dense physical body is only an outer shell of dense physical matter which is actually energized by an inner etheric body (also called the energy body, the vital body, or the etheric double) comprised of etheric matter. The etheric body, which permeates the physical body and normally extends approximately one-half inch beyond it, is a

web of vital energy responsible for the function, health, and well-being of the physical body.

A system of energy centers or chakras (a Sanskrit word for "wheel") exists within the lower bodies of man which helps provide a means of interaction within the various planes and bodies of consciousness. The chakras (as manifested on etheric levels) correspond in finer matter to the endocrine glands of the physical body and develop naturally as man spiritually purifies himself. The chakras, however, are not intended to be tampered with by the curious, as serious dangers including mental disorders and insanity exist for the unaware and unrefined person. With spiritual refinement, the chakras unfold gradually, naturally, and with safety.

Coexistent with the physical plane is the emotional (or astral) plane. This is the fluctuating world of emotions, feelings, and desires. It too is divided into seven sub-planes with the lowest sub-planes being the region of coarse emotions and desires such as hate, anger, fear, pride, selfishness, lust, and greed. The higher astral sub-planes which are made up of more refined matter are the field of higher emotions and desires such as impersonal love, devotion, compassion, and spiritual aspiration.

The quality or purity of the emotional energies can be indicated by their color. However, an individual who has astral vision must perceive these energies looking out through his own emotional nature which will color his perspective. The effects of the emotional (astral) body or aura extend beyond the physical body (and the etheric double) and reflect through its hue and luminosity (or lack thereof) the quality of emotion being expressed by an individual. The law of attraction operates to a high extent on the astral plane, with like (emotions and desires) attracting like. Therefore if one is filled with coarse feelings and yearnings, he will attract additional coarseness to him, while repelling purer, more noble emotions and inclinations (or vice versa). Thus it benefits a person to watch carefully that which he allows himself to feel and desire.

The next plane of consciousness is the mental plane with its two divisions of thought, the region of concrete thought composed of the four lower sub-planes, and the region of abstract (formless) thought found on the higher three sub-planes. Man builds and vivifies his mental body by right use of thought and by

an ever higher order of thinking. The process of development, purification, and refinement leads man ultimately from the lower planes of consciousness and the worlds of the personality to the higher planes and the worlds of the soul and monad.

Ordinary man in actuality is much more active on some of the lower planes of consciousness than he generally realizes. For at night during sleep, one's focus of consciousness leaves the physical body while it is being rested and restored, and dwells on the emotional (astral) plane, or in atypical cases, on the mental plane. An individual on occasion may remember part of these experiences as dreams, but usually the dreams are jumbled and distorted. Only later as he is more developed will a person have achieved continuity of consciousness which will allow him to recall clearly and accurately all of his activities on the inner (more subtle) planes of consciousness.

Besides during nightly periods of sleep, an individual also dwells for longer segments of time on the inner planes when he releases the physical body at death and leaves the physical plane. From another perspective, with the death of the physical body, man is born into another world, dimension, or plane of consciousness. The next higher plane, the astral (emotional) plane, becomes his focus as he continues the journey through the lower planes, before eventually being drawn back again to the physical plane in another incarnation. Thus is the cycle of life as man grows by repeated opportunity for experience, knowledge, and progress on the various planes of consciousness until he achieves human (relative) perfection, thereby fulfilling (in the earth scheme at least) the intended purpose of life.

Death and the Afterlife 1

Learning about the purpose of life brings into consideration the subject of death and what happens after one dies. Within Western civilization, the inevitable approach of death generally elicits fear and misunderstanding, with many vexing questions: When a person dies, is he annihilated, or does he survive? If he survives, what is life after death like? Is there a heaven? Is there a hell? Is there eternal life?

For those with awareness of theosophical teachings, greater insights into the transition process may be more easily achieved and misunderstanding and trepidation alleviated. At death only the physical body is released, and man persists, remaining clothed in his several less dense bodies or vehicles of consciousness. In these he moves on to the next higher plane of consciousness, the astral (or emotional) plane. Indeed he does survive and continues in the process of transition, advancing on after periods of refinement and assimilation at each stage through the astral and then mental planes of consciousness, until he has eliminated his lower (astral and mental) vehicles and is clothed only in his causal body, the vehicle of his soul.

During this period, the wisdom, virtues, talents, and quality developed from the experiences on the lower planes (dimensions) of consciousness are extracted, while eventually preparation is made for future incarnation (rebirth) in the physical world. Each stage is a significant part of the recurring cycle of life, filled with potential for continued growth and evolution.

Although the dense physical plane seems to the average man in physical incarnation as the most real, the other more subtle planes of consciousness do exist and provide valid experiences and opportunities for the inhabitants of those planes as well. As an individual moves on toward the higher planes of consciousness and the realm of the soul, he advances closer to reality.

From this perspective, there is no death of the human consciousness. The releasing of (or death of) the physical body which is the outer coat or sheath just signals a commencing of the process of transition. But man is not his physical

body (nor his emotional body, nor his mental body); he is the soul, and the beginning of this transition process takes place according to the determination of the soul.

The soul is linked to the physical body via a silver cord (also referred to as the sutratma). The silver cord is divided into two threads; one called the consciousness thread is attached in the head region of the physical body, and the other called the life thread is secured in the heart region. During sleep, the consciousness thread and the higher bodies of consciousness leave the physical body, and an individual's focus of consciousness dwells in the astral plane of consciousness (generally), to be recalled to the physical body as one awakens back into the physical plane. All the while the life thread which provides for the continuity of life within the physical body remains secured in the heart.

At physical death, however, the life thread joins with the consciousness thread as both are recalled by the soul, through the breaking of the silver cord link with the physical form. As a result, the physical body no longer can maintain its cohesion and vitality. The higher bodies of consciousness are liberated from the dense physical vehicle and are drawn into the next world of the astral plane. The etheric double is also disengaged from the dense physical body; however it continues to hover over the dense body while it decomposes.

Also withdrawn by the soul to a higher plane is the permanent physical atom in which is found the archetype for the physical body containing the physical attributes developed. The permanent physical atom will be used again in forming the dense body for future physical incarnations.

Left behind at death then is the dense physical body which traditionally in Western culture has been buried. Cremation, however, used often in Eastern cultures, holds many advantages and is the preferred method for spiritual reasons. This avoids the blight of slowing decaying corpses in cemeteries which effects the etheric and psychic atmosphere of our planet. Instead, cremation quickly releases the physical elements to return to their source to be used again in future manifestations. It also disperses negative energies that may be attached to the corpse, and brings about proper release and restitution.

Memorial services which focus on the continuity of life and the uplifting release of the individual to the higher planes of consciousness provide a source of encouragement to loved ones, and are helpful in preventing an extended period of mourning which distracts and detains the transitioning individual. With an understanding of the recurring cycle of life and death and the realization that there is no actual death of human consciousness, attachments can be released which might impede the progress of one whose time it is to move on and who no longer has a physical body in which to function.

The experiences and quality of life after death are directly related to the quality of life lived in the physical world. The quality of matter (energy) that he has built into his astral and mental bodies during physical plane life draws him to the corresponding astral sub-plane. The more purified his emotions and desires, the higher is the matter that composes his astral body, and he will naturally be attracted to a higher astral sub-plane. The lower his desires and feelings, the lower the corresponding astral sub-plane.

Onto whatever astral sub-plane an individual is first drawn, there occurs a review of the just completed life experience on the physical plane to learn the lessons that it contains. If one had engaged in the process of retrospection (regular review of one's life) while still in the physical world, he may have already abstracted much of the meaning and learning contained within his experiences. Additionally, because he still had a physical vehicle in which to function, he could also have taken immediate steps to right any wrongs committed, thereby helping to balance his karma as well.

On the astral plane, the lowest three sub-planes are referred to as the region of purgatory because the energy and experiences there are rather coarse. A very coarse individual will dwell there until he has dissipated (overcome) some of his lower desires and emotions. As he does so the coarser matter will be released and eventually he will move on to the next higher astral sub-plane. Addictions to such impediments as alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or inappropriate sexual activity will after death hold a person in bondage on the lower astral sub-planes until they are overcome. The individual will still retain these cravings, but will no longer have a physical vehicle in which to satisfy or deal with the longings. Therefore it is even more challenging to overcome such addictions

after leaving the physical plane and thus is beneficial to sublimate such desires while still in incarnation.

Is there a hell? Not really. But by his own gross consciousness, harmful projections, and negative quality of energy, an extremely coarse individual will create and attract his own hellish environment on the lower astral. With more enlightened consciousness, an individual can instead create his own version of heaven in the astral. The higher astral planes reflect the aspirational life and representations of mankind's concepts of paradise, utopia, or heaven. A heaven or hell experience is dependent upon the quality of an individual's consciousness and the expectations one has about the after life. The world of desire simply reflects and corresponds to what is in one's consciousness.

† Article No. 43

Death and the Afterlife 2

The region of the astral plane involved in the after-death transition process is referred to as kamaloka. The three lowest astral kamalokic sub-planes comprise the region of purgatory, characterized by coarse energies and experiences. The fourth astral kamalokic sub-plane is frequently called the borderland, and the highest three kamalokic sub-planes are designated the first heaven, embracing purer, more noble aspirations and beauty.

The law of attraction holds sway on the astral plane. Each person's experiences on the plane differ according to the person's quality of consciousness, desires, feelings, and thoughts. By one's desires and thoughts, an individual of average spiritual consciousness can create in the fluidic astral environment of colors and shapes anything he wants, and he can remain absorbed in his seemingly real creations and pleasures for quite some time.

If one's desire is for riches, power, or sensual pleasures, one can create them. Or if one desires instant spiritual awareness or a specific perspective of the kingdom of God, the illusion can be manifested. If a person is expecting to see a beloved religious figure when he passes into the astral plane, his desire can create that very experience as well as creating lifelike thought-forms of family or

friends. Eventually he will realize the illusion of it all and through detachment overcome his attraction and desire for such experiences. Only then will he move on to higher sub-planes and more meaningful activities.

Contributing to the general realization of the continuity of life after death are investigations of near-death experiences in which a person is clinically dead yet medically revived and brought back to life. A number of people from all walks of life have reported comparable experiences, with most encountering instead of pain or suffering a great peace and love (on the astral plane), after which they reportedly become aware that their work in the current life is not completed and they must (karmically) return to their body.

Frequently the experience brings increased spiritual awareness and a desire to help others as well as a definite release from the fear of death for the individual realizes that life does continue. Individuals involved in near-death experiences may interpret the occurrences in whatever religious or philosophical terms to which they ascribe, but overall similarities are notable.

For persons on the physical plane overwhelmed by misery and pain, the concept of escape through suicide may seem like a way out. But that is an illusion. One cannot escape one's problems in physical life or physical death for the law of karma holds each accountable. In death one only drops the physical body; the problems remain and often seem more intense and challenging to deal with when one lacks a physical body. The distraught suicide individual is usually held in limbo on the lower astral planes for the interval his normal physical plane life would have been had it not been inappropriately interrupted. The karmic consequences and arrogance of taking one's own life and thwarting the soul's purpose are great (unless there are significant mitigating circumstances such as no longer preserving forms which haven't any remaining coherent purpose to serve).

Death at the appropriate time is a beneficial release from crystallization and limitation of physical form and consciousness and results in restitution. It involves "the destruction of form in order that the indwelling life may shine forth in fullness." Physical death commences the transition process of advancing from one state of consciousness to a higher one.

A person may not be immediately aware that the process has begun. In cases of sudden death which occur through accident, violence, or sudden health failures such as heart attack or stroke, a person initially may not even realize he is physically dead because parts of the astral plane of consciousness superficially appear like the physical earth plane. Eventually the disincarnated person becomes aware of inconsistencies which he realizes could not be of the physical world. The newly deceased individual also will receive assistance in the transition process from those who serve on those levels.

For the average person, the immediate after-life experience is a continuance of the physical living interests, consciousness, and awareness. For the spiritual student, death is a continuance of the spiritual service and learning activities which he has been participating in during intervals of sleep.

However for the extremely coarse or cruelly selfish individual, intense desire for physical plane sensuality can temporarily bind him to the physical earth after death. These earth-bound individuals who no longer have a physical body seek by whatever means to experience physical life again and may even attempt to appropriate another person's physical vehicle in which to experience physical sensations and appease cravings and addictions. Only when the desires are somewhat overcome and dissipated can they free themselves and move on into the transition process on the astral plane.

Another category of people who may remain for a period bound to the earth after physical death are those who are strongly attached to physically living persons and cannot reconcile leaving them, or individuals who greatly desire to accomplish unfulfilled earthly duties even though they no longer have a physical body. These disincarnate persons may at times appear to those on earth as ghostly apparitions. Moreover, strong attachments by those living on earth to loved ones who have died may distract them or hold the loved ones temporarily earth-bound. Attempts to contact the deceased through séances or other means are counterproductive and possibly harmful to all parties involved. More appropriate is to send loved ones light, love, and encouraging thoughts which can reach them on the astral plane and be of benefit to them in transition.

The after-life stages, if the individual is properly motivated and developed, offer much opportunity for growth of consciousness and spiritual service. As always

the law of karma governs persons whether in or out of incarnation, and wisdom in choices results in a more timely transition through the subtle planes and increased current and future opportunity.

Detachment and refinement of desire ultimately allow the transitioning individual to free himself and pass through the astral plane. Those who are more spiritually aware will consciously and mentally assist in the process, and because their attachments are fewer (detachment being a focus of their physical plane life as well), the process is expedited. The astral body becomes so purified and refined that the astral particles composing it are gradually released. As the astral plane lessons are extracted and the pull of the mental plane increases, a second death occurs and the astral body is released.

There ensues a period of gestation in which the astral quality is withdrawn into the astral permanent atom for future use and the mental body is vivified. Upon awakening into the mental plane, the individual finds himself in what is known as devachan, the second heaven region. Using his mental body, he functions on the concrete sub-planes of the mental plane to the degree of his development, assimilating the mental experiences of his previous incarnation.

There is potentially much bliss in the second heaven experience, of an even more refined quality than that the first heaven of the astral plane. However, for average man who is more emotionally oriented than mentally developed, participation is limited. Unless he led a more substantial mental life previously, developing the concrete and the abstract mind, the ability cannot be developed during the interlude between lives.

The more mentally developed person may dwell on the mental plane in devachan for considerable periods, participating in the fruits of earlier planted mental seed-thoughts. There the individual also learns the technique of building his vehicles of consciousness for future incarnation. Spiritual students who are mentally polarized and aligned to a considerable extent with their soul frequently forego the devachic experience to instead reincarnate for purposes of service. Generally they have already assimilated much of their mental experience while in physical incarnation so there is little further need for reflection. They also sense that the bliss of devachan cannot compare to the greater joy and bliss of nirvana, achieved at a higher state of consciousness after

more evolutionary progress (not that any such bliss is part of the goal), nor with the joy of service even in the lower worlds.

When (as) learning and wisdom are assimilated from mental experiences, the concrete mental particles of the mental body are released and the third death occurs. The individual remains clad in his higher formless sheath, the causal body, which is the vehicle of the soul. This concludes the transition of the personality. The physical, emotional, and mental permanent atoms are recalled along with the sutratma into the causal vehicle. The causal body is the repository of all talents, virtues, and wisdom developed by the individual in his long course of incarnations.

The period between death and rebirth is not complete until the individual experiences to whatever degree possible the higher abstract (formless) mental sub-planes in which he contacts or touches his soul. For the unevolved person, this may be a brief, limited, unconscious or semi-conscious experience while for the more highly evolved individual who has developed more of his abstract and spiritual abilities, the experience will be of longer duration and more conscious. A more insightful overview of the just completed life, its purpose, and quality may be obtained in that state of consciousness, while a brief insight into the next incarnation is given by the soul as a means of understanding the future learning opportunities, and as a way of connecting all the previous incarnations so that common evolutionary threads may be more apparent. Certainly the karmic learning experiences of the future lie in the roots of the past.

Soon the urge to reincarnate occurs. The typical individual, sensing imperfection and the lack of development of his vehicles of consciousness which prevented him from participating more fully on the higher planes, desires to return to the physical plane for further experience, development, and refinement. The call of karma and evolution cannot be ignored.

The after-life period between death and rebirth is sometimes called bardo. The length of the bardo experience can vary considerably (from months to thousands of years) as there is no set timeframe valid for everyone. The bardo cycle may be relatively short for the unevolved person who has limited consciousness on the higher planes, and limited mental experiences to assimilate. On the other hand, it may also be brief for the more highly evolved and developed serious spiritual

student mentally polarized and aligned with his soul who undergoes much of the assimilation process while still in physical incarnation and chooses to return to incarnation sooner. Additionally the bardo interval may be short for the individual who died during childhood with less experience to assimilate. The longest bardo periods often correlate with a person who is emotionally and mentally quite developed but with much experience to reflect upon.

In physical life and in death, it is apparent that nothing stays the same and the only constancy is change (growth). There are cycles of manifestation and unmanifestation, periods of activity and seeming inactivity, day and night, but life never ends and however it may change and clothe itself, it continues evermore on an upward spiral of magnificent and expanding evolution.

† Article No. 45

Dwelling Within the Good

What a person repeatedly thinks about, lives (in some dimension or plane of consciousness). The reason for this is that energy follows thought and a relatively focused individual thus necessarily energizes his thoughts and feelings. The thoughts may exist as thought-forms visible on the astral or mental planes of consciousness, on the etheric sub-plane, and if they are potent enough may even be manifested in some form on the physical plane. Indeed, thoughts are things.

This has significance for spiritual students tasked with the responsibility of encouraging the good and the potentially good within all lives. And in actuality, what in life is not potentially good? For all life is part of the One Life which is God (Absolute Goodness). Any particular small aspect of God (individual or group) may not be currently manifesting much of its inherent goodness because of selfishness, separateness, and ignorance (lack of development, refinement, and awareness). Accordingly, one should, in honesty and truthfulness, necessarily acknowledge such, for imperfections and shadows should be recognized to the best of one's ability.

But one must also look for the good however flickering or subtle or transient in appearance it may be. For therein lies the power of transformation. The currently insignificant expressions of goodness, however seldom and weakly they may occur (within ourselves or others), should be nurtured and encouraged.

To actively participate in this endeavor, a person must be aware of his thoughts and thinking habits. For as he goes about daily life, an individual is continually thinking, whether unconsciously (as with most people) or consciously, and his thoughts, however weak or strong the thought currents may be, however apparently beneficial or harmful, nonetheless impinge upon and impact others for whatever appropriate measure of good or ill. Thought-forms which are rather feeble and incoherent won't be projected much beyond the thinker's own aura.

But as man evolves and his mental potency grows, the ability to benefit or harm others likewise increases. Thus in one's thought life, a man (woman) of goodwill should consciously and constantly dwell within the good, looking for it within himself, in others, and in the world at large, and as he gives energy to that good that will encourage it to flourish.

The power of thought is one that humanity is only on the threshold of beginning to understand. An individual or group (humanity) creates within the bounds of karma its own reality to a large extent by its thoughts, feelings, and desires, which are necessarily reflected in its actions.

If an individual would like to help change (improve) the world, then he must first begin to change himself. Persons who are serious spiritual students are more concerned with improving the (inner) quality of consciousness which will eventually result in improved outer physical expression and right human relationships. Being relatively less self-centered and less selfish, they are not particularly interested in acquiring physical possessions or manipulating the form aspect as they are more focused on the inner world of spiritual realities and less concerned than average man with material things.

However if a spiritual student in physical incarnation is concerned with only the higher dimensions (and desirous of escape to them), thinking the physical world is a dreadful place, then probably it will be to him (her), and by energizing those thoughts he will not attract to himself as much of the good and beauty

that is possible (albeit on a lower turn of the spiral). If one is in physical incarnation, then quite likely part of his work lies within the physical plane regardless of its lower vibration and coarser energies, and no matter how seemingly discouraging are its imperfections.

A spiritual student's service (work) and activities (calling) may frequently include helping to receive, transform, and anchor on the physical plane higher spiritual energies, and through this there can be no real discouragement. In reality, a spiritual student needs to appreciate (with detachment) the value of experience and opportunity for service on each plane of consciousness, and on whatever plane he finds himself see the good so that he may encourage its expression.

To begin to consciously change himself, any individual first must have the aspiration to do so and believe it is possible to improve. Then through self-observation and self-examination, it will become apparent what quality within himself most needs improvement and what virtue is appropriate to develop. By utilizing the power of thought, he can affirm and visualize the virtue and then "act as if" the improved condition of consciousness was currently already in existence within himself.

The powerful pull of continually revitalized thoughts and visualizations (concentration, affirmation, visualization, and projection) of self-improvement will facilitate (within the limits of karma and to the degree of his mental ability and self-discipline) the manifestation of that which is dwelled upon. As one's spiritual consciousness and awareness evolve, more direct means of transformation and mental energy projection are realized.

One should endeavor to improve consciousness and higher realization rather than to change specific circumstances or events which might be intended by karma for a person's highest good as a means of learning. Quite specific thought projections also may not take into account unexpected complications which are provided for by more general, appropriately qualified projections. Also, specific projections which are personality-centered or colored by personal energy (desire) only strengthen the lower self and may inhibit spiritual awareness. Proper (selfless) motive is of increasing significance as one evolves.

Although a person has the responsibility to change himself, taking the same hands-on action without invitation in regard to another person is interference and imposition. A general disposition of positive thinking and an overall qualification encouraging spiritual growth are helpful and can be shared with others without imposition.

By dwelling within the good (as an expression of harmlessness), while having first clearly acknowledged that which is not yet good, one can help to encourage the unfoldment of that greater good (God) which he desires. Dwelling for a very long, extended length of time on that which is not yet good often is counterproductive, for one is giving energy to that which he really does not want to strengthen. The concept of sin and the sinful nature of man, as well as an individual's low self-esteem both when emphasized also may create a sense of worthlessness that undermines efforts to improve oneself and bring forward the potential (God) within.

The concept of good is a relative one, dependent upon the degree of evolution an individual (or group) has attained. What may be considered "good" behavior or right action (right thinking, feeling, and desiring) for one individual may be insufficient for another who is more evolved, of which more is required. The upward spiral of evolution continually raises the standards of appropriateness and goodness, so one must recognize that what once was considered appropriate and "good" for him or her may no longer be so.

In addition, the standards for one well established on the spiritual path (of accelerated evolution and service) are accordingly more demanding (higher and stricter) than for humanity as a whole. Thus there should be no attachment to specific expressions of goodness, but rather there should be a whole-hearted commitment to the concept of goodness, embracing whatever appropriate manifestations it may take.

The heart aspect of the transformation process is as necessary to the unfoldment of goodness as the head aspect. The head aspect of light (enlightenment) and power (will, self-discipline) can bring forth the realization of imperfections (shadows) in an individual and provide much of the directing power for a person to achieve improvement. But the heart, with its qualities of love, compassion, goodwill, humility, consideration, gentleness, and

thoughtfulness, provides the encouragement, qualification, and nurturing so necessary for a person to achieve success himself or to properly encourage another person.

Within the head quality, the analytical aspect of the concrete mind in its evaluation process lends itself to divide and separate and to criticize. The heart quality through compassion and recognition of oneness unifies and sees the failing as a temporary (however long enduring) stage through which the individual must pass for learning as a result of karmic growth opportunity. The attitude (type of energy) with which one views a particular situation will make it seem to be a bitter pill to swallow, or (more properly) a meaningful opportunity for learning. With a higher awareness, man will realize that he is fortunate for his opportunities (challenges) whatever they may be, for in them lie possibilities of greater goodness.

Within any transformation process, there needs to be the proper balance of head and heart. A too soft (immature) heart, one that is emotionally oriented, or not cognizant of the requirements of the law of karma (or later the requirements of the spiritual path), may ascribe to unrealistically easy standards and condone coddling and excuses in which little real progress will be achieved. A too harsh head (critical, belittling, separative) will be discouraging and equally limiting. As one is able to draw upon the soul, through development, refinement, and selfless service, greater will be intuitive realization and the proper unfoldment and balance of head and heart.

And more encompassing will be the sense of oneness in which a person sees the greater, more evolved lives not as separate from himself, put on a pedestal of unattainability by one as "lowly" as he knows himself to be by comparison. Rather, they may be viewed as elder brothers and teachers deserving of respect and love (appreciation), as those who have traveled a similar path at an earlier time and through their own efforts now demonstrate what is possible someday for those who follow. That in itself can be of immense encouragement, drawing one forward along the path of evolution.

Encouragement should be shared with others without expectation or judgment, and with the realization that the course of evolution for humanity as a whole is slow but true. One should not expect specific results, nor expect to see results

within a certain timeframe. The spiritual student should radiate encouraging energies with detachment and simply because it is a reflection of his consciousness.

The method one uses in encouraging those in one's life who are drawn to one's environment should not involve imposing upon other people. Much is dependent on circumstances and relationships which affect appropriateness. For example, the degree and method with which a person actively encourages his child will necessarily differ from the degree and method of encouragement he utilizes in sharing (energy and encouragement) with a neighbor.

The appropriate method of encouragement is also affected by the ray make-up (type of energy of which a person is composed which indicates lines of approach and rapport), and the general stage of evolution of the individual one seeks to help (the younger ones might need more explicit encouragement while for the more evolved a subtle encouragement (presence) may suffice). Not that one should necessarily "seek" to help others in any particular sense. One should simply be helpful as appropriate, focusing primarily on general goodwill rather than particular people and their particular problems.

It is not the role of the spiritual student to judge others. But it is the role of the spiritual student to be helpful, with due consideration for the karmic factors and freedom of expression. An individual's responsiveness to encouragement is a significant factor. Each person's free will and right to choose for himself must be respected in order to prevent interference and inappropriately imposing one's will upon another. A general qualification containing good and uplifting energies (light, love, and goodwill) may be appropriately shared with all.

A person can (better) be a source of encouragement to others indirectly (inductively) by his own example of livingness (presence, quality of consciousness). Even an act of simple kindness (gentleness, courtesy) such as a smile or helping hand may convey encouraging energies, just as the giver is also a receiver of much (silent, selfless) encouragement himself. For there exists an unbroken chain of light, love, and encouraging energies streaming from the Absolute God (Creator) through His countless differentiations, from greatly evolved beings down to the most primitive type of life.

All contain intrinsic goodness responding in various ways to stimulus and gradually unfolding toward eventual self-initiative (more conscious development, refinement, and selfless service) which brings them to their next step of unfoldment of the God-self within. The chain is unbroken and enduring and all aspects of the One Life have their place. Thus in our thinking, may we consciously endeavor to dwell within the good, thereby lovingly and respectfully giving energy and encouragement to the good inherent in all.

† Article No. 47

Cosmogogenesis

Just as there are cycles of manifestation and unmanifestation for man the microcosm (e.g., physical life and death), so it is with the macrocosm. Throughout the entire universe, cycles and periodicity exist. Some familiar examples are day and night, waking and sleeping, breathing in and breathing out, the ebb and flow of tides, the four seasons, the cyclic migration of birds, geological cycles, the rise and fall of civilizations, the periodic revolution of planets around the sun, and the cycle of constellations moving (relatively) through the zodiac.

All reflect the Hermetic axiom "As above, so below." Correspondences to the physical plane cycle of day and night are the periods (of immense duration) of activity and rest known as universal days and nights, cosmic days and nights, and solar days and nights. There are days and nights of Brahma, each of which is equal to millions of actual years, with each year of Brahma consisting of 360 days and nights of Brahma. The numbers of years are somewhat misleading, because of their symbolic value and because the concept of time is illusive and existent mainly on the physical plane and involving physical plane consciousness. ("An hour of objective time today is not of the same actual duration as an hour of objective time a hundred years ago. Objective space-time is neither absolute nor constant" because it is affected by the polarity, degree of manifestation, and by perspective).

After an enormous, almost inconceivable period of manifestation, even the universe itself will be withdrawn for a cycle of rest and assimilation. The

Sanskrit concept of manvantara refers to a period of manifestation, while pralaya denotes a period of unmanifestation (obscuration), rest, and assimilation. The progressive cycles (spirals) occur entirely naturally as an essential element of the divine plan of evolution. The universal law of periodicity thus is reflected in both the microcosm and the macrocosm.

For individuals unfamiliar with the ancient wisdom or theosophical teachings, the concept of a period of universal obscuration may be surprising, but upon reflection the concept is quite consistent, and provides for the rest and assimilation proffered the microcosm. One may achieve increased understanding through a study of cosmogenesis regarding the origin and development of the universe (the macrocosm); likewise anthropogenesis deals with the origin and development of man (a microcosm).

From the Absolute God, the unmanifested, boundless, ultimate divine being of which the universe is only a reflection, proceeds the periodic manifestation of the universe (and other universes). The Absolute God differentiates Himself into a hierarchy of beings and consciousness varying greatly in awareness and abilities from supreme, vastly intelligent, godlike quality on down to microscopic lives of very limited awareness, yet latent with potentiality. "Having pervaded this universe with a fragment of myself, I remain."

The Absolute God is unknowable to man as He is beyond our powers of comprehension. By His reflection and through correspondences, one may begin to approach an understanding. From the Absolute God comes forth (by differentiation) the Supreme Being, the "architect of the universe." The Supreme Being manifests as a supreme Trinity, variously referred to as The Father, The Son, and The Holy Ghost; or The First Logos (another name for God in the descending hierarchy of godlike consciousness), The Second Logos, and The Third Logos; or the first three Rays; or Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma.

The three aspects embody certain divine essences (energies) and qualities on the highest level: (1) (The First Ray) -- pure spirit, characterized by the power, will, and plan of God; (2) (The Second Ray) -- consciousness in its many expressions, distinguished by the love and wisdom of God; and (3) (The Third Ray) -- matter or form, characterized by the intelligent activity of God. The higher Trinity is differentiated into seven types of energy and quality, the Seven Rays, and is

reflected (by correspondence) through “differentiation by threes and sevens” into other lives and consciousness.

The Supreme Being manifests first as a Trinity and then as seven Supreme Logoi. A Supreme Logos exists as a Trinity and then as seven Universal Logoi. Downward through the seven cosmic planes of consciousness, the panorama of manifestation unfurls: a Universal Logos into a triplicity and then seven Cosmic Logoi; a Cosmic Logos into a triplicity and then seven Solar Logoi; a Solar Logos into a triplicity and then into seven Planetary Logoi. Divine manifestation proceeds deeper and deeper into denser matter ultimately reflecting itself in a myriad of lesser lives and consciousness. It is achieved in a complex process of cycles within cycles, involving planetary schemes, chains, globes, rounds, lifewaves, kingdoms, and lesser days and nights of activity and rest.

At the heart of the divine plan is the evolution of both consciousness and form. The physically visible heavenly bodies and the light they emit are merely a dense, dim reflection of their exalted, inner consciousness and divine quality, analogously as man’s much lesser physical body is a limited physical vehicle and a lower reflection of his divine spark or monad (the God within). Man is not even aware of the heavenly beings who express only on more subtle, less dense planes of consciousness. Although form (matter) appropriately serves a purpose of providing a needed vehicle of interaction, truly it is not the form aspect which should be revered (e.g., the physical sun), but rather the divine consciousness (e.g., the solar logos), a reflection of which inhabits the form.

Indeed because the universe and all that comprises it is part of God, everything in the universe from the greatest divine being down to an atomic or sub-atomic particle is alive and conscious on some level; there is no such thing as dead matter. Matter is simply “crystallized spirit,” and spirit is “liberated matter”; both are energy, which is the essence of the universe and is life itself. Energy can be modified and changed into one form or another, but it cannot be destroyed.

The multi-dimensional universe is not primarily the result of chance, but rather is the outer expression of an inner divine purpose and plan of the great divine intelligence (the Absolute God) resulting in cosmic (solar, planetary) laws and

interrelated order. The universe is manifested and preserved that the purpose of evolution may unfold, just as the lives within each cosmic unit are qualified by the will and purpose of the divine consciousness. The evolutionary plan consists of general and specific guidelines which may be adapted in some of the lesser specifics as needed to meet the overall objectives. Even the need and freedom to be innovative (within limits) is planned for, as epigenesis itself is an aspect of the encompassing design of the teleological (purposive) universe.

Within each planetary scheme, as a lifewave is created (differentiated from (within) God) it begins the descent into matter to gain experience and development. At first the lives are unconscious, lacking any self-awareness, yet possessing the inherent potential to develop God consciousness (after eons of development). The first stage of the evolutionary cycle is referred to as involution during which the (subhuman) lives descend and become indwelling in matter, and eventually progress to (human) self-consciousness. When that happens, the second stage of evolution proper commences involving ascent or liberation from matter, returning to the Logos or God source.

In the process of manifestation, both creation and evolution occur. Creation takes place as God differentiates the various lives to be manifested while evolution occurs as the lives develop, and progress. As the powers and consciousness latent within the lesser lives are evolved and brought into fruition, so do the lesser beings contribute to the progression of the greater lives. When the divine purpose in the grand evolutionary cycle for all life is (ultimately) achieved within the universe, so will the need for manifestation be fulfilled. Accordingly will commence a corresponding cycle of universal pralaya with a resulting period of assimilation and rest.

Over the ages the story of the creative manifestation of the universe has been related symbolically in exoteric religious teachings and Scriptures. The teachings generally are layered with many levels of meaning, and the interpretation an individual ascribes to them is dependent upon his stage of evolution and degree of understanding. In the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament Bible, for example, the progressive spiral of manifestation is symbolically told as the cosmic (solar, planetary) days and nights of creation unroll. There is periodicity of the macrocosm and microcosm. From the void of inactivity comes a new cycle of emergence and an emanation of the cosmos.

From the One God issues forth the many. And thus the process of evolution begins anew.

† Article No. 49

Involution and Evolution

In the broad framework of evolution, both involution and evolution proper occur and in the human evolution encompass the development and progress of subhuman, human, and superhuman lives. Involution is the first part of the cycle that commences after an outpouring of lives called a lifewave is created or differentiated by (within) God. Each lifewave contains divine sparks of God or monads which are spirit and beyond consciousness. Latent within each monad, however, is divine consciousness and the potentiality of godlike qualities and powers. Through the process of evolution after eons of growth and refinement, these potentialities are eventually developed and actualized.

Involution occurs as a new lifewave (spirit) descends deeper and deeper into matter in order to gain needed experience and expression. The descent continues down the various planes of consciousness until the lifewave reaches the lowest plane of manifestation, wherein evolution proper and the upward path of return to the God-source is then embarked upon. The process of involution is one of unconscious evolution by the lifewave in which greater lives and involutory forces work on the lifewave externally.

The lifewave in its involutory journey expresses itself and moves through a variety of forms and kingdoms. It does so as a group having a group soul (not individual souls) as the various lives move through the involutory (subhuman) kingdoms within our planetary aura: the elemental, mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms. Each kingdom with its many diverse forms and expressions is a step forward in consciousness; although the consciousness may be primitive, it is nonetheless evolving. The forms of each kingdom are also involved in a slow process of evolution and change to provide improved vehicles for the incarnation of a lifewave. When a form becomes too limited or crystallized, the species may become extinct. The form has ceased to adapt; however, the life (consciousness) inhabiting the form will reappear in other, improved forms.

As a lifewave completes its involutory, subhuman cycle, it undertakes the transition into the human kingdom through the process of individualization. Accordingly, the group soul of the lifewave is differentiated into (seeming) individual souls and appropriated by the monads for utilization on the path of ascent. Thus in the human kingdom there is individual self-consciousness, and progress is achieved by conscious effort from within as the lives themselves each endeavor to achieve greater awareness and liberation from matter.

In the process of evolution, a lifewave indwells in each successive kingdom to gain additional experience and growth of consciousness. Currently the human lifewave has progressed through the elemental, mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms and presently resides in the human kingdom. The forms of each of the previous kingdoms in the past were quite unlike their appearances today, for the forms also have been evolving.

Once transitioned into the human kingdom, a lifewave evolves (in the current major cycle) through seven lengthy epochs of seven root-races. A root-race provides a distinct type of human form for the human lives to inhabit. Each root-race may be divided into seven sub-races, which may further be divided into branch races. Each division reflects modifications of the basic root-race pattern, which eventually overlap and blend until pure distinction is no longer apparent. Even though in the human kingdom there are and have been many diverse racial forms, the lives that indwell them generally comprise one lifewave. From that perspective, there is only one human race (inhabiting many racial forms).

Each racial pattern contributes certain characteristics and qualities and adds to the overall progress of the human race. A soul incarnates in many root-races, sub-races, and branch races in its long course of evolution. It does so without attachment, as the soul is beyond race, color, nationality, or sexual distinction.

Humanity's passage through the various root-races has included the first root-race, the Polarian; the second root-race, the Hyperborean; the third root-race, the Lemurian; the fourth root-race, the Atlantean; and the fifth root-race, the Aryan. (The term Aryan should not be confused with any (misleading and separative) concept of racial superiority.) The first and second root-races, which did not utilize dense physical forms, are today extinct, and the third root-race

has almost disappeared. Currently the fourth and fifth root-races are in active manifestation, while the sixth and seventh root-races will emerge in the distant future.

For each root-race, there is generally an achievement in consciousness to be developed by the majority of the inhabitants. For the Atlantean root-race, this was the full stimulation of emotional consciousness (to be refined and overcome or integrated by the mental development of subsequent root-races), and for the Aryan root-race, it is substantial mental development. However, the level of consciousness does not directly correspond to the root-race because consciousness and form evolve somewhat independently of each other. For example, most humans currently in Aryan forms are emotionally polarized (Atlantean) in consciousness.

The goal in this the fifth epoch is for the majority of people to achieve greater mental development which will lead to integration of the personality and eventual mental polarization. When this is accomplished, one (an individual) functions as a stable, non-fragmented unit, and one's mind non-reactively controls and directs one's thoughts, emotions, body, and actions. The next step possible for a person is then the achievement of a consistent alignment in consciousness with one's soul or higher self, thus being able to access the wisdom, virtues, and guidance therein. This expansion in consciousness is accomplished only after extensive development, purification, and refinement of the lower self, the personality.

Naturally, within a lifewave, not all lives evolve at the same rate. There are forerunners who respond more rapidly to evolutionary forces than does the bulk of the lifewave which (the bulk) is generally advancing at the intended or more or less average rate. Additionally there are the stragglers who produce resistance and are slower to respond than the majority. Hence a bell-shaped curve reflects the evolutionary progress. This is natural as the pioneers serve as a source of encouragement and leadership for the lifewave, while the stragglers serve as a balance to prevent an unqualified and hasty development of the lifewave.

Overall, however, a lifewave should achieve appropriate, intended progress. At vast periods of time (eons), a lifewave undergoes significant tests of

consciousness to measure growth. Those lives who fail to pass the major tests of consciousness are separated from the lifewave and held over as a group for further development in the succeeding lifewave.

In the earth system, there is another major evolutionary group which parallels the human evolution, called the deva evolution. It, too, evolves as a chain of lifewaves expressing through various deva or angelic kingdoms which are the correspondences of the subhuman, human, and superhuman kingdoms. Although the deva evolution is complementary to the human evolution, it is quite different. While the human evolution is an objective one, the deva evolution is mostly subjective. Likewise, while the polarity of the human evolution is positive (masculine) and active, the polarity of the deva evolution is negative (feminine) and passive.

In the deva evolution, there is no objective incarnation or any apparent separation from the God-source. Rather, there are stages of slow transformation in which the devas transition through their lifewaves, kingdoms, and races as they "embody the forces of evolution and provide for the maintenance of the various human [evolutionary] kingdoms ... as the dynamic sustaining forces of all (lower) manifestation." Lower order devas exist mainly as matter while higher order devas do not even manifest in form.

For average man, there is considerable misunderstanding regarding the deva or angelic evolution. Over the years, man has tended to ascribe human forms to angels because he has misinterpreted their unusual (foreign), subtle energies. However, angels do not express human characteristics nor are they self-conscious in any human sense. Many devas assist humanity or the plant or animal kingdoms and encourage healing in spite of the fact that humanity has little awareness or understanding of them. But because of the difference in polarity, it is dangerous for untrained and unaware individuals to directly contact the devas. The higher order devas exist beyond the planes of lower manifestation and have evolved great consciousness and potency (albeit markedly different from that to be attained along human lines).

As with the human evolution, the deva evolution completes its unfoldment and transformation moving through the various deva kingdoms and stages and then attains a synthesis and concluding assimilation within the greater divine life

from whence it came, to await another great cycle of manifestation (experience and expression).

† Article No. 50

Learning From Experience

In the human kingdom, individual lives or souls are expressed as personalities currently on the physical, emotional, and mental planes of consciousness. The personality (or lower self) is the vehicle of incarnation for the soul (the higher self), and consists of the physical body, the emotional body, and the concrete mind. Although the soul consciousness is beyond such worldly considerations, the personality or lower reflection manifests in form as either male or female, within a particular race (sub-race), nationality, tribe, religion (non-religion), philosophy, and culture, generally ascribing to specific customs, beliefs, and activities. In this capacity, experience of all types is engendered, and by learning from these experiences, an individual eventually gains knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

In each incarnation, the particular situational factors change as the soul creates a new environment with new specifics for the personality to experience. Accordingly in the school of life, each new incarnation means a new classroom in which to learn. For example, the soul which earlier may have expressed itself as a male personality may next express as a female; or incarnate as a white person followed by being a black person; as an Arab and next as a Jew; as a Christian and later as a Hindu; as an American and next as a Russian or Chinese. The changes provide for a rich learning environment, and help to balance and prevent crystallization and over-identification by the personality with any one aspect of form, be it a particular sexual identification, nationality, religion, etc. Because all life is one life, emphasizing these lesser perspectives will inhibit true growth and progress.

At first (in earlier epochs of human development), the new life (which had recently individualized and become self-conscious) has little past experience, knowledge, or wisdom from which to draw upon for understanding and insight. Thus many lives are initially spent simply gaining experience. Gradually the conscience is built as the personality learns through trial and error what is

appropriate at this elementary stage. Karma, the law of cause and effect, serves to indirectly teach as the person experiences the consequences of his actions. This learning of basic appropriateness is stored in the conscience and is available on unconscious or conscious levels, depending on the personality's responsiveness.

As the many and various personality incarnations occur, the life experiences are assimilated into the soul. This means that the essence of each incarnation is incorporated into the soul consciousness. The details of any particular incarnation are not that important, but what is learned is significant, as well as the virtues and talents developed. Knowledge is transmuted into wisdom, and these essences are stored in the reservoir of the soul consciousness to be used in future personality incarnations (or in other levels of expression).

The process of assimilation of life experience happens in two ways: unconsciously, and long after the experience; and consciously, as the experience is occurring or shortly afterwards. The majority of humanity assimilates experience in the first way, generally doing so mostly after death during the after-life transition on the more subtle planes of consciousness. During physical incarnation, most people are not able to extract the meaning and understanding of their life experiences at a fast enough rate. Therefore a great deal of unprocessed experience accumulates which must be reviewed later, after which the essence of knowledge and wisdom is incorporated into the soul.

The second method of assimilation is undertaken by serious spiritual students who are consciously endeavoring to learn life's lessons, as well as (to some degree in general) by people who have developed a good intelligence and have some awareness. Awareness is key to the process, for in the second method one must first be open to learning from experience, and then must be relatively aware of many factors such as one's motives, relationships, abilities, and past experiences. Honesty, humility, detachment, and impersonality are significant qualities necessary for seeing clearly. Because so many numerous and diverse factors frequently must be correlated and evaluated, it is often difficult to understand the meaning and significance of life experiences without intuitive insight.

Frequently, evaluations are made superficially, using faulty observation and reasoning. While a person should not over-simplify the assessment process, he (or she) should not over-complicate it either, seeing significance where none exists. Even where experience is not strongly biased or diffused by the emotions, if the individual utilizes only his concrete mind and rationalization, he will fail to discern the greater insight available through the higher abstract mind and (soul) intuition (as he develops these). He also will be unable to properly correlate the many diverse factors and inputs to achieve proper understanding.

Each experience a person participates in is related to every other of his experiences in all timeframes, as well as to the experience of other people and other lives. The abstract mind and the intuition of the soul can provide some correlation and understanding of current experience while the individual is still in physical incarnation and thus able to learn from and make appropriate adjustments in the present life situation. The conclusions formed, however, should be tentative and subject to further review after more experience, growth, and insight.

Retrospection, a period of review, reflection, and evaluation, if done at the end of each day, helps an individual learn from current experience and prevents a large accumulation of experience having to be processed later. By regularly allowing time each night, an individual can quietly withdraw from outer activity, become poised and centered within the inner consciousness, and meditatively and reflectively review the day's events. With honesty, humility, and detachment, a person looks for significance and meaning within the day's manifold experiences.

Sometimes reviewing the day's events in reverse order assists in achieving a more impersonal perspective and allows the thread of cause and effect energies to become clearer. Special attention should be given to one's motives, attitudes, thoughts, and feelings during the day, as well as to one's actions.

In the assessment process, one can ask one's self: "How could I have better handled a particular situation or response? What can I learn from this? What was the quality of my motives, my thoughts, and feelings? Do I need to make any compensation for inappropriate energies (or actions) that I have created and

sent out? Do I need to forgive others for any wrongs directed to me? Have I utilized the opportunities for learning presented to me today? Have I met all my obligations and duty? What have I done to help others? What has been the over-all quality of my life expression today? What is the quality of my physical, emotional, and mental bodies, and is there anything I should do to help restore vitality, health, balance, and purity? Am I ready to meet tomorrow as another opportunity for growth, determined to make it an even better day of livingness?"

In this evaluative process, the individual (preferably the soul) is the judge of these factors according to one's values, understandings, and abilities. Through daily retrospection, one can identify and overcome weaknesses, while strengthening the good, as well as taking steps to balance and fulfill one's karma.

Of the two methods of assimilation of life experience, obviously the second method of consciously and timely processing experience provides greater opportunity for learning and progress. As one is able to discern the meaning and significance of life experience and learn the lessons therein in a timely fashion, he is able to make compensations for the misplaced and inappropriate energies he has expressed and to become a relatively conscious co-creator (within the bounds of karma) in his current life unfoldment. A person realizes that events in life aren't experiences that just happen to him (or her); rather he understands they are the results of his previous behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. They are opportunities in which to demonstrate new-found learning (and even the wisdom of past assimilation) and discerned insights into spiritual laws and processes of life.

Consciously learning from life experience leads to the realization of the importance of consistently expressing right thoughts, right feelings, and right actions in one's daily life, and of becoming more inclusive in one's perspective, concerned with helping others, and learning about God and the spiritual life. These realizations inevitably come with growth in consciousness.

However, the personality in the early and intermediate stages of development generally is focused predominately on physical and emotional living and mundane/personal concerns. Most individuals in incarnation today live mainly for day to day pleasures and material pursuits. The majority of people are not

aware of their higher self, the soul, and their spiritual aspect, the monadic spark of God. They see themselves (by default if not consciously) as being separate from God, and from other men and women, and from other life. They believe they exist only as their physical body, emotions, and mind. They are unable to grasp the purpose of life in general, and their own purpose specifically. This, consequently, results in much confusion, conflict, and unhappiness, as well as the unfocused, selfish, and inappropriate activity expressed by so many who are in incarnation.

In separateness lies the seeds of the selfishness, disharmony, and misery in the world today. By identifying only with the separate form aspect of himself, man overlooks the divine aspect and fails to realize what he really is and what is possible for him to achieve as part of the one life. Lack of realization of the oneness of all life and the great potentiality that lies within each of us serves as a limiter to development and progress to the fullest.

There are many different ways and different rates in which the various human lives incarnated as personalities grow and evolve, depending upon their consciousness, awareness, and responsiveness to stimuli, both external and internal. At first, an individual unthinkingly reacts to external stimuli rather than intelligently (considerately or intuitively) responding. In most persons, the emotions and desires still dominate, and the concrete mind, without refinement, tends to be reactive, as well as being separative, subject to biases, close-minded, and critical.

Through conscious efforts toward purification and refinement, levels of emotional and mental improvement are achieved and eventually the abstract mind begins to be developed also, but the mind is still vulnerable to mindsets, limitations, and illusions. For example, the general human perspective of life is a self-centered one and focused only on human experience, giving it extreme importance instead of thinking in more universal terms. There is a tendency also to anthropomorphize God, viewing God in human terms. Anything expansive that is beyond a typical individual's understanding is usually interpreted in familiar human terms. Because this is a common misunderstanding of most humanity, these mistaken perceptions are reinforced and blindly accepted, until at some point they are inwardly challenged.

Interestingly, the mind, for all its initial limitations, after development, purification, and refinement, becomes the tool for the overall development, refinement, and self-discipline of the entire personality. It is the mind, responding to evolutionary pressure and the promptings of the soul, which institutes measures of control, balance, and purification over the physical body and the emotions of the personality. And it is the mind which finally unifies the three competing and fragmented aspects of the personality (physical body, emotions, mind) into one coherent, functioning unit. The achievement of personality integration is one of the many significant accomplishments for the evolving human life. Additionally, development of the abstract mind is essential for the personality to achieve a measure of alignment in consciousness with the greater soul consciousness.

Though the outer world of the senses provides a myriad of stimuli and experiences to process, ultimately, it is the responding to the internal stimuli of the soul that provides any real expansion of consciousness. As the personality is properly cultivated, developed, and purified, it becomes more in tune to the inner soul promptings. With self-discipline and refinement, the personality is elevated and becomes a better, purer instrument with which the soul can then work by qualification in the lower worlds. Thus the soul is able to incorporate within itself more wisdom, virtue, and quality assimilated from the personality life experience, and true spiritual progress is eventually achieved. As the personality is developed and refined, it moves from the darkness and separation of the lower world into the enlightenment and oneness of the soul, and the constraints of limited awareness, glamour, and illusion are gradually overcome.

Progress in the Human Kingdom

The original (human) lifewave that left the God-source on the path of descent into manifestation and form was unconscious and lacking development. It moved through the various involutory kingdoms, the elemental, mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms. From the animal kingdom, the lifewave individualized, and the lives became self-conscious as the lifewave progressed into the human kingdom, and thus began the path of ascent or return to the Godhead.

Today virtually all of humanity are on the path of return. This path of evolution will eventually lead humanity (after eons of more development and evolution) from individual self-consciousness to an enlightened group consciousness found within the super-human kingdom of souls, the next highest kingdom. Man will have achieved self-mastery, liberation, and human perfection. It is not an absolute perfection, however, as the path of evolution continues ever onward to even greater heights.

In the school of evolution, just as in conventional schools, individual lives learn and progress at various rates. Within the human kingdom, some lives are more responsive to evolutionary energy and stimulus and develop more quickly and in advance of the majority of the lifewave. The exceptionally responsive lives naturally move to the leading edge of the lifewave and become the pathfinders for the majority who follow. To some degree, the lessons they learn are passed on in a more understandable form to those who are progressing at the average rate.

The pioneers of the lifewave face great evolutionary pressures, for they are on a path of accelerated evolution. This means that they are consciously endeavoring to achieve all that is required for graduation from the human kingdom in a much shorter time period than for most of humanity. Thus the requirements, tests, challenges, duties, and stresses they meet are intense and demanding. The path of accelerated evolution is known as the formal spiritual path. Within this advanced path, there are certain definite stages, and certain abilities, virtues, quality, levels of consciousness and awareness,

responsibilities, and service which comprise the formal spiritual path. There are also specific progressive standards for advancement upon it. Although the accelerated formal spiritual path is open to all, few can meet its requirements and go on to meet those intense evolutionary forces.

The bulk of humanity are on the gradual spiritual path. Within this large group are found people of average consciousness and awareness who are less responsive to evolutionary energy. They will eventually achieve what the pioneers accomplish, only much less directly and over a much longer period of time. Included in this large group also are the men and women of goodwill who have developed considerable heart energy, and express themselves in various ways, such as through religion, metaphysics, or humanitarian work. Even though these activities may be quite helpful, they do not automatically indicate that the participants are on the formal path of accelerated evolution. For even the normal path of evolution is itself evolving, and more is required of average individuals to keep up with the bulk of the lifewave than was long ago. Within the human kingdom, no matter where one is in one's evolutionary development, each person is intended to live as spiritual a life as possible according to his or her abilities, understandings, and consciousness. This not only benefits the individual, but the contributions of all people aid humanity as a whole and are valued, as they contribute to humanity's progress as well.

It is consistent with the divine evolutionary plan that only a relatively few lives are drawn to the accelerated formal spiritual path. Conversely and as intended, a group of stragglers are found (by contrast) at the opposite end of the spectrum, who are not keeping up with the average pace of evolution. The stragglers act as a balance to the pioneers and prevent unqualified development of the lifewave. The gradual path of evolution is intended for the majority of the lifewave. However, as the normal path of evolution itself evolves, the result is that knowledge which was once esoteric and hidden from the masses of people becomes exoteric and more readily available. Thus, opportunity for greater knowledge increases as man's capacity for understanding and properly handling such knowledge grows.

Although most of humanity are evolving slowly and without much conscious effort, a growing number of people are in the process of awakening to higher promptings. As a person gains (some) awareness, the individual should

endeavor to know himself (herself) through self-observation, reflection, and meditation, and to determine what is appropriate for him (her). Each person with a degree of awareness should seek understanding of what is the next step in development and refinement awaiting him or her to take on the path of return.

If an individual is drawn to the formal spiritual path of accelerated evolution, then the person should undertake to learn as much about the formal path and its requirements as possible. By doing this, the person can help clarify in his (her) own waking consciousness what is the source of the new prompting and if the individual is casually interested in the formal path, seriously interested in it, or committed to the effort.

There is much spurious information publicly associated with the formal spiritual path, and it requires definite discernment on the part of the aspirant to the formal path to recognize what is valid, and what is misleading. Some aspirants are drawn to would-be teachers in the public arena who suggest the formal spiritual path is a means to obtain the material (external) objects they desire and to solve personal problems. These individuals are unaware that personality interests and selfish seeking are actually impediments to the formal path. Other inexperienced seekers are attracted to glamorous (self-deceived), magnetic personalities who (falsely) offer instant enlightenment, rather than guidance toward the true path itself.

Some misguided aspirants are drawn to the idea of approaching the accelerated spiritual path because of the illusionary and separative thought of being special or elite, which appeals to their egos. It indicates they lack the necessary spiritual qualities of humility, desire to serve, and oneness with all life. Other individuals are simply curious, or perhaps interested in dabbling in phenomena, which distracts them from the real spiritual path. Some aspirants are kind-hearted and concerned with helping other people, but are so self-focused and attached to their own ideas, methods, and activities regarding the path, that they are blind to higher realizations. Other individuals believe they must locate the right external teacher (guru) or important group to convey upon them special outer initiations to advance along the formal path, not realizing spiritual growth is an internal process. These are but some of the illusions (mental distortions and untruths) and glammers (illusions on the emotional, desire level) about the

formal spiritual path. Additionally, few aspirants have any clear understanding of how rigorous and challenging the accelerated path really is.

The formal spiritual path lies within an individual. No one is chosen for it; instead, an individual's soul at some point in time (which varies considerably among souls according to the quality of consciousness) hears the inner call of the spiritual path and responds to it. The soul chooses to tread the formal path, and then endeavors to gain the personality's cooperation and commitment in the undertaking.

Only the soul can first commit itself to such an arduous spiritual undertaking. The personality, without the greater soul commitment, lacks the ability to achieve such accomplishments. With humility, aspiration to serve God and humanity, desire to realize greater truth and oneness, and in response to higher soul prompting, the true aspirant thus embarks upon the path of steep ascent, and begins to experience the challenges and the inner joy that result.

The soul with its spiritual quality and wisdom becomes the true teacher for the personality on the formal spiritual path. On the lower stage of approach to the formal path, there are many external sources of preliminary information from which to choose. Books, periodicals, groups, and lectures are some resources which provide outer information which must be carefully evaluated for validity, using discrimination and discernment, and drawing upon the developing intuitive guidance of the soul. Preliminary spiritual teachings (the lesser mysteries of the ancient wisdom teachings), which were once secret, are now openly available, and the aspirant on the path of approach is expected to read, study, discern, meditate, and teach himself the true basic teachings.

Through this process, the serious aspirant will begin to develop self-reliance and the inner approach to discerning truth. Because of his own realizations, the aspirant will eventually institute certain self-disciplines and begin to develop certain qualities which will ultimately qualify him for treading the formal spiritual path. For it is only through unceasing, strenuous self-effort that one travels the formal path of accelerated spiritual evolution. And it is only through right motive, determined aspiration, and beginning to live a more spiritual life that one achieves soul insight, discrimination, and awareness into what actually

constitutes the real spiritual path. Thus, for the true dedicated spiritual seeker, the light that shines upon the way is from within.



