



The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 2.5

Spiritual Practice

The Application of Spiritual Principles



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Spiritual Practice

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Contents

		Page
• Chapter 2.5	<u>Spiritual Practice</u>	1
	Spiritual Practice	C 236 2
	Preliminary Discipline	C 449 3
	Preliminary Endeavors	C 453 5
• Section 2.51	<u>Aspects of Spiritual Practice</u>	7
	Retrospection	C 5 8
	Cumulative Momentum	C 586 9
	Success	C 794 11
	Spiritual Retreatment 1	C 828 13
	Spiritual Retreatment 2	C 829 14
	Application	C 911 16
	The Practice of the Path	C 967 18
	Rules	C 1277 19
• Section 2.52	<u>Advancement</u>	22
	Advancement	C 285 23
	Progress in Consciousness 1	C 351 24
	Progress in Consciousness 2	C 352 26
	Activity and Change 1	C 473 28
	Activity and Change 2	C 474 29
	Transformation	C 910 31
	Aspects of Advancement	C 942 33
	Mental Advancement	C 943 34
	Becoming and Being	C 953 36

		Page
• Section 2.53	<u>Self-Assessment</u>	38
Self-Assessment 1	A 33	39
Self-Assessment 2	A 34	42
Autobiographic Study	C 234	44
Self-Assessment	C 1164	45
Self-Assessment 1	F 1	48
Self-Assessment 2	F 2	53



Chapter 2.5

Spiritual Practice



The Application of Spiritual Principles

- For the spiritual student, evolution of consciousness occurs in the context of application of ethical and spiritual principles, to whatever extent they are understood by the student. It is not enough simply to study the (esoteric) (theosophical) (metaphysical) philosophy. The student must put into practice the teachings of the path, in order to advance in consciousness and in order to contribute to the advancement of the lifewave.
- Spiritual practice begins with the preliminary disciple and preliminary endeavors, both rather well-defined by those who have successfully traveled the path already. As the practice improves and the student becomes more refined there is a growing momentum leading eventually to success.

Spiritual Practice

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

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

The incorporation of the teachings depends on their practicality. The higher (greater) (more abstract) lessons (principles) can only be incorporated subjectively (in consciousness), while the lower (more practical) lessons must be objectively incorporated wherever possible (and reasonable). What is practical is what is capable of being put into purposeful practice. Spiritual practice implies the actual performance or application of principles in the daily life, through (1) relationships with other persons, (2) the mental and emotional life (quality of consciousness and the sharing of meaningful energies), and (3) the exercise of personal (spiritual) values.

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

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

† Commentary No. 449

Preliminary Discipline

A rather clear demarcation exists between the casual student and the serious spiritual student (candidate) in that the serious student has overcome the basic resistance of the personality and conscientiously embraces (at least) the preliminary discipline and preliminary endeavors of the (spiritual) path. The casual student may be nonetheless sincere and well-intentioned, but until the preliminary discipline is adhered to, the student cannot properly be trusted.

Adherence to the preliminary discipline is important for a number of reasons, all relating to becoming fit to channel the energies of the path effectively and efficiently (and safely). Though moderation is a particularly significant keyword upon the path, any compromise with the preliminary discipline leaves a

student below the threshold of significance. In other words, one who adheres to the entire discipline is normally trusted with advanced qualification and training (and concomitant energies) while one who embraces not all of the preliminary discipline is simply too weak from an occult point of view to warrant much attention. The casual student may very well be helpful in relation to spiritual work, but much of the qualification (energy) of the path must be withheld, for the relatively coarse personality (and lack of integrated strength) would simply compromise or short-circuit the more profound (potent) energies of the path.

The preliminary discipline is primarily physical albeit having significant effects on emotional and mental levels. The dietary restrictions of the preliminary discipline are simple and straight-forward. No meat, fish, or fowl is permitted for consumption. Some (nominal) care must be taken to eat the proper foods, but the important thing (occultly) is the elimination of flesh foods. Similarly, no consumption of alcoholic beverages (including beer and wine) is permitted by the preliminary discipline. Only drugs which are deemed medically necessary or medically expedient are permitted, and even those are discouraged. Likewise, no smoking is permitted by the preliminary discipline.

The elimination of these things (flesh foods, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, etc.) is a necessary prerequisite for the refinement and self-control required on the path. The consumption of these things sustains a certain coarseness in the physical body (with concomitant effects on higher levels) (from an occult point of view), burden the energy balance of the etheric body, and undermine the physical, emotional, and mental integration and self-control of the personality. Another important aspect of the preliminary discipline is adherence to a daily pattern of meaningful (spiritual) meditation (20-30 minutes minimum) and philosophical study or contemplation (consideration). This too is important to refinement and self-control and responsiveness to higher energies.

Many attempt the preliminary discipline gradually and piecemeal, and fail to make significant progress because the gradual approach merely strengthens the (subtle) resistance of the personality to these changes. The successful students are generally those who simply embrace the preliminary discipline in its entirety, in a no-nonsense fashion. Of course, the preliminary discipline must be faced again in every succeeding incarnation (and the first time is potentially the most

difficult (although in subsequent incarnations the resistance of the personality is likely to be more subtle)). The advanced disciplines of the path simply expand upon the preliminary, as greater and greater freedom (from coarseness and the bondage of personality-centeredness) and capacity for service are achieved. None of the disciplines of the path are imposed; all are simply accepted and embraced by the serious candidates.

† Commentary No. 453

Preliminary Endeavors

While the preliminary discipline embraces a number of necessary and relatively easily achievable adjustments to (in) the personality life (being well-defined and easily objectively realizable), the preliminary endeavors are a necessary complement to the preliminary discipline and deal with the more qualitatively realizable aspects of the spiritual path and approach thereto. The preliminary endeavors are well-defined and clear in concept and principle, but not so easily defined in practice. The preliminary endeavors require more attention (awareness) for accomplishment than does the preliminary discipline, but build upon the refinement and opportunities afforded by the discipline and gradually lead the spiritual student further and further into the light and love (and service) of the spiritual path (the soul).

To complement the preliminary discipline and realize the next step or stage in the process of transformation of the human personality, the student must endeavor to improve the quality of the body, the aura, and the mind, through conscious purification and qualification. The student must (likewise) endeavor to achieve and maintain an integrated personality (with a mental polarization) and a healthy balance between the head-centered nature and the heart-centered nature. In order to achieve these things, the student must necessarily overcome the physical and emotional appetites, desires, attachments, etc. which lend strength to the lower (coarse) (personal) nature and decrease the responsiveness of the personality to higher (soul) impression.

The spiritual student must also endeavor to live a relatively harmless life, becoming more and more aware of the cause and effect relationships and

endeavoring to be as intelligently cooperative and constructive as practicable. The student must endeavor to be honest and truthful in all respects, to value truth, and to achieve the humility demanded of the path. The student must endeavor to overcome the tendency of the personality toward self-deception, glamour, and illusion; to overcome the resistance and inertia of the self-indulgent and self-sustaining personality, transforming that personality into a relatively selfless and spiritually responsive instrument (of the soul).

The spiritual student must learn to become and remain free from opinions and other mental attachments, learn to speak purposively and not needlessly, and endeavor to be free from personality absorption (which implies that the student must first learn to be aware of being absorbed at the personality level). The spiritual student must endeavor to be non-judgmental relative to others, yet nonetheless able to learn by observation and assessment. The spiritual student must endeavor to live constructively, in harmony with the spiritual path, with the environment, and with mundane humanity (without being absorbed in the mundane world or personal energies). The student must endeavor to moderate the entire personality at all times to insure self-control and a positive qualification of consciousness and activities.

The spiritual student must similarly endeavor to improve the quality of the daily meditation discipline and extend that meditation environment (energy) to application in the daily life. The student must endeavor to become more and more responsive to the spiritual path and to the soul, embarking upon and sustaining a life of appropriate service to humanity (according to the talents and abilities and significant opportunities afforded (earned)). All in all, the student must do that which is before him (her) to do, that which must be done (the preliminary discipline), and endeavor to do whatever is appropriate to do (the preliminary endeavors).

Section 2.51



Aspects of Spiritual Practice

- In addition to embracing the preliminary discipline and preliminary endeavors, there are a number of additional aspects of spiritual practice, leading to progress in consciousness.

Retrospection

The simple (profound) spiritual discipline (exercise) of retrospection is attributed (exoterically) to Pythagoras. The object of the exercise is to live day by day the purgatory and first heaven experiences that normally occur upon the death of the physical body. By consciously living these events daily the student not only passes more rapidly into the second heaven, but the capacity to experience and to assimilate experience during the present life is expanded, thereby enhancing the usefulness and effectiveness of the incarnation.

Hell and purgatory are regions of consciousness in the astral plane where, upon death, the individual experiences a panorama of the past life with a feeling that purges the base desires and encourages the correction of the weaknesses and vices which hinder progress. This feeling is wisely adapted to that purpose. The first heaven is a higher region of consciousness in the astral plane where, similarly, another panorama of the past life is experienced with the purpose of strengthening the good that was manifested and assimilating the virtues and talents that were developed. The talents and virtues and conscience are the qualities that are incorporated into the higher self (soul), to be available appropriately in the next incarnation. After the experiences of purgatory and the first heaven, the explicit memories of the incarnation are left behind and only the conscience (and quality) is taken forward.

The exercise of retrospection is usually performed daily in the evening just before passing into sleep. The events of the day are recalled and visualized in reverse order, beginning with the most recent experience and working backwards in time toward the morning's awakening. Each event is analyzed for the quality of behavior, words spoken, feelings, and thoughts, and especially for the quality of motives. Those events or motives that were unfortunate or improper should be noted, and repentance, reform, and correction enacted or planned wherever and however it may be appropriate. These are potent factors in the fulfillment of karma. Wherever the student has been wronged there should be forgiveness, and wherever injury has been caused there should be compensation made. Weaknesses should be uplifted into virtues, by implementing corrective action. Those events that were of a positive nature should also be noted, that qualities

might be strengthened. Thus is the student judged (by himself) on all points, accepting both blame and praise wherever it is due, without punishment and without inflating the ego. The actions of other persons should not be judged; retrospection is a self-centered (but necessary) exercise.

The discipline of retrospection can also be extended in two directions. Over a period of time, the student can systematically review the events and experiences of the lifetime (in reverse order), beginning with the day before the exercise was implemented daily and ending with the earliest childhood memory. As much detail as possible should be recalled, as in fact, retrospection is also a training of the mind (through observation and discernment). When the student becomes quite proficient in this exercise, it can also be extended to a minute-by-minute self-evaluation, instead of (or in addition to) a daily routine. The student can then be continuously and consciously aware of his behavior, feelings, thoughts, and motives, while responding with evaluation and adjustment at that time.

Through this simple exercise, the energies of the soul are brought to bear upon the personality, as the concrete mind is trained and the abstract mind is exercised. Through observation, recognition, awareness, and adjustment, considerable progress can be made upon the spiritual path.

† Commentary No. 586

Cumulative Momentum

The momentum of the spiritual path is cumulative. As the individual experience is assimilated by the soul (and incorporated as wisdom (conscience) (realization)), the momentum of that soul is increased upon the spiritual path. In each subsequent incarnation the cumulative wisdom of the soul is available to the waking-consciousness to the extent of responsiveness. Even as experience is accumulated and assimilated in the present incarnation, the resulting wisdom is available to some extent. As progress is made upon the path, the momentum of the path (and the individual (and group) relative to the path) is increased and the evolutionary forces are intensified and accelerated.

At some point in the evolutionary process, the evolving spiritual student achieves sufficient momentum upon the path so that (in the higher, subjective, overwhelming sense) an identification of the student is made with the spiritual path. At that time, the path embraces the spiritual student (as the spiritual student truly embraces the path) and evolution is quickened. This results in increased spiritual momentum, which manifests in a number of ways. Karma is intensified; karmic bounds are reduced (i.e., the path is narrowed so karma no longer permits the student to pass beyond the near fringes of the path, where previously the student could function at the far fringes of the path); and karmic force is much more focused directly on evolutionary factors.

This commitment of (to) the spiritual path means the student is swept up and into the mainstream of the path and it becomes quite difficult then to withdraw from the path. This is because it is the cumulative spiritual momentum and commitment of the soul to these evolutionary processes, not merely that of the personality. This cumulative momentum is thus an invested, dynamic vector for spiritual progress (evolution in consciousness) (world service through self-realization). It is invested (and vested) in the sense that the spiritual student (soul) has invoked and therefore evoked the conditions and consequences of momentum and commitment. It is vested and dynamic in the sense that having evoked the hastened evolutionary forces, the spiritual student enjoys a considerable encouragement of those forces. In a sense, the student so embraced is cultivated and conditioned for self-realization by those forces, and yet, in another sense, it is all the initiative of the soul (the call of the path is compelling on some level).

Thus cumulative identification with evolutionary forces means becoming (embracing) (being embraced by) those evolutionary forces. But the same phenomenon is possible for the reverse flow (involutionary and/or devolutionary forces). If a person is so attached to coarse things (material wealth, power, ego, etc.) there is a tendency to identify (on some level of consciousness, generally subconsciously) with material forces instead of spiritual forces. The right-hand path (upward to God (spirit)) (identification with evolutionary forces) is the withdrawal of life from form, the unification of consciousness and spirit (i.e., evolution, freedom, and release).

The left-hand path (identification with devolutionary forces) (downward) is the path of the disintegrating form, the dissolution of material existence without further recourse to evolution (at least for the evolutionary unit so encumbered). Cumulative momentum holds as well for both paths, so sufficient attachment (absorption in material things, identification with ego) results ultimately in an irrevocable force for self-destruction and dissolution. But (fortunately), karma is a potent preventative of such extreme identification, as it is a potent force of evolutionary encouragement.

† Commentary No. 794

Success

From the mundane view, success is generally defined as the gaining of wealth, fame, power, prestige, status, or achievement in some material (physical plane) sense. Success of this type has principally to do with physical world maya, astral glamour, and mental illusion. This is success in terms of form and appearance. From the spiritual view, however, success is seen in terms of quality. It has to do with the fulfillment of karma, learning of lessons, evolution of consciousness, fulfillment of dharma, or achievement in consciousness. The real products and indications of success are the quality and character that are incorporated into the permanent atoms, to be drawn upon in succeeding lives. They are eternal, whereas the products of mundane success are strictly temporal (fleeting) since they are associated with a particular personality for the course of only one lifetime.

The spiritual student does not strive to be a success in mundane terms. He recognizes that he is incarnated on the physical plane for the purpose of learning to overcome the maya (material perspective), glamour (emotional bias), and mental illusion, and to be of service to humanity. He chooses therefore not to waste time and energy seeking mundane success, which would tend to enshroud him further in the material veil. This does not imply that the spiritual student may (will) not be successful in the mundane sense, merely that it is not something he values and seeks as an end (or even means) in itself.

A spiritual student with a well-developed, integrated personality may build and create in the physical world and wield power. He or she has the potential to

envision something (an end) and achieve it through the strength (force) of personality (with or without some relative measure of wisdom and a relatively real (not rational) sense of appropriateness). His or her karma (or dharma) may even include holding a position of power (influence), but that position comes (properly) as a duty to fulfill (service opportunity) (in as detached a manner as possible) and not as the result of seeking success for the separated self.

From the spiritual perspective, the net increase in the quality of consciousness is the measure of the success of any particular incarnation. A person who was highly successful from the mundane perspective, but who spent most of his life's energy focused on attaining that material success, may actually pass out of incarnation with little, if any, positive change in quality of consciousness. It is the soul that determines what progress is to be attempted in any lifetime. If that which the soul chooses to attempt is not achieved, it matters not that all of the schemes and plans of the personality were realized. The soul might, for example, endeavor upon an incarnation rich with struggle and continual conflict as a means of attempting to quicken the pace of it's progress. To the outer world the life would appear to be but a series of one problem after the next, with little of what is associated with the concept of "success" emerging. Yet it is the learning that is the basis of spiritual success. If learning has occurred, then success has been achieved.

Similarly, a person may incarnate, experience (on whatever levels), and appear to be a failure in mundane terms. But, again, if the objective in consciousness of the soul is realized, then that incarnation is successful. Thus, success in spiritual terms varies depending upon the evolutionary stage of the individual. Without an appreciation of where an individual is and where he or she should be in consciousness, it is not possible to judge the success or failure of anyone's life, and success in mundane matters does not necessarily correlate to real success (in spiritual matters).

Spiritual Retreatment 1

The extent to which a student is absorbed in the mundane and personal world is the extent to which that student is ineffective in spiritual matters (e.g., in maintaining one's spiritual poise, having awareness beyond the superficial consciousness, performing one's dharma, etc.). Spiritual retreatment affords the opportunity for withdrawal and refreshment (renewal) of the spiritual perspective. A retreat is defined as (1) an act or process of withdrawing, (2) a place of privacy or safety, and/or (3) a period of group withdrawal for prayer, meditation, study, and/or instruction. Spiritual retreatment is a process combining all of these things in a context of withdrawal from the influences and habits of the mundane and personal life and refreshment in the ways of the spiritual path.

One of the principal problems or challenges of the spiritual life is maintaining one's spiritual perspective (demeanor) (awareness) (presence of mind and heart) while being necessarily imbedded in mundane, egoistic, and secular influences (and while being surrounded by people who are (more fully) absorbed in those mundane, egoistic, and secular influences). Those all-pervasive influences in the lower worlds encourage personality-centeredness, egoism, and the concomitant state of mundane, egoistic (personal), and secular absorption. Without some force to the contrary, one will necessarily remain in that state of absorption more or less indefinitely. Indeed, virtually everyone in incarnation is so absorbed in the lower worlds. Only the relatively few spiritual students can glimpse beyond the veil of mundane absorption and ego, and of those few yet fewer are actually able to sustain anything other than transient freedom.

For those who are on the path, however, there are periodically manifested contrary forces resulting from the dharma (karma) of the path (and one's relationship to the path) that (periodically) impel or encourage the student to release his or her mundane and personal (egoistic) attachments (entanglements) and some measure of freedom from absorption is achieved (if only momentarily). This occurs to the extent to which the student is responsive to the (higher (inner)) impelling force and is lessened to the extent of the student's attachments. As the consciousness of the student improves (is refined) and as

the student gradually loosens the mundane and personal attachments then so does the student respond more and more effectively (more often and more consistently and with greater quality) to the liberating forces (of spiritual retreatment).

The forces contrary to absorption are the forces which impel the student to meditate daily and effectively and which tend to periodically disrupt the status quo of the absorbed state. The intelligent and responsive student cooperates with these forces by being determined (1) to meditate daily and more effectively, (2) to achieve freedom from absorption, and (3) to serve more effectively and responsively. That determination (evocation of will), sufficiently reinforced, naturally increases and improves the moment-to-moment awareness of the waking-consciousness. The extent to which the student is aware of being (or having been) absorbed is the extent to which freedom is achieved.

Daily philosophical study and (proper) spiritual meditation are in effect the first and most essential level and aspect of spiritual retreatment. The daily patterns (habits) of study and meditation (and service orientation) are therefore quite important. But daily philosophical study and (proper) spiritual meditation are in themselves not usually sufficient to afford true freedom from absorption. This is so because even the daily study and meditation is performed in the context and habits of one's daily (more or less personal) life.

† Commentary No. 829

Spiritual Retreatment 2

In addition to the quite essential daily discipline and momentum of philosophical study and meditation, the student must also endeavor to break through the veils of the (lower) (personal) consciousness associated with the mundane (personality-centered) (absorbed) state. This is generally achieved by periodically breaking the patterns of the daily rhythm (and whatever measure of mundane (personality) absorption) and achieving some greater measure of withdrawal (spiritual retreatment) [without foregoing the daily discipline].

In this sense, spiritual retreatment means withdrawing both from the habits and the environment of the daily (egoistic) (personal) (secular) life to some place of relative privacy and safety (spiritual seclusion) (i.e., freedom from most if not all of the ordinary daily influences). Although one can achieve some spiritual refreshment (revitalization) in any truly secluded place and position (relative to one's normal state) (if approached and utilized properly), proper spiritual retreat "facilities" are designed to more effectively afford this freedom and provide the student with the opportunities implied in the more secluded (less encumbered) environment. The essential objectives of spiritual retreatment are for the retreated student (1) to achieve effective withdrawal (freedom from the normal habits of absorption) (i.e., clarity in thinking and feeling (heightened awareness of the true self and its objectives)) and (2) to carry that momentum forward in the return to the normal daily life. This second level or aspect of spiritual retreatment (physical withdrawal and displacement), if conducted and embraced properly and periodically, is generally necessary and sufficient for achieving relative freedom and in sustaining that achieved freedom.

It is one thing to achieve a measure of freedom and momentum upon the spiritual path. It is another matter (and challenge) entirely to maintain that freedom, awareness, and spiritual momentum (service), particularly in the face of the natural personality tendency toward mundane (egoic) (personality) absorption. A proper retreat "facility" and circumstances thereof should be designed to encourage the state of spiritual poise (awareness) and to discourage the participants from falling back into the absorbed state. Thus properly maintaining the retreat environment is essential. Retreat activities should neither indulge the personality nor encourage any ego emergence or personality presence. A "monastic" and unemotional environment is preferable. Quietude and periods (and places) of real privacy are quite essential. The overall seclusion of the facility is also important, as one needs to embrace the retreat environment without being distracted by mundane considerations.

Proper spiritual retreatment should be a regular and periodic practice of the serious spiritual student, regardless of one's level of attainment. Because even the relatively more advanced students develop mundane or personality habits that must be challenged if the spiritual freedom is to be achieved or maintained. Even those who live and work in a "retreat" environment must at least periodically achieve spiritual retreatment from that environment (i.e., third-order

retreatment) if they are to be successful in achieving and maintaining their relative freedom from absorption.

Of course one should not withdraw entirely or indefinitely, but merely periodically. For the student on the path must ever live the life of service within the context of the race (lifewave) (humanity). Spiritual retreatment is not for the student, but to afford the student more effectiveness in the spiritual life (which is service).

† Commentary No. 911

Application

For the majority of people who are either approaching the path or who have embarked upon the way, the principal difficulty or failing is the lack of application of the principles and practices of the path. Naturally the emphasis in the early stages is upon seeking knowledge (understanding) (wisdom), but unless that knowledge (understanding) is applied in the day-to-day life then it serves no real purpose in consciousness. Knowledge without earnest application leaves a person at the intellectual level, absorbingly so.

This application is compounded by the nature of the various stages of the path in which some of the rules vary according to the place upon the path. For example, in the relatively early (and intermediate) stages there is strong encouragement toward learning (in the sense of basic knowledge anent the path) and self-discipline (preparation), while in the relatively later stages there is a stronger emphasis on service (the work). Thus the relative importance of seeking knowledge (understanding) (wisdom) changes along the way, from relatively important (vitaly necessary) to relatively incidental (being a distraction from higher qualification).

This is particularly so with regard to the intellect. The intellect must be developed as an effective instrument of consciousness, but if the student dwells entirely or too long in the intellect, without passing on to the intuitional levels, the student cannot be very responsive to higher qualification. But before that higher responsiveness can be achieved there must be some considerable mental (intellectual) development (properly balanced with self-refinement).

In a sense, the path is a continual process of development and application of various talents and then passing beyond those talents into a higher or deeper realm. Reliance on instinct (feelings) (emotional polarization) must give way to reliance on intellect (mental polarization) which must ultimately give way to reliance on buddhi (intuitional polarization). In each case one develops a capability and applies that capability before passing on. Passing on does not imply losing the formerly emphasized talents. But it does mean letting go of any associated attachments (habits) at the lower (former) level in order to establish capability (responsiveness) (activity) on the higher level. If one is involved or entangled in (enslaved by) one's feelings, it is very difficult to develop the intellect. Likewise if one is involved or entangled in (enslaved by) the intellect, it is very difficult to develop the intuition. Yet feeling and thinking are still relevant and helpful, but in a higher context and without dominance (involvement) (entanglement) (enslavement). Where there is reliance on the higher faculties (intuition), the lesser (psychic, mental, and emotional) serve instrumentally and not centrally.

The key is passing beyond the mechanicalness of the personality (habits) (conditioning), through dynamic and relative progression. This comes primarily through the continual application of what is learned (known) (understood) and cannot be accomplished simply by the accretion of knowledge. One who studies and/or meditates somewhat each day, even someone who serves somewhat each day, will not progress significantly or substantially unless the effort is applied on a broader scale and the whole life of the personality is included. The spiritual path is not and cannot be a part-time endeavor, to be embraced at the convenience of personal interests any more than one's religion can be properly embraced by virtue of an hour of superficial worship one day a week. One's values must be applied if they are to be truly assimilated.

The Practice of the Path

Why is the spiritual student a conscientious vegetarian? Why does the spiritual student not pay much attention to enjoyment of what is normal and pleasurable experience? Why is the spiritual student relatively indifferent to pleasure and pain, desires and their fulfillment, and other forms of self-indulgence? Why does the spiritual student lack ambition and lack aggressiveness? Why does the spiritual student accept responsibility for all that happens in his or her life, even without apparent relationship? Why is the spiritual student devoted to the spiritual practice of concentration, meditation, and contemplation? Why does the spiritual student seek to be completely honest and harmless in all things? Why is the spiritual student not as gregarious and sociable as most people? Why is the spiritual student relatively quiet and peaceful?

Why is the spiritual student so reluctant or reticent to speak, even for a good (apparent) cause? Why is the spiritual student not caught up in trendy humanitarian endeavors? Why does the spiritual student live at peace with himself and with the world? Why is the spiritual student so relatively simple-minded? Why is the spiritual student not concerned so much with material things and status? Why is the spiritual student somewhat tempered in physical, emotional, and mental expression? Why does the spiritual student not generally conform to social and cultural expectations (without actively or particularly expressing that non-conformity)? Why is the spiritual student content to read and study, to learn from experience, and to serve, without personal recognition, without any involved sensations? Why does the spiritual student avoid criticizing or judging others, merely accepting people and their actions (behavior) at face value?

Why is the spiritual student not so wholly devoted to religious practice? Why does the spiritual student embrace egolessness? Why is the spiritual student courteous toward and considerate of others? Why does the spiritual student not think badly of others or act badly toward others, even without reciprocity? Why is the spiritual student more concerned with the quality of consciousness and the process rather than the apparent or presumed results? Why does the

spiritual student not rely upon the intellect or rational process? Why does the spiritual student focus on the how as much as the why? Why is the spiritual student more introspective and contemplative than extroverted and expressive? Why does the spiritual student not impose upon others? Why does the spiritual student value understanding above knowledge, and wisdom above understanding?

Why does the spiritual student not really know anything at all? Why is the spiritual student without substantive beliefs and wholly without opinions on things? Why is the spiritual student not self-indulgent? Why is the spiritual student merely amused by life in the lower worlds, without taking pleasure in that which is pleasurable? Why is the spiritual student concerned with ethical and moral practice, even in the absence of witnesses or anyone who could be affected thereby? Why does the spiritual student not glorify human existence? Why does the spiritual student not glorify the human personality? Why is the spiritual student relatively poised in the face of adversity or difficult circumstances?

Because the spiritual student values and lives according to that which facilitates the evolution of consciousness and not according to that which inhibits the evolution of consciousness.

† Commentary No. 1277

Rules

Life is not a game, but there are rules. Some are artificially (but mostly purposively) imposed by various (artificial (worldly)) authorities. Some are more natural, underlying the evolutionary process and facilitating progress. The natural rules are tailored to consciousness in the sense that the rules differ according to consciousness.

For example it is not inherently harmful for a relatively crude human being to eat meat (fish) (fowl), because eating meat is consistent with the relatively coarse (animalistic) consciousness. Consequently, there are no real consequences (penalties). But for a more evolved person, who seeks to progress (evolve) spiritually, to refine the consciousness and achieve communion, eating

meat is really quite harmful because it inhibits (indeed, effectively precludes) the process of refinement in consciousness. So the rules are different. And karma (the mechanism of action and consequence) functions differently in these two cases. The consequences for the spiritual student are substantially more severe than those for someone who is relatively crude or coarse. The spiritual path involves a narrowing of the rules and an intensification and quickening of consequences. When a relatively crude person commits murder the consequences may be relatively mild (even though murder is still “wrong,” but when a refined person commits murder the consequences tend to be much more immediate and more intense.

All of the (natural) “rules” are induced by evolutionary qualification and are intended to encourage and facilitate evolution in consciousness. There is a great underlying and uncontrived wisdom in the rules of the way. But they are uncontrived in the sense that no one thinks them up and sets them into place. God (the Logos) simply qualifies evolution within the Logos field of consciousness, and that qualification naturally induces various rules and laws associated with manifestation and evolution. The whole process is natural, albeit divinely inspired, but not manipulated (or manipulatable) in any sense. There is great, higher intention, but the details of manifestation and the rules that guide progress are left to be induced by the process. They (rules) are nonetheless meaningful and nonetheless serious.

Various “authorities” religious and secular provide “encouragement” in the form of “rules” ... most of which are sincerely intended for the greater good and based upon the (necessarily limited) consciousness (understanding, wisdom) of the authorities. But the problem of artificial rules is that they need to apply in the same ways to everyone, regardless of quality of consciousness. Consequently they may be helpful in some generalized way, but not necessarily and not generally in all the ways that one needs. They are geared to those for whom evolutionary is a very gradual process, and not to those who move more quickly (gently) (subtly) along the spiritual path.

One of the rules that is not so easy to understand is that the (natural) rules cannot actually be conveyed externally, but each person must gradually and progressively realize what the rules are (for oneself) (based on first-hand experience and growth in consciousness). In the early stages there are

externally-imposed rules (e.g., the golden rule, the ten commandments, the ten pillars of Buddhism) such that those who embrace them are rewarded with progress in consciousness even if the underlying realization of the meaning, truth, and value (of the rules) is not there, but for the most part one must genuinely realize the meaning, truth, and value in order to effectively embrace them. And as one does so, greater insight (realization) is evoked.



Section 2.52



Advancement

- Progress is based on experience, as knowledge is transformed into understanding and as understanding is assimilated into wisdom. External and internal forces impel (and sometimes compel) the student onward. But real progress comes only when the student becomes consciously and deliberately involved in the process of evolution in consciousness. Advancement begins and continues with refinement in consciousness. Refinement leads to greater capacity for spiritual work.

Advancement

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

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

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

Perhaps the most significant ingredient to human advancement is selflessness. Though the spiritual student is expected to consciously and effectively assist the process of advancement, the student must also take care to evaluate and reform the motives and expectations concerning his own advancement. Self-

centeredness is a major obstruction to human advancement, regardless of ability and experience. Where the student is self-centered (to whatever extent), the student is naturally isolated from the more meaningful adjustments in consciousness which effectively mark the successive progress of the student along the spiritual path. One cannot obtain effective (proper) discipleship until considerable progress has been achieved in overcoming the self-centeredness of the human personality. Where the ego is for all practical purposes fully overcome, the student advances quickly and effectively (safely) through discipleship and the more esoteric stages.

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



Commentary No. 351

Progress in Consciousness 1

Human evolution is essentially the evolution of human consciousness. Progress in consciousness is achieved as the consciousness is improved in quality and as the focus of consciousness is expanded (retaining the dynamic capability of concentration). Actually, human evolution (in consciousness) is more properly the expansion in quality (wisdom) of the soul, but for all practical purposes (for most of humanity) that expansion in soul consciousness is subjectively related by assimilation to the experience and development in consciousness (quality) of the personality.

Evolution in consciousness generally proceeds within a plane of consciousness, as the purity (refinement) and elevation (level) (frequency) of consciousness is improved (increased). Thus evolution (simplified) is two-dimensional in the sense that experience and development tend to improve these two basic factors until the consciousness is sufficiently qualified to undergo a phase change to the next higher sub-plane, or from the physical (emotional) (mental) plane to the emotional (mental) (intuitional) plane (respectively). In human development (evolution in consciousness), improvement in consciousness is relatively multi-phasic (multidimensional), as experience leads to improved qualification simultaneously on several levels (i.e., the relative quality of consciousness of the physical body, astral body, and mind).

In essence, each aspect of the human form has intrinsic consciousness (the consciousness of the matter itself, on its own level), imposed consciousness (the consciousness induced in form by the (relatively) higher consciousness), and composite consciousness (the personality) (which may or may not be integrated) (and if integrated, may or may not be aligned with the next higher stage in consciousness (the soul)). Thus human evolution is itself a synthesis wherein several aspects are evolving more or less interdependently. For the relatively unevolved human being, those aspects are relatively independent (not integrated or well-coupled). In the case of the relatively evolved human being, the aspects of the imposed and composite consciousness are much more obviously interdependent (cooperative) (responsive to higher consciousness).

The intrinsic consciousness includes that of physical, emotional (astral), and (concrete) mental matter (and beyond, yet the substance of matter beyond the concrete mental region is not properly considered matter). The imposed consciousness refers to that of the personality upon the several aspects of the form (matter) (body), that of the soul upon the composite personality (and to the extent that it is integrated and responsive), and that of the monad upon the soul. The personality actually consists of three aspects of induced, composite consciousness (the personality is itself composite): the physical form (body) (and its etheric double), the astral body (aura), and the concrete mind.

Significant to the development (progress) (evolution) of human consciousness are the various phase changes (and step changes) which occur as a result of positive (assimilated and responsive) or negative experience. Phase changes are

crises in consciousness where the focus of consciousness is actually transferred from one plane (or sub-plane) to the next. Phase changes occur only when the personality is sufficiently qualified (for a positive phase change) (i.e., where the qualified matter within the several vehicles is sufficiently refined and where the focus of consciousness can be raised to the next higher level). During preliminary development these changes occur unconsciously and without realization in terms of frequency, phase, purity, etc.; during the later changes they occur more consciously and result from more deliberate activity (effort).

† Commentary No. 352

Progress in Consciousness 2

During the early and intermediate stages of human development, the waking-consciousness (focus of the mind) (kama-manas) is largely preoccupied with physical and emotional matters, with relatively little awareness beyond the coarse, self-centered perspective, being largely reactive to external forces; while during the later stages, the lower vehicles (physical body, emotional body, and concrete mind) are properly integrated (stabilized) (less reactive) and responsive to a mentally-polarized waking-consciousness (manas) (eventually becoming highly responsive to the quality and character of the soul).

The intrinsic consciousness of each vehicle is the consciousness induced within the matter itself by its own evolutionary (elemental) life. If that consciousness is coarse, it cannot be easily maintained in composite form (there will be a large tendency toward disintegration). This is true for the mind on its level as well as the astral body and the physical (etheric) body. Thus for a relatively coarse personality, considerable (unconscious) effort is required to hold the personality together, while for a more refined (and integrated) personality, less energy is required for composition (maintenance) and more energy can be devoted to conscious evolutionary experience and expression. It is largely the consciousness imposed by the personality aspect upon the intrinsic consciousness of the three vehicles that holds them together, loosely (more or less independently) or integrated (interdependently with a single, central personality consciousness) as the case may be.

The composite consciousness of the personality may be a loose collection of the three aspects of personality, each reactive and independent (and relatively fragmented), in the case of the relatively unevolved (average) person (or one who is having difficulty overcoming the lower vehicles). Or the composite consciousness may be well-coordinated (cooperative) (responsive) (non-reactive) (well-disciplined), where each of the three aspects are integrated by the single coherent (non-fragmented) personality (or somewhere between). To achieve the intended condition (a fully integrated personality wholly responsive to the properly qualified soul), the polarization of individual consciousness must be raised to abstract mental (contemplative) and intuitional levels.

Each overall personality consciousness is polarized at some level (at some particular plane and sub-plane of the physical, emotional, or mental planes). As the individual progresses, that polarization is gradually raised (from physical to emotional to mental levels). The personality that is not properly refined and integrated, however, cannot be raised to the higher sub-planes (in terms of overall consciousness). The waking-consciousness (focus) of such a personality will move (fluctuate) quickly and frequently from one center of consciousness (on some level) to another, according to external influence and changing experience. Such a waking-consciousness is enslaved by the demands of the various elements of the three vehicles. But the progressed (cultivated) (refined) (integrated) personality (which can be raised to the higher sub-planes) will exhibit a stable (poised) (non-reactive) waking-consciousness, relatively invulnerable (responsive but not reactive) to external forces (internal forces being nicely qualified), which can flow from level to level according to higher (mental) direction (at will or according to suitable need).

The mind of such a personality is the progressed product of considerable and sustained (long-term) effort (experience and training) (evolution), and is thereby able to qualify the various aspects of the personality intelligently (at will) (constructively) for enhanced experience and expression.

Activity and Change 1

Given the immediate purpose of life (which is the evolution of group and individual consciousness), then the purpose of activity is the affordance of experience, and the purpose of experience is the affordance of assimilation (of that experience) leading to change (growth) (development) (deepening) (expansion) (refinement) (in consciousness). Consequently, much of the evolutionary qualification of external conditions and consciousness is concerned with the stimulation of consciousness and the coincident opportunities for positive (progressive) change.

Proper change comes about through and as a consequence of changes in consciousness, and those changes in consciousness can only come about from within; they cannot be externally imposed or induced (except in the catalytic sense of responsiveness). Progress is never the result or consequence of outer (external) activity; it is always the result or consequence of inner (internal) activity (i.e., changes in consciousness). The cause and effect relationships of consciousness dominate throughout the experiential and evolutionary fields. In the experiential field, activity does not determine (or cause) change; change (ever) determines activity (i.e., the factors of consciousness (quality, character, temperament) and change in consciousness determine (cause) activity or apparent (conditional) changes). Activity (external) is not (particularly) important or significant; change (in consciousness) is. Activity is merely an affordance.

People respond to evolutionary pressure (experiential affordance) in various ways. Most assimilate experience gradually and between lives, being generally inertial and resistant to change, the more so while involved in the sleep of incarnation. Some, being more responsive to that evolutionary pressure, consciously or otherwise seek to change or develop themselves. Others, being responsive or reactive to that evolutionary pressure, seek to change others (humanity) or the (outer, external) conditions of humanity. But the outer conditions (other people) cannot be changed (significantly); those conditions (people) can only change as an inevitable consequence of changes in

consciousness. Besides, the outer conditions are simply not important compared to consciousness.

The timescale for significant (effective) change tends to be much, much longer than most people want to believe. The outer conditions may change superficially quickly, but not substantively quickly. The outer conditions are necessary and always in accordance with the generalized consciousness. Those who would force upon the world (or others) their means and notions, however noble, will not and cannot in such activity cause any changes in consciousness or bring about any effective changes in (outer or inner) conditions. It is only when (as) the changes in consciousness have (are) taken (taking) place that any such activity will appear to bear fruit, but that is all it really is (the appearance and consequence), not the cause. It is necessarily futile and foolish (for the spiritual student) to try to change things without regard for the cause and effect relationships and the necessary and prerequisite changes in consciousness.

Such activity (attempted change (imposition) without proper regard for consciousness) can only serve to vary the experiential field (albeit not significantly so). There is, however, a domain of proper activity in consideration of consciousness that does contribute substantively albeit indirectly to (significant) (effective) change.

† Commentary No. 474

Activity and Change 2

The domain of proper activity in consideration of consciousness includes cultivation (development) (refinement) leading to self-mastery, service to humanity (or the planetary scheme) through being, and service to humanity (or the planetary scheme) through creative (occult) (unimposing) endeavors.

Changing oneself is relatively simple and straightforward; one needs only to be determined and sensible, for man (as a creative being) is self-responsible and able to influence his internal and external conditions (while remaining karmically consistent).

The activity of being (substantive incidental service) is also relatively simple and straightforward; having achieved some measure of consciousness (character, quality, temperament, etc.) one needs only to live in accordance with that character and consciousness, consistent with spiritual (ethical) principles and practice. Being present within a lifewave (e.g., humanity), the individual (spiritual student) (group member) is an inductive force (for good or ill) depending on that character and consciousness. Thus the spiritual student is tasked with continued development and refinement (toward self-mastery) and with continual (if not yet continuous) service through being.

The proper activity of occult endeavor can be generalized or very specific, performed as a responsive individual (i.e., an individual without a formal group relation but who is nonetheless responsive to the consciousness of the evolutionary plan), or performed as part of a coordinated (concerted) (integrated) group endeavor. In the general sense, proper occult activity involves observation, understanding, and creative evocation of appropriate energies. In the general sense, the spiritual student is encouraged to observe the world conditions (without becoming personally involved or entangled (as that precludes occult effectiveness (i.e., compromises the ability to contribute in consciousness))), to seek to understand the cause and effect relations in consciousness leading to those conditions (in consciousness), perceiving the inherent momentum toward improved conditions (in consciousness), then to visualize (or otherwise creatively stimulate) the gradual enlightenment from within humanity that shall bring about the needed changes (without being deceived or distracted by apparent needs) (e.g., hungry destitution is not a problem; the condition in consciousness that brings about hungry destitution is the problem; the solution is not to artificially or arbitrarily eliminate hunger and destitution, but to evoke (induce) the changes in consciousness that afford the assimilation of experience and result in progressive change (in consciousness)).

Occult work is particularly effective where the concerted (group or individual) effort is in harmony with the evolutionary plan and working from within humanity (inductively) (in consciousness) rather than working upon from without. All esoteric groups working within the human lifewave (and within the planetary scheme) are tasked with (realize and embrace) some general or particular creative endeavor(s) (service) in context, according to their respective talents and charters (and according to the needs of the evolutionary plan). No

esoteric group or (proper) occult work is concerned directly with changing the external conditions as an end in itself. All deal in one manner or another with consciousness and the conditions in consciousness. All are active in one manner or another, yet none are externally active. Those exoteric groups which are externally active may or may not be working in response to the (true) needs (in consciousness) of humanity.

† Commentary No. 910

Transformation

The spiritual path is fundamentally a matter of experience and assimilation of experience, of growth and expansion in consciousness, leading to greater realization, service, etc. Much along the way involves extension and/or expansion, in the sense that what we are to be requires an extension from what we are now and an expansion toward that greater existence. The whole (necessary) process of purification, qualification, refinement, and upliftment is one of extension. The whole process of growth in consciousness from the physical, to and through the emotional, to and through the mental, and beyond, is a matter of expansion built upon the foundation of assimilated experience that allows extension (refinement) in consciousness.

The so-called Masters are (properly) those who have evolved beyond the human stage, who have entered the next kingdom in nature (the kingdom of souls), who have overcome the limitations (sleep) of human existence and who have expanded their consciousness well beyond that of being (merely) human. They do not lose their humanity, but they do lose all of the weaknesses implied in being (merely) human. And they become something greater-than-human. The masters are the real pioneers within and beyond humanity, who, by virtue of their relationship to (within) humanity, draw and inspire humanity onward and upward.

But are the so-called Masters merely extensions of humanity, having greater knowledge, deeper understanding, more power and wisdom? Do they also have expanded or extended egos and all that that implies? No. A human being does not achieve this mastery merely by extension or expansion (growth), although the evolutionary process necessarily includes both extension and expansion in

consciousness, they are not sufficient. Mastery proper is achieved through fundamental transformation. The candidate must achieve a self-mastery which conveys a fundamental self-realization. This can only occur through radical change, through transformation of what a person is (as a person) to something else entirely different (yet related to that from which one comes).

This transformation is a fundamental conversion in composition and structure, in character and condition, and in function, a transmutation of the lesser (element) into the greater, a metamorphosis and a transfiguration. This transformation affects and effects the entire personality as the matter which forms each of the several bodies (dense physical, etheric, emotional (astral), and concrete mental) is purified, qualified, refined, and uplifted; as the refined personality is integrated and ultimately transformed in its functional existence from being more or less independent (as an ego) to being wholly infused (changed in its underlying polarization) by the soul. This transformation occurs as the consciousness expands and is transformed (radically) to embrace the underlying unity of all life, not conceptually or intellectually but actually. But (this) transformation cannot occur without (proper) expansion. And (this) expansion cannot occur without (proper) extension. All of the factors (aspects and attributes) of the human being must be fulfilled in order for this transformation to be possible.

Although fundamentally the factors for transformation are extension and expansion of consciousness, the process is necessarily synergistic and holistic. The real keys are the head and heart (and their suitability for transformation). Without temperance and balance, transformation is not possible. Without freedom (from attachments (ideas, beliefs, opinions), materialism, egoism, self-centeredness, etc.) transformation is not possible. In freedom (humility) comes transformation, and awakening from sleep.

Aspects of Advancement

It is possible, and eventually necessary, for one to be “advanced” spiritually. One may also be “advanced” intellectually and/or occultly. And one may be “advanced” psychically as well. But these three dimensions need not be simultaneous or coincident. Advancement is largely a matter of perspective, and is not particularly significant.

Psychic development is generally a matter of acquired sensitivity and temperament, without necessarily any regard to intellectual or spiritual maturity. One can be etherically or astrally sensitive in a passive sense, without any real effort. In fact, passive sensitivity usually comes as a consequence of emotional instability or extreme emotional expression (or induced by drug use (abuse) or other artificial means). But such passive sensitivity is atavistic and not progressive or evolutionary in nature. Real (positive) psychic development comes as a consequence of spiritual development (but is not necessary to spiritual development). Thus being “advanced” psychically usually corresponds with being “not-advanced” spiritually.

Similarly, intellectual development is generally a matter of accumulated experience leading to concrete mental development, without necessarily any correlation with spiritual or psychic development. In fact, most people develop intellectually long before they develop psychically or spiritually. If one “develops” psychically before one “develops” intellectually, then there is generally emotional or psychic instability, lack of control, lack of understanding, etc. On the other hand, if one develops intellectually without any balance between the head-centered nature and the heart-centered nature, then one is generally over-developed intellectually, which leads to untoward (self-centered) occult expression and relatively dire consequences.

Occult development requires intellectual development in order to be evolutionarily effective. Without a relatively strong (and hopefully balanced or tempered) intellect or concrete mental ability, occult development is quite dangerous. The worst kind of occult development is either that which is emotionally-polarized (lacking a moderately strong intellect) or that which is

largely self-centered (selfish or self-indulgent) [or both]. The “best” kind of occult development is that which is tempered by spiritual quality (balance). Occult development (and psychic development) is usually also a matter of effort, the ease of advancement depending on previous achievements. Yet real development along any of these lines is ultimately a matter of non-effort and non-seeking, with advancement coming as a consequence of understanding.

Spiritual development requires balance between the head-centered (occult) aspect and the heart-centered (mystical) aspect. It requires a reasonable extent of intellectual development, but is inhibited or precluded by any intellectual over-development. Occult and psychic sensitivities (and associated (developed) abilities) may come with spiritual development, or not, depending on the individual circumstances, karma, opportunities, need, etc. What matters is spiritual development, not intellectual, occult, or psychic development. The real “key” to spiritual advancement is quality of consciousness, not extent of psychic or occult sensitivity. A spiritually-advanced student does not feel “advanced” because he or she has passed beyond any need for ego self-recognition. In the final analysis, one advances and evolves as a consequence of one’s relationship to the spiritual path and in the context of humanity, but advancement per se is not important. What is important, at these levels, is being true to the spiritual path and one’s higher self (soul).

† Commentary No. 943

Mental Advancement

Spiritual advancement is not unrelated to mental advancement, as much of human evolutionary experience and expression relates to the illusion of manifested existence, the illusion of self-consciousness, and the overcoming of these and other illusions.

Keys to mental advancement include (1) sufficient (and sufficiently broad) external and internal experience leading to mental development (the development of the concrete mind and its relationships with the lower self and the abstract mind) and a proper balance of the head-centered and heart-centered

natures (i.e., quality of mind), (2) the development of suitable (non-egoistic or non-ego-based) character, temperament, and values, and (3) willingness to consider the relativity of manifested existence (i.e., open-mindedness). Only with these accomplishments can the spiritual student begin to deal effectively with the three apparent levels or aspects of maya-glamour-illusion.

Balance of perspective is quite important to the realization of the illusion of manifested existence. Not only must the value of manifested existence be appreciated and dealt with, but the value of non-attachment and non-entanglement must also be realized, before the student can effectively unentangle his or her personality from its absorption in manifested "reality" and become focused much more so on higher realities. Thus the student must effectively live in both worlds without being wholly distracted by either. The lower world yields opportunities for needed experience and expression, while the higher world offers evolutionary encouragement and freedom. Realization of the existence of illusion is a necessary condition to passing above or beyond that illusion. Yet illusion is as progressive as the means of overcoming. In overcoming one (relatively more fundamental) illusion, one discovers another (relatively more subtle illusion).

The mind is key to human advancement in the sense that (1) it is the principal instrument of the personality for experience and expression, (2) it is the principal means of self-deception and self-delusion, and (3) it is the principal means of overcoming the obstructions and impediments to realization (and subsequent advancement). Preliminary mental advancement refers to the development of the concrete mind and intellect. Real mental advancement refers to the tempering of the concrete mind and intellect and the cultivation of subordination of same to the needs and expression of the higher self. Overcoming maya (glamour) (illusion) by virtue of clarity of consciousness on the next higher (astral) (mental) (buddhic) level leads to recognition of existence of glamour (illusion) (that which is beyond illusion).

In a sense, all of human experience (evolution in consciousness) relates in some way to illusion and its progressive transcendence. Through experience the mind is developed in a highly conditioned manner, yet the mind ultimately becomes aware of its conditioning, and after passing through a stage in which the mind uses its openness to conditioning to deepen and strengthen its own conditioning

(as self-protection), the mind begins to discern the true from the false, realizes its own artificiality, and contributes more or less directly (and willingly) to its own demise. In other words, the mind ultimately becomes a noble and self-sacrificing instrument of the higher nature. The key is for the spiritual student to cultivate that nobility rather than merely (passively) extending the intellectual development and continuing the pursuit of the self-interests of ordinary humanity (i.e., overcoming illusions rather than sustaining the illusions in which the conditioned mind is imbedded).

† Commentary No. 953

Becoming and Being

Becoming is defined as the process of coming into existence, of coming to be, of happening, of undergoing change or development. In the context of the fundamental process of manifestation (which is the evolution of consciousness through experience and expression (and service)) and in the human context, becoming in the lower sense is simply the manifestation of the (monadic) higher self as a human being (personality and soul), while becoming in the higher sense is that process of evolution in consciousness in which one becomes that soul (and higher self), in overcoming the delusion of reality (existence) of personality (ego) (mind) and achieving manifestation of the unhindered soul. Throughout the field of evolution there is stimulation of life and consciousness toward fulfillment of evolutionary purpose.

Becoming is also defined as marked by propriety, in the sense that one who is actively and consciously becoming (or progressing toward becoming) in the higher sense is proprietous (manifests propriety). Propriety in the lower sense refers to the quality or state of being proper, while in the higher sense it refers to one's true nature (God) (monadic being). Becoming (in the sense of propriety) leads to being in the higher sense.

Being in the lower sense is defined as the quality or state of having existence, i.e., something that is apparently conscious, living, etc. The human being appears to exist in the lower worlds. But that is a shadow-existence and not a real-existence. Being in this lower sense is illusionary in many respects, as what appears to be is only a very partial (constrained) and distorted reflection of

what truly is. Identification with what is not real only compounds the illusion (delusion). Identification with what is real requires truly unhindered awareness of the God-self (being) within. Being is defined in the higher sense as actuality. For the human being, the fundamental aspect of evolution is becoming what we truly are, while being is what we truly are. What we truly are is the fulfillment of the human archetype, in the context of union with divinity. The archetype exists (on its own level). That which is manifested appears to exist (on its level), but that existence is not real compared with the archetype.

There is, in all of this, a paradox or apparent contradiction of effort (becoming) (in (as) the non-real) leading to non-effort (being) (in (as) the real), and the question of purpose in evolution. If one is truly the archetype, then of what value is it to the archetype if its manifestation (reflection) actually evolves toward itself? Is an unfulfilled archetype less real than a fulfilled archetype, on its level? From the lower perspective (of the human being in incarnation, with some degree of soul contact) there is the realization of impelling (eventually compelling) evolution, even if there is not sufficient understanding of such. If the process of evolution in consciousness is necessary yet not real (at least not in itself), then is the fulfillment of evolution in consciousness any more real? One answer is that effort (becoming) is required in order to reach non-effort (being) and that non-effort is required for realization and that realization includes (indeed) greater reality for a fulfilled archetype (and since that final process requires non-effort, one must accept the premise of apparent contradiction).

Thus, in (lower) being (becoming), one is not real. In (higher) being, one is real. In the context of any aspect or totality of manifestation, reality is necessarily relative. In the final analysis, one (who lives at the level of being rather than at the level of becoming) is propriety.

Section 2.53



Self-Assessment

- All of the characteristics and attributes of the personality (lower) nature must be transformed and uplifted in order for the student to be responsive to higher energies (qualification). That (continual) transformation is most effective when the student is consciously and honestly self-apprised. To know oneself is a prerequisite for dealing with oneself. As personality limitations are recognized and assessed, they can be overcome, being transformed into spiritual strengths.

Self-Assessment 1

A serious spiritual student necessarily must develop a mature understanding of the formal spiritual path and what it genuinely constitutes. Accordingly, the serious student is expected to develop the discernment and awareness needed to determine which teachings concerning the path are relatively valid, and which teachings are relatively misleading.

That same perception and discernment must also be applied analogously in regard to oneself. It is relatively important to be able to properly evaluate one's own strengths and weaknesses, and to ascertain one's relative stage in regard to the formal path. Personal energies, lack of objectivity, or self-deception will cloud the evaluator's perspective, as will lack of awareness and a deficiency of self-knowledge. The ancient maxim, "Know Thyself" ever well serves the spiritual student.

Numerous qualities and factors can indicate an individual's quality of consciousness and his resulting relationship to the spiritual path. Being aware of some of the qualifications required on the formal path will enable the student to more accurately assess his own stage and thus realize what is before him to do, i.e., what qualities still need to be developed or strengthened, and what limitations still need to be overcome. In time, working with these concepts and energies and consciously qualifying (programming) oneself with the desired attributes will eventually bring about the needed qualities. This self-qualification effort can be achieved through the processes of affirmation and visualization, or for those who are properly trained by an esoteric group (at an intermediate stage of the formal path), through more occult methods involving energy manipulation. When these self-development and self-refinement undertakings are coupled with continual, sincere, and dedicated spiritual service with selfless motive, spiritual growth and progress become the natural and indubitable result.

The most meaningful and significant qualities and qualifications on the formal spiritual path are ones which are the most esoteric and subjective in nature, and thus the most difficult for a student to evaluate. For example, while

qualifications such as cleanliness and neatness may be easy for one to assess, qualifications such as integration of the personality, alignment with the soul, and level (plane) of polarization of consciousness generally are not readily ascertained by the average or beginning spiritual student. First is required an accurate understanding of what each qualification actually entails. Then a true assessment of oneself is necessary. These evaluations lead to even more esoteric and subjective qualification such as evaluating one's overall quality of consciousness, one's stage of ray development on each of the seven rays, one's relationship to the formal path, and one's status on the path, both for one's soul and for its reflected personality. Again a serious student must first achieve a true (valid) understanding of each of these higher qualifications (their meaning), as well as a standard upon which to measure or evaluate himself. Then he must truly see (assess) himself, knowing that he cannot avoid some distortion, but seeking to minimize it through an impersonal and detached perspective, aided by meditative reflection. Initially the standards of measurement may not be readily apparent (they are more advanced in comparison with average humanity). But as one works with the self-evaluation qualifications over time, meditatively and conscientiously, (soul) insights will come.

Many of these spiritual qualifications are included in a two-part Self-Assessment Form that follows, which can be used by the serious student as an aid in his self-evaluation process. As a prelude to the most significant qualifications, there are a large number of somewhat more easily evaluated (less subjective, less esoteric, and not as heavily weighted in significance, but nonetheless important prerequisites) qualifications that can be focused on initially. By reflecting on these capabilities first and interacting with the attributes and energies during Part (1) of one's self-evaluation efforts, the stimulus and inner awareness will be developed for later assessment of the deeper, more meaningful (more subjective) qualifications in Part (2).

Reasonable (considerable) progress must be achieved first in the development of most Part (1) qualifications before any (much) capability can be demonstrated in Part (2) qualifications. In addition, notable progress in Part (2) attributes are required before one is accepted for occult training by an inner esoteric group. Development of Part (1) qualifications, therefore, will lead to development of Part (2) abilities, and eventual association and training with an inner esoteric group. Until that time, however, the student is not yet sufficiently developed,

refined, trustworthy, or deeply spiritually (service) motivated to merit a close relationship and occult training with an esoteric group.

Self-Evaluation Method

The serious spiritual student should monitor and evaluate himself regularly to stimulate efforts to improve his character and quality, and to assess his growth. At certain times, however, in spite of diligent effort, growth in certain areas may not be readily apparent. The student should refrain from digging up the seeds of refinement recently planted looking for results. If he deals with himself in an impersonal, consistent manner, growth is sure to follow, and the flower of spirituality to bloom. The following Self-Assessment Form, Part (1), consisting of some of the more (relatively) easily measurable qualifications on the formal spiritual path, may be filled out several times a year in a carefully considered self-evaluation process. The Self-Assessment Form, Part (2) (associated with Article No. 34) (the more significant part) will be aided by one's efforts in Part (1).

The serious student should rate himself on each quality listed, according to some qualitative scale. On a separate sheet of paper, the student might indicate in writing why he rated himself as he did. He might also indicate what is the next step necessary in his development of this particular quality. This additional consideration will benefit his growth process.

Please note that the purpose of this form is for a serious spiritual student to evaluate himself; it is not intended for the student to be evaluated by another person. It is incumbent upon the student to be able to see himself clearly and accurately to stimulate his own growth and to develop self-mastery (and not reliance on another). The results are private, and for each student's use only. Please do not return self-assessment forms to the Upper Triad Association for evaluation.

Self-Assessment 2

On the formal spiritual path, continual self-evaluation is a necessary and important undertaking for one's development, refinement, and progress. A spiritual student needs to recognize his own weaknesses that they may be overcome, while being aware of his own talents indicates to him how best he can serve. Both strengths and weaknesses aid in revealing one's place on the formal path and suggest the next stage of growth and service to be achieved.

Of the many qualities and qualifications on the formal path, a number are included in a two-part Self-Assessment Form for use as assistance in a spiritual student's own self-evaluation efforts. Some of the qualifications are more objective and relatively easy for a serious student to evaluate in the self-examination process. Many of these have been incorporated into Part (1) of the Self-Assessment Form (with Article No. 33). Others are more subjective, esoteric (and especially meaningful), but more difficult to discern. Some of these are included in Part (2) of the Self-Assessment Form which follows.

Development of the more objective qualities leads to unfoldment of the more subjective qualifications and eventual affiliation and training with an inner esoteric group. But association with an esoteric group occurs only when the student has a considerable amount to offer in the way of quality of consciousness, trustworthiness, and talents (strengths) (or potential talents). For the student must be worthy of a deeper association and occult training (with an inner esoteric group) for it to occur, and there are many tests to be met and virtues to be developed.

As the student begins to know and understand himself better, he is better able to understand God and the universe, for understanding the microcosm gives insights (and correlations) into the macrocosm. But it is easy to be self-deceived; thus honesty and humility are vital prerequisites to realizing truth.

Self-Evaluation Method

The process of completing Part (1) of the Self-Assessment Form will greatly assist the student in accomplishing the Part (2) evaluation. The student must have a clear understanding of each spiritual qualification, and then must impersonally (meditatively, with detachment) assess himself, seeking to minimize personal energies and distortion. In time, as one ponders and reflects upon the qualifications, working with the energies associated with each quality, greater awareness and insight will be realized. It is a continual on-going process of review, wherein this form may be completed several times annually as a stimulus to growth and refinement, for self-assessment is a basic aspect of the formal spiritual path.

The student is cautioned against constantly looking for results, for that will undermine the growth process. But he should have confidence that with diligent effort, growth will be achieved. The sincere student should seek the good that is within himself, and he should give energy to (strengthen) (refine) that good within while overcoming the shadows.

Please note that this form is for the serious spiritual student's use only, as an aid in his or her own self-evaluation process to be completed by himself (not another).



Autobiographical Study

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

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

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

consciousness, etc.). A relatively discrete method should be employed to permit ease of revision and expansion.

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

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

† Commentary No. 1164

Self-Assessment

Continual (but not obsessive) and honest self-assessment is essential for the spiritual student, to enable the student to deal effectively and intelligently with whatever strengths and weaknesses may be present in the personality life. Weaknesses can be transformed into strengths. Limitations can be overcome. Strengths can be applied to spiritual practice and spiritual work.

But self-assessment is not an easy process. It is complicated by personal bias, how one perceives oneself. It is complicated by ego. It is complicated by conditioning and the delusion of the senses. It is complicated by the student being unable to see clearly all the aspects and dimensions of the personality life.

So the first step in self-assessment is the cultivation of honesty and self-honesty. The student needs to be honest, as honest as he or she can be, in order to embrace the truth about anything. One needs to be honest about oneself, in order to recognize the truth about oneself, to whatever extent that is possible. One needs to not react badly in the face of weaknesses. That is not what self-assessment is about.

One needs to honestly recognize weaknesses, not identify with them, but deal with them as natural components of the lower self, that simply need to be addressed. And one likewise needs not to feel overly good about one's strengths, but merely accept them graciously. In a sense, life in this world is a matter of continually transforming one's limitations and weaknesses into freedoms and strengths. Evolution in consciousness occurs to the extent that the student is able to do this. To learn. To grow. And expression (service) is based both on the student's ability to deal honestly and effectively with his or her strengths and weaknesses and the student's ability to recognize the calling (need and role) (which is itself a consequence of attunement (self-honesty)). In a sense, self-assessment is a process in which one wrestles with the ego, eventually transcending that limitation.

Self-assessment is (should be) necessarily an objective process, in order to minimize the effects of bias and conditioning. Self-assessment is self-appraisal, and should begin with an appreciation for all that is there. Strengths are opportunities for positive expression. And weaknesses are merely opportunities for developing the corresponding strengths. As a whole, each person has considerable value, and self-appraisal should begin with that sense of (uninflated) self-value.

There are many aspects and dimensions to self-appraisal. There are many characteristics and qualities to be considered. How one perceives oneself, hopefully honestly, is important. But so is the perception of others. Their perception may or may not be wholly correct, but one should not dismiss the possibilities, for there is often a degree of truth in every observation, and others can sometimes see things that one cannot see oneself. One should not look to others as authorities, but one should at least consider the possibilities. In fact, in all self-honesty, one can never really draw definitive conclusions. To be completely honest, one always leaves open the possibility that one's insight is

not whole, that one's appraisal and conclusions are not (wholly) correct. Yet the process (self-assessment) is nonetheless valuable. And the process helps the student to recognize and then focus upon what is relatively important. As one proceeds from developmental focus to service focus, one does not then ignore the self-assessment process, but one then merely places it in a different context.



Self-Assessment 1

Positive Qualities

Assess the extent to which these are developed.

1. Physical Health
2. Proper Diet
3. Vitality
4. Cleanliness, Neatness
5. Sexual Sublimation
6. Physical Refinement, Purity
7. Emotional Health
8. Proper Temperament, Good-natured-ness
9. Emotional Discipline
10. Emotional Refinement, Purity
11. Mental Health
12. Openmindedness
13. Objectivity, Impartiality
14. Mental Ability
15. Mental Discipline
16. Concentration
17. Learning Ability
18. Scholarship and Attention to Detail
19. Worldly Knowledge
But not adherence to worldly values
20. Common Sense
21. Facility of Language
Ability to use words appropriately and effectively
22. Ability to Communicate Effectively
Implies facility of language
But includes the method of one's presentation (clarity)

23. Right Speech
 - Harmlessness and truth in speech
 - And refraining from idle talk
24. Administrative Ability
25. Organizational Ability
26. Practical Ability
 - Addressing practical, mundane matters using the concrete mind
27. Problem-Solving Ability
 - Aptitude with systems of reasoning, e.g.,
 - Logic, deductive reasoning, scientific methods
 - Using the abstract and/or concrete mind
28. Mental Refinement, Purity
29. Objective Awareness (external, physical awareness)
30. Subjective Awareness
 - Awareness of energies on other than physical levels
31. Clear Perception
32. Discernment, Discrimination
33. Understanding, Realization
34. Consideration, Courteousness
35. Cooperation, Helpfulness
36. Compassion and Kindness
37. Charity and Good Works
38. Service Motive
39. Devotion to Duty
40. Acceptance of Responsibility
41. Conscientiousness and Dependability
42. Perseverance, Endurance
43. Faithfulness, Loyalty
44. Overall Motivation
45. Competence
46. Personal Discipline
47. Honesty and Accuracy
48. Flexibility and Reasonableness
49. Patience
50. Balance and Moderation
51. Stability, Consistency, Coherence
52. Spiritual Poise

- 53. Personal and Professional Ethics
- 54. Personal Values
 - As reflected in priorities and quality of living
 - Ethics are an indication of values
- 55. Adherence to Truth
 - What one believes in and the extent to which it is lived
- 56. Courage (not physical boldness)
 - To live one's spiritual values and not embrace mundane values
- 57. Respect for Secular Laws
 - Implies adherence as long as it's consistent with spiritual law
- 58. Respect for the Natural Order
 - Implies knowledge of the natural flow of energy
 - And respect for all lives and all kingdoms in their places
- 59. Responsiveness
 - Being responsive to the soul, to truth and the spiritual path
 - Being responsive to any call or appropriate stimulus
 - Through intelligent, well-considered action
 - Not ill-considered reactivity
- 60. Discretion, Caution
- 61. Gentleness, Harmony
- 62. Harmlessness
 - Not passiveness, but an expression of loving awareness
 - Of the goodness within every lifeform
 - And the desire to avoid inflicting injury
- 63. Right Human Relations
- 64. Humility, Reverence
 - Not a submissive state
 - But freedom from egoism, pride and arrogance
 - With a loving realization and appreciation of the God within all
- 65. Spiritual Character (Quality), Spiritual Strength
- 66. Inclusiveness, Sense of Oneness
- 67. Ability to Love Impersonally
 - Loving with detachment and inclusiveness
- 68. Impersonality (a broader context than just loving impersonally)
- 69. Detachment, Lack of Attachments

70. Knowledge of the Human Constitution
 - Relationship of the personality to the soul to the monad
 - Chakras and their relationship to force
71. Knowledge of Human Psychology
 - Interaction of the person and his environment, consciousness, motivation, deceptions, and human relations
72. Knowledge of Evolution, Karma and Reincarnation
73. Knowledge of the Seven Planes
 - Including the relationship to the seven bodies
74. Knowledge of the Seven Rays
75. Knowledge of the Formal Spiritual Path
76. Knowledge of Cosmogogenesis (a qualification for occult training)
77. Meditation Ability
78. Meditation Discipline
79. Meditation Quality
80. Ability to Visualize Effectively
81. Contemplative Ability
82. Ability to Evoke Light Energy
83. Ability to Evoke Healing Energy
84. Telepathic Ability
 - Not in the crude common sense
 - But in the sense of the having been qualified and properly trained
85. Spiritual Absorption
 - Being aligned with the soul
 - And the absorption of the conscious mind in the world of the soul
 - It is the antithesis of being absorbed in the mundane personality life
86. Commitment to the Soul
 - A commitment and willingness of the personality
 - To follow the will and spiritual promptings of the soul
87. Commitment to the Formal Spiritual Path
88. Adherence to the Formal Spiritual Path

Negative Qualities

Assess the extent to which these are tempered.

1. Bias, Prejudice (-)
2. Opinionated Nature (-)
Having strong opinions and being attached to them
3. Critical, Judgmental Nature (-)
Tending toward fault-finding and negative evaluation
4. Impositional or Controlling Nature (-)
Involves the inappropriate influencing, interference with.
Or coercing of other people or other lives
Most people who have it cannot perceive it in themselves
5. Independent, Separative Nature (-)
6. Ego, Pride, Vanity (-)
7. Self-Indulgence (-)
8. Extravagance (-)
9. Self-Centeredness (-)
10. Selfishness (-)
11. Personality-Centeredness (-)
Being centered in the personality, rather than the soul
One may have a great deal of quality without being self-centered
Or selfish, and yet be centered in the personality and not the soul
12. Personal and Professional Absorption (-)
13. Mundane Absorption (-)
Being absorbed in mass consciousness, and outer, worldly,
Personality happenings, instead of the spiritual life
14. Reactiveness (-)
The tendency of the personality toward quick, ill-considered action
That is separative, defensive, and lacking in self-control
Intelligent responsiveness should be developed instead
15. Susceptibility to Glamour (-)
An astral, emotional problem that distorts reality and truth
16. Susceptibility to Illusion (-)
A mental-level problem that distorts reality and truth
17. Susceptibility to Self-Deception (-)
This is necessarily particularly difficult for most people to assess

Self-Assessment 2

Section I

- I. Overall Head-Centered Development
2. Overall Heart-Centered Development
3. Overall Balance
4. Overall Intelligence
5. Overall Maturity
6. Personality Resistance and Inertia (-)
7. Spiritual Momentum
8. Quality of the Aura
Refers to one's etheric, astral (emotional), and mental bodies
9. Quality of Consciousness
Relates the quality of one's aura to the ability of the soul
And its personality to utilize the lower vehicles through awareness
10. Rapport with All Life
11. Potential for Occult Training
12. Suitability for Occult Training

Section II

1. Level of Polarization of Consciousness --- the plane of consciousness within which one's waking-consciousness is naturally and normally focused.
2. Degree of Integration of the Personality --- the extent to which one's physical body, emotions, and mind are fully integrated (functioning in a united, coordinated manner). To achieve full integration, one's consciousness must be polarized at the mental level or above. If one is emotionally (or physically) polarized, integration cannot be achieved for as long as one is so polarized.
3. Degree of Alignment of the Personality with the Soul --- to achieve alignment to any fair degree, one must be polarized at the mental level or above, and be well-integrated as a personality.

Section III

Assess the extent to which each is fully developed.

1. Ray I The Ray of Will and Power
2. Ray II The Ray of Love-Wisdom
3. Ray III The Ray of Active Intelligence
4. Ray IV The Ray of Harmony Through Conflict
5. Ray V The Ray of Concrete Knowledge
6. Ray VI The Ray of Devotion and Idealism
7. Ray VII The Ray of Ceremonial Order

Section IV

Assess one's relationship to the formal spiritual path.

1. Approaching the Formal Spiritual Path (Unconscious of the Path)
2. Approaching the Path (Somewhat Consciously)
3. Peripheral Commitment to an Inner Esoteric Group
4. Commitment to the Path by the Soul - Presumed
5. Commitment to the Path by the Soul - Known
6. Commitment to the Path by the Personality - Tentative
7. Commitment to the Path by the Personality - Known

Section V

Assess one's place on the path.

1. Aspirant
2. Probationary Student
3. Probationary Disciple
4. Accepted Disciple
5. Obligated Disciple
6. Initiate --- Third Degree
7. Master --- Fifth Degree

An initiate or master would never perceive of himself or herself as such.