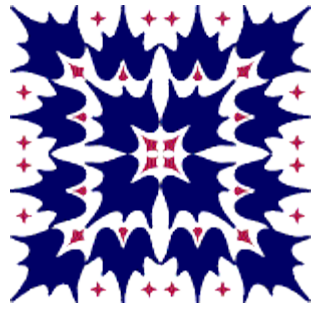


The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 3.3

Values

The Result of Growth in Consciousness



The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 3.3

Values

Fourth Edition, October 2006

Published by

The Upper Triad Association

P.O. Box 40

Willow Spring, North Carolina 27592

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

www.uppertriad.org

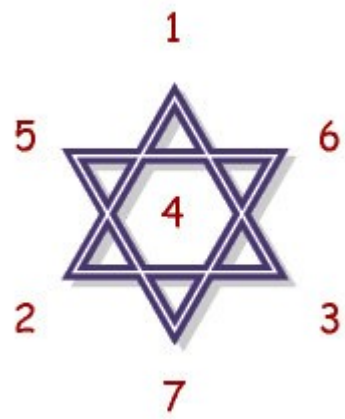
Contents

		Page
• Chapter 3.3	<u>Values</u>	1
	Values 1	C 1169 2
	Values 2	C 1170 3
• Section 3.31	<u>Value Systems</u>	6
	Value Systems 1	C 806 7
	Value Systems 2	C 807 8
	Value Systems 3	C 808 10
	The Old and the New	C 1233 12
• Section 3.311	<u>Importance</u>	14
	Importance 1	C 168 15
	Priorities	C 221 16
	Importance 2	C 1035 18
	The Basis of Importance	C 1036 20
	Importance 3	C 1107 21
• Section 3.32	<u>Personal Values</u>	24
	Personal Values	C 373 25
	Changing Values	C 405 26
	Essential Values	C 1158 28
	Changing Consensus Values	C 1285 30

		Page
• Section 3.321	<u>Personal Values 1</u>	32
Awareness	C 353	33
Beauty	C 80	34
Brotherhood	C 307	36
Experience	C 293	38
Freedom	C 375	39
Goodwill	C 356	41
Happiness	C 81	43
Health	C 1177	44
Honesty	C 156	46
• Section 3.322	<u>Personal Values 2</u>	48
Justice	C 291	49
Knowledge	C 1134	50
Love	C 1135	52
Money	C 319	54
Pleasure	C 457	55
Privacy	C 159	57
Prosperity	C 1063	59
Understanding	C 321	60

		Page
• Section 3.33	<u>Ethics</u>	63
Ethics	C 97	64
Ethics and Psychism	C 976	65
Personal Ethics	C 1178	67
Conscience	C 1221	69
Ethical Formalism	C 1305	70
Integrity and Judgment	C 1404	72
Ethics and Awareness	C 1486	74





Chapter 3.3

Values



The Result of Growth in Consciousness

- A person's consciousness is closely related to character, temperament, and values. Character is the first ray aspect. Temperament is the second ray aspect. And values are the third ray aspect. All three are very closely related, but values tend to be more objective indications of consciousness.
- As a person grows in consciousness, by virtue of experience and assimilation of experience, that person's values naturally change to reflect the new or expanded consciousness. Yet often there is a difference between what is believed (professed values) and what is actually embraced and practiced (real values). Thus the spiritual life is a matter of seeking to live in accordance with one's values as much as it is a matter of growing in consciousness (and evoking new or higher values).

Values 1

The values of most people are predominately a matter of conditioning and consciousness. Since most people are asleep in the sense of being unaware of the underlying reality, and perceive themselves as separate self-conscious individualities, most peoples' values are naturally self-centered. As people evolve, and as civilizations grow, as people become less self-centered, as people begin to appreciate and respect the interests of other people, values naturally become more refined and less self-centered. Thus there are (some) changing values and personal growth.

Many values (for most people) are unconscious and implied by the way a person lives his or her life, in the pursuit of personal survival, in pursuit of material things and (apparent) wealth, in pursuit of pleasures and sensations, in pursuit of ego-building accomplishments and status, in pursuit of objects and goals considered worthwhile or valuable or on behalf of others, etc. A person is no less responsible for his or her values because they are unconscious and implied, but the karma of such a person is markedly different in flavor and practice than of one who is more deliberate and conscious in embracing values. There is much more potency (karma) in consciously embracing values and learning more directly through the resulting experience.

Many people are passive with regard to values, and embrace whatever values are subscribed or professed by elders, friends, the community, etc. Some people do whatever they are called upon by circumstances or by others to do. Some people do whatever is expected of them, or whatever they perceive is expected of them, without really thinking about it. The lessons conveyed through such passive experience are relatively modest, but provide a stepping-stone toward a more active posture. As such people develop, they naturally begin to be motivated more and more by desire rather than simply acquiescence or compliance. Most people are more active (than passive), have goals, consciously or unconsciously elucidated. This may be materialistic or sensual or egoistic (or some combination).

At one extreme there is to do whatever feels good or to acquire things (material possessions, wealth, status). In the middle are relatively self-centered goals relating to education, personal growth, spiritual development, etc. At the other extreme there is the goal of accomplishing whatever is perceived to be of value to humanity (or some group therein) or whatever one is called upon to do (in the sense of Tao). Eventually, the spiritual student transcends personal goals altogether, and simply embraces quality (spiritual qualities) (serving effectively through non-contriving). But in each case there are fundamental and essential values that reflect the nature (character and quality) of consciousness.

Perhaps the most fundamental value at the human level is life, in the sense of preserving one's life in the world. Life is sacred, both metaphysically and to a large extent conventionally (although this value is not generally applied to non-human lives, it should be). Life should be protected because people are in the world in order to fulfill their karma (and dharma). There is purpose for being here. But life should not necessarily be sustained artificially, for there is (real) life beyond this world. Under virtually all conceivable circumstances, the taking of life (abortion, murder, suicide) is anathema to the spiritual student. This anathema extends as well to the animal kingdom, to the taking of animal lives for human consumption (pleasure) (sport). That anyone should kill, ignorantly or otherwise, human or animal, is a serious matter.

† Commentary No. 1170

Values 2

Very closely related to life is the quality and nature of life in the lower worlds, (perceived) through (having) health and happiness. Health includes physical, etheric, emotional (astral), and concrete mental (intellectual) considerations. Health is also a matter of consciousness in the sense that a truly healthy person, one who is best able to experience and express most effectively, is one who is unencumbered by coarseness. Thus some pleasurable activities are inherently harmful (obviously or not) and are therefore not healthy.

Health is important in several regards, both in the sense of one being able to effectively experience and express oneself in the lower worlds, and in the sense

of one being able to learn more effectively through the lack of health (accident, disease, etc.) the lessons that are implied or conveyed thereby. Health and non-health are both opportunities, but decidedly different in nature. And of course healthy people tend to "feel" better. And yet many people trade transient pleasure for health, e.g., in smoking, drinking, taking drugs, risking one's life for some thrilling experience, etc. Many people live in accordance with the prevailing worldly assumption that there is only one life on earth (and nothing beyond this life) and so one should simply enjoy it as much as one can. This is fine, it leads to experience that leads in turn to assimilation of experience. But it is short-sighted in the sense of lacking realization and perspective of the underlying purpose (collective evolution in consciousness) and true value of life (opportunity to contribute to collective evolution in consciousness).

Happiness is a very personal matter, perceived variously according to perspective. There is real happiness (that relies on internals) and there is the illusion of happiness (i.e., happiness that relies on externals). Yet the pursuit of happiness is ultimately futile, while participation in happiness is much more meaningful. But because values (and consciousness) differ(s) so much, each person is his or her own judge of what constitutes quality of life, and most people actively pursue things (goals) (or at least function) more or less in accordance with their perceptions (self-perception, goals, values, etc.) and apparent opportunities.

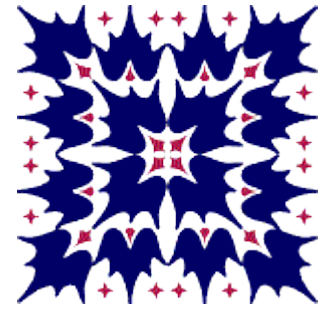
Many worldly values are intermediate in the sense that they simply (potentially) contribute to (the perception of) happiness. For example, job satisfaction (which may be perceived to bring happiness) (or may be perceived to prevent happiness) (when indeed, the job one has (or not) does not in itself bring or convey any opportunity for happiness (except in the artificial sense)). Comfortable surroundings, possessions, fame and fortune, etc., may seem to be satisfying, but in the long run they are futile (in themselves). There is nothing wrong with having possessions, etc., provided one is not overly attached to them, provided they are not acquired at the expense of others, etc. The human being is really a custodian and does not (cannot) ever own anything, but people attract things and experiences in accordance with consciousness and karma.

The only thing that really matters (in this perspective) are the values through which we live our lives. We can embrace mundane, worldly, material, egoistic

values, or we can embrace more noble values (or at least work in that direction). In between the mundane and the spiritual are the more social values (brotherhood, friendship, relationship, etc.) that, when properly broadened and deepened, lead to the spiritual.



Section 3.31



Value Systems

- A value system is that collection of interdependent values that a person more or less embraces and to (for) which a person's motives, attitudes, personal objectives, judgment (bias), and behavior are related (derived).

Value Systems 1

Esoterically, a human being (person) is defined and measured in terms of quality and extent (level and breadth (depth)) of consciousness and the person's place upon the path. A soul is either committed to the spiritual path or not (or is approaching the path) and is polarized on some (soul) level (i.e., the causal body resides on (is focused within) some sub-plane). The soul's measure of achievement is the relative quality of consciousness and the extent to which that consciousness is represented in its personality matrix (and thereby in its incarnated personality).

While the quality and extent of consciousness of the personality is a proper (esoteric) measure, exoterically, it is a person's character and temperament that matters (more so than ability and relative intelligence) and that character and temperament (and intelligence) is indicated by the value system that is more or less embraced by a person. By value system is meant that collection of interdependent values that a person more or less embraces and to (for) which a person's motives, attitudes, personal objectives, judgment (bias), and behavior are related (derived). Those values need not be well-organized or even self-consistent, nor need those values be consciously realized. As a person progresses through the various evolutionary stages, the value system similarly undergoes change and adaptation (to new conditions and/or new focus in consciousness) (and achieves some measure of organization and consistency).

There are many kinds of value systems, indicating various types and combinations of values. Some values may be loosely held (and not contribute much to the value system); conversely, some values may be closely held (and contribute substantially to what a person is (his or her value system)). Primitive people are primarily concerned (more or less) with survival considerations and their values reflect that focus and consideration (absorption). Others may embrace a predominantly materialistic or egoistic value system. Yet others (spiritual students and those who are approaching the path) embrace a system of predominantly spiritual values. In each case there is a relative balance of environmental and inherited values (derived from racial, family, cultural, and religious factors) with personal values, with the relatively more advanced people

having a stronger personal (individual) component and a weaker environmental component (in this sense personal values can range from very personal (personality-centered) to the impersonal and super-personal).

Thus a person's actual value system, whether passively (unconsciously) embraced or embraced deliberately (actively) (consciously) (intelligently) (with self-determination), is individualized or customized to that person's character and consciousness, yet affords various dimensions of conflicting (hierarchical) and complementary (consistent) values. In a stable value system (which reflects a stable (integrated) personality), values are generally hierarchical or conditional in the sense that value conflicts are relatively easily resolved in consciousness (i.e., through intelligent realization and conditional or situational prioritization (consciously applied or otherwise)).

In one sense, a person's value system is a reflection of that person's character and quality of consciousness. In another sense, the character and quality of consciousness is a reflection of that person's value system (values). Thus, one can effectively utilize a conscious and deliberate change (improvement) in values to bring about changes in character and quality of consciousness. A person and his or her values are one.

† Commentary No. 807

Value Systems 2

One common kind of value system (or dimension within a more complex value system) is concerned with materialistic values. At one extreme a person (with such a value system) may be focused entirely on the fulfillment of basic material needs. At the other extreme, a person may be absorbed in the pursuit or embrace of luxury.

In the middle ground (of this particular spectrum) is a concern primarily with being comfortable. In this dimension, the material component of a value system suitable for the spiritual student (materially rich or poor) lies somewhere between the fulfillment of basic needs and being comfortable, but the magnitude (intensity) (degree of concern, attention, or focus) is relatively small (for the spiritual student (who is more properly and more substantially focused on more

pertinent matters) and the student disdains material extravagance (luxury), preferring to conserve resources for purposes of constructive utilization (appropriate sharing).

Another common value system is concerned with relative egoistic values. At one extreme the values embraced are wholly self-centered and selfish, with little or no concern for others (e.g., in the case of a wholly egoistic, judgmental, status-seeking, arrogant, competitive, defensive, reactive, self-absorbed individual). In the middle ground of this dimension is a balance between (values that express) personal concerns and (values that express) concern for others. It is this balance (moderation) that is highly desirable (appropriate) for the bulk of humanity. At the other extreme are two branches, in one case (primitive) with values characterized by indifference and/or passivity (i.e., the absence of ego and the relative absence of intelligence), in the other case (advanced) with values characterized by intelligent impersonality and humility (where the person (spiritual student) is primarily focused upon the path and its work (the student's dharma), with only minor material and egoistic components).

A third common value system is concerned with a particular combination of material and egoistic values under the guise of glamour (in its primarily astral or emotional component) (and to a lesser extent maya and illusion (in its physical (etheric) and concrete mental components, respectively)). The glamour-value system is probably least likely to be consciously embraced (since proper and sufficient awareness generally precludes absorption along the lines of glamour), but is equally seductive as the more materialistic and the more egoistic systems. A related value system (and one that is particularly seductive) is concerned with sensation on physiological, emotional, and/or concrete mental levels (i.e., this value system is more or less unconsciously embraced by the thrill-seeker, the fun-loving person, the drug user, the drinker (of alcoholic beverages), the combatant (competitor), the smoker, and the sexually-focused person).

The spiritual student on the other hand generally seeks to avoid the pitfalls of any glamour or sensation-based endeavors, being far more concerned with the dharma and (in maturity) being relatively unaffected by the various pleasures that so entangle most of humanity. The spiritual student properly (quietly and unemotionally) enjoys life without being distracted by desire or sensation, being largely content to serve (work) without recognition or attention by others. The

spiritual student thus embraces a fairly comprehensive set of values that are characteristic of (treading) the path (and which have been progressively revealed to or realized by all who have embraced the path).

† Commentary No. 808

Value Systems 3

The real import of value systems lies in their utilization, both in terms of accordance and in terms of transition or intention. Everyone has a value system or set of personal values, but there can be differences between values aspired to or intended, values actually embraced, and values merely professed. The difference between values professed and values embraced is a negative or counterproductive differential (hypocrisy), while the difference between values aspired to and values embraced, provided that difference is consciously and honestly recognized, is a positive or constructive (progressive) differential.

In a sense, the whole extent of the spiritual path can be viewed in terms of the progressive realization of embraced values. The basic principles of metaphysical, theosophical, and esoteric philosophy imply or convey progressive and intelligible values. The aspirant is one who aspires to or embraces a basic (aspirational) (probationary) (preliminary) value system, consistent with his or her understanding of the path. Similarly, the disciple is one who embraces an intermediate value system (discipleship), consistent with his or her (more substantial) understanding. In each case the student progresses from one value system to another, or more properly, the value system evolves as the student's knowledge and understanding (and relative wisdom) grow.

That progression generally involves some presentation of values (e.g., encouragement of adherence to the preliminary discipline), some consideration of the presented values, some (preliminary) acceptance, and a period of transition or transformation as those values are gradually embraced or fulfilled. This process actually occurs continually (if not continuously) as new values are recognized, considered, and incorporated. But because the personality (ego) has a mind (will) (desire system) of its own (and because of its inherent self-centeredness, narrow-mindedness, and basic materiality), the personality is usually an impedance to the progression of values (i.e., the personality has its

own (primarily self-defensive and sensation-seeking) value system that conflicts or contrasts naturally with that of the waking-consciousness of the spiritual student). The value system of the personality is generally equivalent to the value system of the average person, in which case the values held are generally held more or less unconsciously (subconsciously) (by default). The mark of the relatively more intelligent person is that values (of whatever quality) are held more consciously (i.e., with conscious awareness if not actual conscious consideration and deliberation). The mark of the spiritual student is that values are held more consciously and that those values are predominantly spiritual (consistent with one's place on the path).

Consciously intended values are significant in the sense that conscious intention creates and sustains a momentum in the direction of achievement. But it is also relatively important for a person to be honest about the values actually held (e.g., through periodic self-assessment), as hypocrisy is ever counterproductive. Conscious intention, intelligently and periodically reinforced, can effect considerable transformation in values embraced (character) (disposition) (temperament). It is also quite helpful to consciously identify one's habits associated with actual or retrogressive values so that one can undermine or consciously dissolve those habits (patterns) (tendencies), effectively replacing them with new (more appropriate) ones.

We are the values we embrace. If we are to progress beyond what we are we must progressively embrace higher values, until we actually embody the embraced values and thereby convey or induce those values.

The Old and the New

The underlying force of evolution in consciousness is quite progressive. It urges growth and deepening through experience and expression, ever onward and upward. But growth is based on assimilation, and how a person approaches assimilation, how a person believes, what a person wants, determines the effectiveness of that assimilation and therefore the effectiveness of growth.

In this process of growth there is a natural struggle between old beliefs and old values and new beliefs and new values. As one grows, old beliefs and old values get challenged by new, broader experience, and new beliefs and new values enter the picture. But this does not mean that all old beliefs and old values are wrong, or that all new beliefs and new values are right. There also needs to be some discrimination, some process of valuation in which the value of a belief or value, and the context of a belief or value, is placed into perspective. More properly, (genuine) new beliefs are more inclusive and allow for the context of old beliefs (and allow those old beliefs that continue to be relevant to continue as part of the belief system).

Much of what is progressive thinking is just a refinement of previously poorly-understood principles. For example, in theosophy there is a basis of knowledge pertaining to root races that has been misunderstood by many to infer racial superiority for the so-called "advanced" races or "advanced" natures. As the issue is more properly understood, there is not (properly) a rejection of the principle of root races, but a refinement of understanding and placing the role and contribution of each race into some broader perspective. Other teachings (and values) depend very much on the place of consciousness of the student, e.g., some students need teachers, others are better able to learn and grow without relying on external authorities. Some students are in the ego-building stage and others are in the ego-transcending stage.

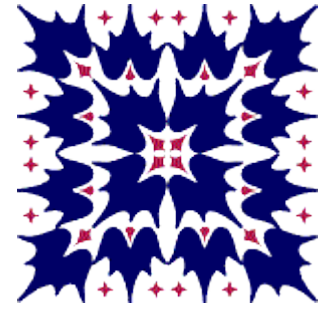
But there is also an inherent struggle of ego and the desire of a person and how that desire affects the belief system and determines how a person relates to experience and opportunities. Thus many people who are otherwise metaphysically-minded and/or spiritually-oriented believe things because those

beliefs support what they want to believe rather than what they need to believe in order to go beyond their current stage. Sometimes people will reject “old” teachings because the old teachings do not allow them to fully rationalize or justify what they want (e.g., the ego will naturally rationalize and justify anything that it needs to maintain control, and feeling threatened by spiritual practice (discipline) will naturally invent “new” values that allow a person to sustain the desired self-indulgence).

Teachings (knowledge) (principles) (understanding) (values) serve a purpose. Some teachings endure for the entire period of human evolution (e.g., the role and value of “love”) while other teachings serve for a while and are then overtaken in significance as a person can understand a broader context (e.g., authoritarian religion is replaced by non-authoritarian (self-centered) “religion” which is subsequently replaced by genuine inner experience). There are no really “new” teachings, but only some that seem new. New teachings may be genuine (progressive) (encouraging evolution in consciousness) or they may be simply whatever is needed to rationalize and justify one’s desires (which is counter-evolutionary and inertial even while appearing to be “progressive”). Ignoring claims of external authority, the truly progressive student learns to discern truth for himself (herself), and beliefs and values are embraced according to their actual value in consciousness and context.



Section 3.311



Importance

- A person's sense of what is deemed important is a relatively clear indication of values. A person's sense of the importance also indicates the extent of glamour and illusion. And a person's sense of self-importance is a relatively clear indication of the extent of ego.

Importance 1

Importance is defined as the quality or state of being significant or meaningful. Importance implies the power of influencing or the quality of having evident value, through relationships, effects, or existence. There are three aspects of importance that deserve mention and elaboration; self-importance (and its extension to the group), the importance of a particular effort or activity, and the discernment of significance (relative importance).

The proper balance of self-value is essential to spiritual progress. Any exaggerated sense of importance (or lack of importance) is an impediment and a distraction. Everyone is important in the sense that all souls are noble (of divine heritage and in support of the greater or spiritual existence), but no one is important in any personal, personality, or separated (exclusive) sense. The basis of this truth is the common life which is noble with respect to the lives and forms through which that common life functions. The cultivation of true humility (self-respect) and a lack of (separated) self-importance is expected of everyone who would tread the spiritual path. The vanity of man is one of the greatest stumbling blocks. The spiritual student would not consider himself important relative to others. Likewise, no group should be considered especially important with respect to other groups. Each individual and each group may be significant in its own (particular) way, but it remains inappropriate to attribute much significance to any with respect to others.

The importance of any particular effort or activity should also be viewed dispassionately. The spiritual student is encouraged to do what (seems) ought to be done, to perform whatever work is worth doing or seems to be appropriate. To attribute any special (exaggerated) importance to a task or project (no matter how worthwhile it seems) is to invite further glamour and illusion. There is indeed much significant work to be done, but that work should be (is better) performed and viewed dispassionately. To be attached to the work is to be distracted by it. To view any particular work as especially meaningful is to enter as well the glamour or fallacy of importance. The spiritual student is encouraged to cultivate an attitude (and perspective) of appropriateness, rather than importance.

The discernment (determination) (realization) of significance in information or experience is not necessarily an easy or rational task. The spiritual student should learn to discern the (relative) significance of information (through correlation) and experience (through assimilation) without any exaggeration or distortion by means of personal energies (bias). To attribute significance where none exists is as inappropriate as to miss entirely the significance which does exist. Actually, it is better in many ways to forego (conscious) realization of significance than to exaggerate or attribute significance that should not be. For in the former case, the significance may be realized later or on deeper levels of consciousness; while in the latter case, mistaken or exaggerated significance can create strong mental and subconscious barriers to the truth, which in turn discourage understanding.

The spiritual student should sincerely try to place everything into a moderate perspective. If significance is self-evident (and right), then so be it; otherwise (and even so) let no claims be made of great significance or importance. To concede that nothing is important is to admit that everything is important, and that that importance is merely relative and moderate. The essence of the problem of importance is the glamour of importance, but with a dispassionate approach, even such glamour may be dispelled and truth revealed.

† Commentary No. 221

Priorities

The spiritual student is in a rather unique situation with respect to his personal values and the priorities of his life, when compared to the bulk of humanity. The values and priorities of most of humanity are determined by karma and the mundane conditions of life in the lower world. But the spiritual student recognizes higher values and comes to realize greater responsibilities than most of humanity. These responsibilities (and corresponding priorities) may be difficult to resolve, and quite likely misunderstood by most of humanity. But for the spiritual student to live an effective and useful life in the lower worlds of activity, it can be quite helpful to recognize and understand an order of priorities as a form of guidance.

The highest priority in the life and consciousness of the serious spiritual student can be associated with God and the spiritual path itself. God is the logos on whatever levels are meaningful to the consciousness of the student. God is life in the highest sense, and as the highest aspect of conceived existence, it must necessarily receive the highest priority, subjective and elusive as it may be to most of humanity. To the esoteric student, this priority is quite real, if not the most real. And the spiritual path itself is the most practical aspect of God with respect to the spiritual student. When the soul makes its commitment to the spiritual path, it is a solemn and serious realization of this first and highest priority.

The next lower level or priority for the spiritual student is relatively broad, encompassing the soul, esoteric group relationships (on soul levels, not on personality levels), humanity, and the various lifewaves. Again these are mostly subjective priorities, yet nevertheless real and meaningful to the spiritually polarized student. The student must ultimately recognize and accept his responsibility to (as) the soul to be greater than anything of mundane significance. As the spiritual student becomes firmly committed to the path and to the soul, all other matters are subordinated and placed into proper perspective in relation to these higher priorities.

The next lower level (priority) for the spiritual student encompasses the realm of ordinary responsibilities: domestic, professional, and personal. Once the higher priorities are recognized and accepted, all of the domestic, professional, and personal priorities should fall nicely into place. Even though far higher priorities (responsibilities) (obligations) exist, they are usually no excuse for neglecting or ignoring the lower responsibilities. In fact, one of the nice things about the spiritual path and all of the implied obligations is that this entire hierarchy of priorities is self-consistent, and usually without conflict (provided a commitment has been made to the path). Apparent conflicts can be resolved, with common-sense (wisdom), hopefully without recourse to an independent or separative mind (personality).

National and racial concerns are not incorporated into this hierarchy of priorities for the spiritual student. Humanity has reached the point where these national and racial responsibilities are not merited for the spiritual student.

There may still be problems for humanity regarding nation-states and the various racial expressions, but these are dealt with as problems of the lifewave, not as responsibilities of the particular spiritual student. But the priorities of the spiritual student can change temporarily with particular (presential) needs and circumstances, but for the most part, the esoteric student is concerned with the broader perspective, which leads ever back to the highest priority, to God and to the spiritual path.

† Commentary No. 1035

Importance 2

There are no important people. There is no important work to do. However, there is worthwhile work to do, and there are many people who “do” worthwhile things, but nothing is really important and no one is particularly important. There is a certain subtle equivalence between saying that someone or something is important and saying that everyone or everything is important. As all lives and all work proceed within God, then all lives (and all work) are “special” (of course “special” loses its conventional meaning in the process). This is not to convey any sense of hopelessness. There is always hope (realistic or otherwise), but hope should be recognized as a somewhat delusive means. The spiritual student is properly and generally hopeful, confident, etc., but not in any particular regard.

The distinction between important and worthwhile is relatively important. Important means substantially significant with a hint or measure of urgency (glamour). Worthwhile simply means being worth the investment of time and effort. Both imply judgment, but a sense of importance or special-ness suggests and invites glamour much more so than a sense of worthwhile-ness. The distinction is more a matter of degree than kind, but one is more moderate than the other and therefore more amenable to the way (path). Importance inhibits realization, while worthwhile-ness does not so much inhibit realization.

To sense something or someone as important is to be to some extent englamoured and deluded; to sense oneself as important and/or to sense (believe) one’s work as important is to separate oneself from what truly is, from God, from life, from humanity. Whenever anyone thinks of oneself and/or one’s

work as special or substantially different, then that is, to a large extent, a manifestation of ego and separateness. To proceed in humility, doing whatever seems worthwhile to do, this is what is expected of us along the way.

Many things are (seem to be) relatively important or worthwhile, but none particularly or non-relatively so. No person is relatively more important than any other. To think of oneself as better than any other or important in any way is the curse of egoism. On the other hand, to think of oneself as in any sense inferior to others is also and equally a matter of (negative) egoism (i.e., the ego may promote a sense of inferiority in order to maintain its hold on the waking consciousness, but more generally inferiority comes from the unintegrated astral nature seeking further stimulation). There are no important people, though there are some people who "do" relatively worthwhile things. Since all people live in God, God is manifested through all people. Some are more responsive than others, or at least appear to be so in ways that we perceive to be relatively significant. But if one person were not "there" to "do" something that really needs to be done, then someone else would be there instead. On the other hand, any sense of momentousness is probably very much distorted by glamour, and any such sense of the importance of events or circumstances is exaggerated by the ego.

In attachment to objectives, one can lose sight of the value of the process. In attachment to objectives, one becomes biased (relatively closed) to deeper and broader realization. The spiritual student is encouraged to "do" whatever he or she is called upon (by common sense and conscience) to do. The spiritual student is encouraged to "do" worthwhile things, not so much because they are worthwhile (i.e., appearing to have worthwhile objectives) but because in the "doing" of worthwhile things one has worthwhile experience and expression, developing character and proper temperament, values, etc.

The Basis of Importance

In addition to the aspect of glamour (self-delusion) regarding a sense of importance, there is a matter of basis of importance. Each person generally has some sense of what is important and what is not important, or at least (and preferably) what is relatively important, but can anyone ever really know what is important, or even what is relatively important?

Perception of relative importance is based on one's values and those values are the result of experience (evolution in consciousness) and a measure of realization (knowledge, understanding, wisdom). But all things, all lives, and all processes are related by karma, the underlying law and force of cause and effect. Thus, what is relatively important (and what is good) is a measure of what facilitates evolution in consciousness (i.e., what is consistent with karmic intent), but the human being cannot generally discern cause and effect relationships except in the relatively superficial (limited, relatively immediate (near-field), and non-conclusive) sense. Karma has two dimensions that transcend human perception and the potential ability to grasp specific cause and effect relationships. The first is the temporal aspect, with karmic forces transcending the time-span of the existing lifetime and the perspective of incarnation, and the second is the aspect of interrelatedness of all lives and circumstances (significantly and otherwise).

As the human being evolves in consciousness there is an expansion of the discernment regarding karma, in the breadth and depth of karmic balance and in some pertinent details, but not in any conclusive detailed sense. The real depth and breadth of karma and the complexity of detail is simply beyond human capacity both qualitatively and quantitatively. Thus not being able to discern details of karma limits the human ability to determine what is really important. Yet, discernment of relative importance (worthwhile-ness) based upon one's values and understanding of principles suffices (and provided that one consciously acknowledges the relativity and tentativeness of any discernment and realization, then one can adapt (grow) appropriately to a deeper sense of propriety).

There are a number of underlying means of discernment of relative importance, both unconscious and conscious, relating to embraced (and to some extent professed) values. At the most primitive level (physical polarization) there are various instincts inherited from passage through the animal kingdom (e.g., survival). At the next level (emotional polarization) there are various higher instincts, self-interest, and what is appealing to the desire nature. At the next level (mental polarization) there is self-interest and what is intellectually appealing (the intellect generally (but not completely) supersedes much of the instinctive nature). Hopefully, in the transition between the emotional polarization and the mental polarization there is a lessening on self-interest and a broadening of appreciation for the context of humanity (and life) as a whole. And at the highest practical level, there is intuitive recognition of appropriateness and propriety.

As the student transcends reliance on instinct and intellect, relying increasingly and instead on the intuition, and as the student transcends the whole arena of attachment (beliefs, opinions) and ego, then there is immediate and effective realization of appropriateness (valuation of relative worthwhile-ness), yet that realization is not really a matter of realization of importance (which it is not, really) as much as it is a matter of realization of appropriateness. One simply learns to do what is before oneself to do.

† Commentary No. 1107

Importance 3

So. What is important? Dharma. Devotion to the spiritual path and its principles, to whatever extent one understands them. Learning, growing, deepening, serving. Awareness, sensitivity, truth. The heart. Embracing the qualities of the path. Living Tao. Everything else is secondary.

For most people what is important is their own experience and expression, having and doing, family, friends, work. But for the spiritual student, who is no longer enamoured by or immersed in experience, who is more concerned about conscious assimilation of experience and living (being) in accord with dharma, experience and expression as ends in themselves are simply not important. There is family. There are friends. There is work. None are neglected. The

student continues to experience. The student continues to express himself or herself in meaningful ways (with spiritual poise), but the focus and emphasis are simply not on experience and expression. Having and doing may have value, but the focus and emphasis for the spiritual student are on being.

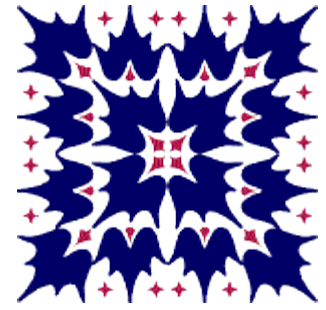
Happiness is not an objective for the spiritual student. Yet the spiritual student embraces happiness. There is an inner joyful awareness that permeates the aura. There is happiness. Sensual experience is not an objective (nor even a direct means) of the spiritual student. Yet the spiritual student continues to sense, but without immersion in the outer senses, without being entangled in (outer) sense experience, preferring to watch quietly (in joyful awareness) rather than being absorbed in worldly affairs, preferring to rely predominantly on the inner senses (awareness, intuition, being). The student enjoys life in many ways and through many facets of life, but enjoying life is not the objective. It just happens. Likewise, achievement is not an objective of the spiritual student. Yet the spiritual student achieves (whatever needs to be achieved) without achievement, without striving, without ambition, without ego. Things are simply achieved. Objective reality is not important; it is simply a field for experience and expression, a means to an end, and instrument of what is real. The spiritual student properly respects objective reality and its place in the scheme of things, but does not make it important. It merely has value. Individuality is likewise not important. Individuality is merely a means to an end. It merely has value. Even karma is not really important. It merely has value and provides a context.

So. What else is important? Life. Love. Light. Which are (collectively) simply another way of looking at dharma. Reality. Truth. The spiritual student learns to discern between the real and the unreal, between underlying truth and appearance (that which is merely apparent to the senses), between the personality (mind) (ego) and the soul (inner, higher, transcendental (immanent) Self (that which is immanent and that which is transcendent are one and the same thing (the reality of one's being rather than the apparent reality of the outer self or personality expression))). Life is more real than it appears to be. Love is more real than it appears to be. Light is more real than it appears to be. And there is no real difference between life and love and light. Between the One and the Three (and the Seven and the Twelve).

Yet. When all of these things are properly considered, one returns naturally to what is truly important. Dharma. Devotion to the spiritual path and its principles, to whatever extent one understands them. Learning, growing, deepening, serving. Awareness, sensitivity, truth. The heart. Embracing the qualities of the path. Living Tao. Everything else is secondary. And it remains so.



Section 3.32



Personal Values

- There are many values that can be embraced consciously and deliberately or otherwise. One's values are a reflection of one's consciousness and one's consciousness is a reflection of one's values.

Personal Values

Individual consciousness may be described in many ways, from the level or plane of consciousness (physical, emotional, mental, etc.) upon which the individual consciousness is polarized (normally and predominately oriented) (stabilized), to the relative presence of the many and particular characteristics of consciousness (e.g., in terms of abilities, tendencies, attributes, etc.). An individual's consciousness is closely related to the individual's overall character, temperament, and values. An individual's personal values serve both as an interactive reflection of consciousness and as a means of achievement (i.e., as an evoking force for experience).

As a reflection or indication of consciousness, personal values are both the result of consciousness and a causative (albeit intermediate) force within the overall consciousness. Personal values can cover a rather wide range (things, experience, ethics, principles, knowledge, character, etc.). Actual personal values are those which are actually embraced in consciousness (typically to some extent consciously, to a large extent unconsciously), and as such are fairly good indications of consciousness. But the actual personal values may be masked by the superficial aspects of consciousness (which (aspects) are also indications of the character and quality of consciousness). Personal values embraced merely intellectually (conceptually) are not very accurate indications of consciousness, for to be embraced in consciousness, a personal value must be reflected or expressed by the personality in accordance with the value.

Where a person's professed (intellectual) values are not actually embraced in consciousness, the lack of harmony between assertion and actuality is a causative force in itself. In the case of conscious, sincere intention (to embrace the value), the resulting causative force will be constructive, seeking to enfold the value in consciousness (bringing about the (relatively ideal) actuality (and thereby resolve the inconsistency)). But in the case of profession without such sincere intention, the disharmony (hypocrisy) will resolve itself in other, less constructive ways. The spiritual student should thus endeavor to live in accordance with his beliefs (personal values), thereby bringing about more effective change (progression) in consciousness.

The overall character and quality of consciousness (and the derived temperament, values, etc.) are not so much a function of particular values as they are a function of the entire collection of values, as each value is weighted appropriately by the degree that it is embraced and its relative significance. The extent to which a value is understood (realized) is also a factor, for values may be held superficially, environmentally (unconsciously), or according to various motives. Likewise the degree to which a person is absorbed in his mundane environment qualifies the personal values (and consciousness) (or vice versa).

As a means of achievement, personal values (keywords) intelligently embraced in consciousness can bring about considerable progress, leading ultimately to (relative) perfection. To be effective, such values should be wisely chosen, continually (not continuously) studied (via meditation) and consciously embraced, enfolded, and expressed (to whatever extent is appropriate). The student should never embrace values concretely or in any absolute sense, for the student must remain flexible (receptive) and relative, in order to progress, as the perspective is ever gradually broadened. Some values will ultimately be discarded, others transformed and incorporated, as the awareness and realization of the student improves.

† Commentary No. 405

Changing Values

One's value system is an important aspect of spiritual life, for it is a reflection of consciousness and character. It represents the basic sense of appropriateness, and it stands for what is important and worthwhile. Since values are the principles, standards, or qualities by which one lives, they usually govern conduct or behavior. A value system is inherent (a factor of consciousness) (even if not fully expressed), and a reflection of experience (evolution). Values may be influenced (more) by the personality or soul, depending on the level and quality of consciousness. Values can be improved or transformed through spiritual effort and through soul contact, resulting in discernment (realization), discretion, and strength of character. With further refinement, values become less self-centered (personality indulgent) and more oriented toward the universal

good (soul existence). Eventually the value system becomes a reflection of the soul (group) consciousness.

Just as humanity evinces a wide range of consciousness (from totally unenlightened to highly evolved), so do its values vary greatly. The unevolved normally (completely) reflect (internalize) the values of society. This is also the case to some extent for the average individual just beginning to achieve an awareness of the soul. However, a spiritual student should be guided more by the inner (soul) awareness and the sense of inner appropriateness (in accordance with (higher) spiritual law), than the dictates of society. Of course, to be effective, the spiritual student should be aware of and respect the laws of society, even though imposed laws may (or may not) be in accord with spiritual law.

In the course of an incarnation, relatively unique circumstances (moral and ethical value context) may be confronted. What may be appropriate for one may not be true for another (at that time). There are many avenues on the path, all progressing to the same basic end. The standards and values are different (higher qualification) for those on the spiritual path, than for those who are not. The path is ever the testing ground for development in consciousness (discernment and discretion), and an opportunity for growth. Under these circumstances, all choices may be "right," but one may be "more right" than another in the sense that it is more appropriate to (be in harmony with) one's higher values. Right is relative. It is for each person to decide what values are best (most appropriate). As the student progresses, so must the values change (be refined), for values rigidly held eventually become stumbling blocks. With progress on the path, the value choices become more subtle, and the choices may appear to be more difficult (an illusion).

A lack of consistency between the level of consciousness and one's values may reflect a lack of (inner) strength of character (soul contact) (spiritual will) in acknowledging the inner awareness and values. Or it may reflect a lack of responsiveness due to mundane absorption (mundane values) and inertia.

The effectiveness of the spiritual student is conditioned by a continuous series of choices in how the values should be applied. Values need to be lived, moving beyond ideals or theory, to be a true expression. For the spiritual student in

particular, not living up to what is known to be worthwhile can create (inner) disharmony and disappointment, as well as evoking more lessons (karma) to be learned (experienced). As lessons are learned, and consciousness and awareness grow, so will values (and determination) and outward conduct improve, as consciousness exists on a broad, ever-expanding continuum of higher-reaching quality.

† Commentary No. 1158

Essential Values

The theosophical details of the esoteric philosophy are many and varied and may seem to be rather complex, much like the many and varied (endless) details of manifestation. The list of qualities and values to be embraced on the spiritual path may seem almost endless. On the other hand, the essential values and qualities are more inclusive, and should be relatively few and simple. Many of the qualities and values are related, being various aspects of a relatively few (essential) (more basic) qualities and values. Thus the spiritual student should seek to recognize and embrace an appropriate simple-yet-effective set of (essential) values.

There are both inherent and procedural values. Inherent values (e.g., harmlessness, honesty, humility) represent transforming energies to be embraced and incorporated. Procedural values (e.g., non-attachment, impersonality) represent transforming energies that represent conditions that are necessary to facilitate the needed (and continual) transformation.

If one attempts to embrace a large or complex variety of values then the effort tends to be diffused and less effective. If one attempts to embrace only one value, then the effort tends to be focused and effective, but only in that one dimension. If that value is essential (inclusive) (representing a field of values and/or qualities) (e.g., a ray), then surely progress is made. But unless some nominal range of essential values are embraced there will not be achieved the balance that is required for fulfillment (and effective service). In other words, considerable progress may be made if one embraces, for example, love or light, but it is only when one embraces some essential triad (life-love-light) (humility-honesty-harmlessness) at some level that there is balanced progress. When the

embraced triad of essential values also corresponds to transcending one's own particular limitations (needs) (weaknesses), then there is real likelihood of substantial progress.

Honest self-assessment is essential, for otherwise one is not really able to address the issues that need to be resolved. If one is not even aware of one's own limitations, then they are not likely to be tempered or transcended in the course of the current incarnation. Often there are a set of limitations relating to one's personality ray (chosen for this purpose) and so one can embrace the higher energy (quality) of the ray and eventually work through and overcome these difficulties. If one properly embraces love (second or fourth or sixth ray energy) then that tends to temper all of the odd-numbered (ray) limitations, but does not in itself produce understanding or enlightenment. If one properly embraces light (first, third, fifth, or seventh ray energy) then there is a natural and steady process of enlightenment, but this does not in itself unfold the heart or produce the necessary balance.

To be truly enlightened is identical to being truly enfolded in love, in achieving (more properly, allowing) the perfect balance between the fully developed head-centered and heart-centered natures. But the way (means) to that end involves spiritual work (effort) (service), embracing essential values. Embracing essential values means that the quality (energy) of those values is evoked into the waking-consciousness and personality as a whole. As that energy works its way through the lower nature it stimulates and brings to the surface the various aspects of the lower nature that are inconsistent with the embraced value (quality) (energy) so that they can be dealt with through moderation and transcendence (transformation). Nothing is lost, but the lower nature is thereby naturally and gradually transformed.

Changing Consensus Values

As people gain experience and develop in terms of relative intelligence, awareness, and consciousness, that experience and development is reflected in the ethics and principles and values that are consciously or not-so-consciously embraced. The same is true for collective consciousness.

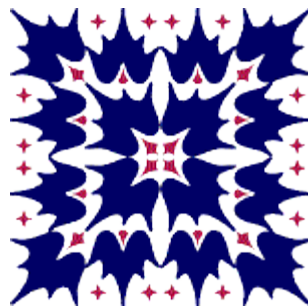
People tend to change their outlooks, perspectives, and values according to their conscious or unconscious realizations. For example, a person who truly realizes that smoking is not healthy will simply not smoke. If the person doesn't truly realize that, then the person will simply make excuses for continuing the habit of smoking. The fact of addictiveness notwithstanding. Something is addictive only to the extent that the person truly allows it to be so. Consciousness can (and in many cases does) transcend the (addictive) tendencies of the lower nature (protestations of the body or the emotions) (and assorted concrete mental attachments). But for a person to actually realize something, e.g., that drinking alcohol is inherently undermining consciousness, there must be true (conscious) assimilation of experience resulting in the courage to embrace the new value(s) even if contrary to the consensus (thinking) (of ordinary humanity).

But while personal values change not very quickly, because it generally takes time to truly assimilate experience, values held collectively sometimes change very (very) slowly and sometimes relatively more quickly than is the case for some people individually. Indeed, many people change values incidentally, because collective or consensus values have changed, rather than because there is any true realization at the individual level. For example, many people today realize that "smoking" is harmful, because the collective or consensus realization has changed. Even while pioneers (in consciousness and values) came to this realization more directly and substantially in advance of the majority or consensus. Yet it is the "thinking" of the pioneers that precurse the changing consensus values, and the "idea" that smoking is harmful simply grows gradually in the collective consciousness until there is some critical mass, at which time there is (in some sense) a growing contagion of passive realization. Eventually this will occur also for use of alcohol (and other drugs)

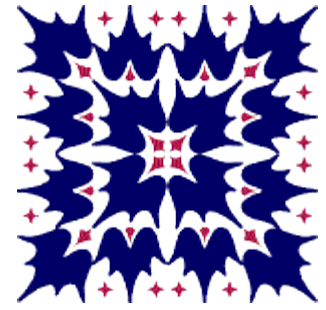
(i.e., that they are inherently harmful (counter-evolutionary)) and ultimately (likewise) for consumption of meat, fish, and fowl.

But there is of course great inertia, resistance to change. Habits (addictions) abound, on physical, emotional, and concrete mental levels. People are consciously and/or unconsciously quite comfortable with the ways things are and relatively uncomfortable with changes that they do not really understand. And real progress in consciousness comes not from passively embracing collective values, but through conscious individual realization.

And sometimes there is an ebb and flow of consensus values (i.e., where values are not quite broadly consensual), as in the case of (relatively unpopular prohibition (of alcohol). But there is encouragement in the sense that there are active debates (considerations) of most poignant issues, e.g., abortion, alcohol (even if only in the context of driving while intoxicated), animal rights, children's rights, drug use (abuse), human rights, respect for cultural and racial and religious differences, etc. It is this framework of open consideration of values that stimulates growth in collective values. It is not about legislation or imposition. It is about experience and understanding and realization and (then) embracing the needed values (doing the right thing for the right reasons).



Section 3.321



Personal Values 1

- A first set of selected personal values relating in some way to consciousness and the spiritual path.

Awareness

Awareness is the state (condition) (quality) of having knowledge, perception, and/or realization, particularly in the sense of alertness (conscious and/or unconscious vigilance in observation), recognition, and qualified (realistic) inference from direct and indirect experience. Awareness is an aspect of consciousness and, though qualified by consciousness, the extent (character) of awareness does not necessarily correlate directly with the character or quality of consciousness. Awareness as an aspect of consciousness must be developed and qualified in addition to the development and qualification of the overall consciousness; one does not necessarily follow from the other.

Awareness may be conscious and/or unconscious, objective and/or subjective, on any or all levels of associated consciousness. Each aspect or element of consciousness has an associated extent (character) (quality) of awareness. While awareness depends to some (indirect) extent on quality of consciousness, it also depends on mental, emotional, and physical training and abilities. Awareness on some level (and some aspect) may be consciously (deliberately) programmed (cultivated) or it may be programmed unconsciously as a consequence of conscious or unconscious experience. Awareness needs to be intelligently cultivated, properly qualified, and properly integrated and aligned with the higher focus of consciousness.

Ordinary human awareness is a combination of instinctive (subconscious) awareness, unconscious outer (objective) (external) awareness (the totality of sense-impressions and their unconscious evaluation), and conscious (objective) (external) awareness. This ordinary awareness is largely a function of (and related to the quality of) the concrete mind, the aura, and the associated activities in (lower) consciousness, and is limited (distorted) by the personality (personal energy) (concrete-mindedness). Awareness (perception) is largely determined by intention and responsiveness. Most of humanity are absorbed in their own (mundane) consciousness and sense things only to the extent of their own habits in thinking and awareness. Relatively few are truly aware of their own external environment, let alone their own condition in consciousness. Most are aware only of what they have (unconsciously) trained themselves to

be aware of, and therefore miss a great deal of potentially meaningful observation (perception) (knowledge) (experience).

The spiritual student is encouraged to develop this aspect of consciousness (awareness) through self-discipline and conscious application, learning to be an effective observer on all levels (higher and lower, inner and outer, conscious and unconscious) and to the extent of consciousness and its quality. The spiritual student should cultivate and qualify both a general, broad awareness (integrating numerous aspects) and the ability of focused awareness, that should enable the student to be aware of the internal and external environments, of activities, energies, forces, etc., and their implications (as a consequence of experienced awareness). This implies an increasing, qualified (stable) sensitivity and a constructive (effective) expansion in consciousness.

While consciousness is a function of vibration (quality), extent (focus), and activity (interaction), (enhanced) awareness (particularly in being aware of conditions in consciousness) is a function of the quality (and field) of consciousness, the will aspect, and the overall integration (alignment) (and degree of impersonality) of the personality. As the student properly cultivates consciousness (and awareness), the student develops an occult awareness, being able to intelligently project the focus of consciousness at will.

† Commentary No. 80

Beauty

True beauty is the special quality that calls forth a state of perception (awareness) (response) in which the normal strains of emotional response and mental activity are displaced to allow a serene emotional and mental appreciation of life (nature) (through positive relaxation) (stillness) (aspiration) (inspiration). Whether the state of appreciation (rejuvenation) (participation) is visual or auditory, the abstract mental response exhibits a common spiritual transcendence over time and space, ever beckoning the world aspirant (humanity) out of the pain of form-attachment and mundane existence, upward to those states of knowledge and soul identification which characterize the peaceful reconciliation of duality (the pairs-of-opposites) (illusion). Such is the

case at least for the more refined (pure) (controlled) emotions which invoke the higher participation; not so for the ordinary uncontrolled emotional response which precludes higher activity in its lack of relationship.

Beauty (in this higher sense) leads to the contemplation of those varying revelations of divinity which require no explanation, which leave the student thankful (humble) and in awe of the compassionate presence. Such contemplation is typical of the mature mystical or heart-centered aspect of the spiritual path. The purest emotions and aspirations indicate a simplicity of attitude which eventually clothes the personality in the robes of mystic humility and reverence. The disciple, however occultly (mentally), invokes the needed rays of love and beauty with the realization of the plan of service. For the plan itself represents that which is beauty (truth) (perfection) (life). The beauty of the compassionate quality suggests the attitude of those greater lives for the lesser, who are sacrificed (made sacred) upon the cross of form and matter. The complexities, apparent inconsistencies, and generic suffering of humanity are easily reconciled within the plan of beauty (purpose) of the solar logos.

The ability of the student to analyze these mysteries of beauty is limited only by the extent to which the depths of personal and group being can be realized. There are no constraints on the essence of life, only relative and specific intention. Beauty is a truly synthetic quality, linking all of the seven streams of life (purpose) (manifestation) together in harmony. The creative and harmonious manifestation of spirit is often reflected in truly classical music (as the position of sound in manifestation is recognized). Good (classical) music (that which calms the emotions rather than that which excites them) is an effective elixir for those students needing to balance in harmony the mental polarization (fire) with the emotional aspect (water) of the heart.

The majesty of certain twilight pageantry emblazons forth the importance of the middle spiritual path (harmonizing the polar opposites). The panoramic differentiation is seen in the tidal spray of sunlight (spirit) projecting subtle rainbows of purpose (soul-mind) amidst clouds of darkness (matter). This suggests the twilight state of meditation bridging between the waking-consciousness and the revelation of the crown of spiritual gold (the light of the soul within the head). The spiritual student sees the presence in obvious splendor while the disciple's light shows the way through the darkness.

The evolved spiritual will synthesizes the seven ray qualities into rich and synergistic patterns (color and harmonies) of greater life from the lesser, the sacred transmutation of microcosmic attributes into macrocosmic aspects. The disciple seeks to identify and encourage the divine principles within humanity in those personalities with which he has contact, a beauty evident only in the group-polarized perspective.

† Commentary No. 307

Brotherhood

Although humanity is linked in countless ways through karmic relationships, there are even more fundamental relationships which draw humanity together, which provide a potential for the (collective) (unified) human organism (lifewave) to achieve its intended place in the (overall) consciousness.

The basis of these relationships is the brotherhood or fellowship of man (humanity) and the continued fellowship of life. The brotherhood of humanity has always been a reality on the level of the soul, in the passive subjective sense, where the distinction of one soul from another is recognized as an illusion of objective existence. The evolutionary intention for humanity can be viewed as the achievement of that brotherhood, on the level of the soul, in the active (conscious) subjective sense, where each soul has fully achieved a quality of consciousness and a rapport with humanity that passes beyond the recognition of the illusion of individual distinction.

The reality of brotherhood is found first in the common source of all life, as all lives can be traced back through intermediate stages to an original common creation. Thus the essence of humanity (on the level of the soul) is a common source of life which sustains an existence and progression. Moreover, many intermediate bonds are found which link humanity to all other life, on every level of consciousness. Another reality of brotherhood can be found in the conclusion of humanity (which already exists) (outside of time and space) where all of humanity participate directly in the communion (fellowship) (rapport) (on the level of the soul) that passes beyond humanity (as the distinction of humanity is no longer pertinent). Between the source and the (relative) conclusion is the

qualification of brotherhood, to be recognized and realized, a qualification that serves also as an evolutionary force.

An intermediate (intended) achievement is the evolution of mundane humanity (on the personality level) to the conscious realization and manifestation of a sense of brotherhood (the reality of brotherhood is actually a common sense), not merely for humanity, but for all of life (and form) (and the sense of equality one with every other life). A superficial sense of brotherhood based upon personality relationships (friendships) is not sufficient; to have any real meaning, brotherhood must be unconditional and involve the energy of the soul manifested through an aligned personality. In this sense, brotherhood is a mutual realization of higher fellowship (communion of souls) (communion of the one soul), a realization unencumbered by the personality or mundane energy. True brotherhood (on any level) is the culmination or product of a number of elements of experience; the realization of brotherhood emerges naturally as a consequence of experience and the gradually evolving consciousness.

This sense of brotherhood is important to the waking-consciousness of the spiritual student, for it then qualifies the interaction of the student with humanity on both mundane and more mature levels. The sense of brotherhood includes the manifestation of a number of human qualities coincident with the spiritual temperament. But the sense of brotherhood also provides an awareness of distinction between aligned and unaligned humanity (between those who are relatively consciously aligned with the soul and those who are relatively absorbed by the mundane life). The student can recognize the God (Christ) (soul) within all, regardless of alignment, but the student must also learn to interact with unaligned humanity (on personality levels) without being absorbed. With impersonality (respect for the God within), the love of the soul can be a force of encouragement for humanity (toward realization of brotherhood).

Experience

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

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

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

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

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

† Commentary No. 375

Freedom

One of the problems in the objective world (as human personalities) is the illusion of separateness and the sense of independence that naturally grows as the personality becomes relatively potent (as the personality becomes reasonably well-integrated). One of man's major objective values is freedom, yet much within the human domain (helpfully) constrains and limits the degree of freedom to be experienced. Each individual (human) has earned a measure of freedom, depending on past experience, consciousness, karma, etc., but that

measure of freedom is generally perceived without consideration or realization of the framework of evolution, subjective and superphysical (impelling) forces, the inter-relatedness of all life, consciousness and appearance, etc.

All of human experience is conditioned or qualified by evolutionary factors and group karma. All individual experience is further qualified by individual karma (the consequences of activity and consciousness (present and past)). The relatively unevolved human being, being largely absorbed in physical and/or emotional experience, has relatively little freedom. Such an individual is not generally conscious of being an active force, moderating the immediate environment and experience; such an individual is largely and unconsciously responsive to external (astral) (astrological) forces. The actions of the relatively unevolved human being are generally determined by the environmental factors (glamour and illusion) (emotional and concrete mental forces) as they relate to the character and consciousness of the individual, not by virtue of the individual's relative freedom.

In the case of the evolving human being (one who is evolving still more or less unconsciously, but who is beginning to think freely), the measure of freedom is greater (albeit limited), the influence of external forces is less, and the individual is beginning to actively influence the immediate (and consequential) environment and subsequent experience. As the individual further evolves, that freedom increases, yet remains bounded (moderated) by evolutionary factors (e.g., the greater needs of humanity take precedence over non-constructive individual expression). As long as a personality remains ego-centered (self-centered), the freedom of the individual will be limited (albeit potentially substantial). But where the individual evolves beyond the personality, where the mind embraces the soul (humility) (wisdom) (impersonality), the human being attains freedom.

But true freedom, being unlimited, is nonetheless qualified, by the character and quality of the soul. And such qualification introduces the essential nature of freedom, the freedom to contribute to the cause (fulfillment) of planetary evolution (and potentially beyond). Such is the paradox, that the character (wisdom) of the soul is to freely choose to align itself in consciousness with the greater life, exercising freedom only to the extent that such expression contributes constructively and effectively, not in accordance with any individual

view, but in accordance with the group view (the consciousness of higher, group (planetary) consciousness). The opportunity exists nonetheless for the soul to choose otherwise, and rarely, a soul does so choose (and consequently ceases to exist as a soul).

Practical freedom is largely a function of karma, an earned privilege of consciousness. Freedom is not an inherent right of consciousness, except in the sense that it is granted by higher wisdom. The properly qualified (committed) spiritual student chooses to subordinate the individual freedom to greater needs (the path and all of its qualified domain in consciousness).

† Commentary No. 356

Goodwill

Ordinary goodwill, without ulterior motive and without expectation, is one of the most practical and effective means of evolutionary encouragement (service) available. Goodwill is a practical application of love energy, related to understanding and to brotherhood (the inherent unity of humanity). It draws upon the nature of good within the personality (which in turn draws upon the more subjective (general) nature of good (wisdom) (love) within the soul) (which is to draw upon the nature of good within the higher, spiritual qualification of humanity), as the individual shares that nature or character (without depletion). Thus goodwill is an application (sharing) of kind feelings and benevolence, leading to improved (right) human relations and group progress.

Goodwill is the natural result (application) of the inner understanding of the intrinsic unity of humankind, and on a broader level, of all life. That understanding may be conscious or unconscious, and the application (goodwill) may be transient (occasional) or a continual predisposition based upon proper temperament (good energy). Transient or personal (selective) goodwill is nonetheless an indication of beginning (progress), while goodwill as a disposition is an indication of (spiritual) health that is itself a consequence of progress (experience) (understanding). Being a positive, qualified energy, goodwill tends to grow and expand by manifestation. Where goodwill is

generalized (as a disposition and/or directed toward all of humanity rather than some portion) then its potency for good is enhanced.

One of the reasons for the potency of goodwill lies in the inherent human nature (which is good, albeit often masked by the complexities of personality) and the natural responsiveness of an individual to goodwill. Goodwill actually engenders responsiveness (and cooperation) and calls upon the good nature (within) that is potentially common to all. The manifestation (externalization) of goodwill is the sharing of positive (inherently non-manipulative) energy (light) (love) on more objective levels, a non-compelling encouragement for good. Goodwill (right disposition) fosters harmony and peace (ultimately reflected in a fully integrated humanity). Thus goodwill leads to constructive progress (non-threatening encouragement) on every practical level (individual and group, particularly for humanity as a whole).

The problem of goodwill lies not in the responsiveness of the human being, but rather in the natural resistance of the personality to sustained progressive energy. Though goodwill is a positive energy, easily shared, and one that is easily sustained in the case of one with understanding, for those who lack such understanding (temperament) goodwill is sub-critical (transient). Goodwill certainly encourages further sharing (with considerably more potent effect), but there really needs to be engendered the understanding that will permit continued responsiveness and the beginning of self-generated goodwill (in addition to that which is externally induced). Self-generated goodwill is of course only another form of that greater energy, as it flows from within, but it is more significant because such an (self-generated) individual becomes an active participant.

The will-to-good is in a sense a higher correspondence to goodwill, a more general form but nonetheless practical, effective, and worthy of application. Where goodwill is a natural energy for the personality, the will-to-good is a natural energy for the soul, and is naturally reflected in the responsive personality. Like goodwill, the will-to-good is rooted in the evolutionary intention of the higher group organism (humanity as a subjective lifewave), and the recognition that one life lives (flows) through all of humanity.

Happiness

Happiness is a sense of well-being and contentment, but happiness can vary in degree and quality depending upon the basis for happiness and its effect on the personality. From a spiritual perspective, happiness can be either artificial or real (or somewhere in between).

Artificial happiness is a sense of well-being based on fulfillment of desire. That fulfillment may be material, financial, phenomenal, emotional, or even mental. There is a degree of glamour or illusion associated with any sense of artificial happiness, happiness based on lower-world values or personality (ego) values. True (real) happiness is founded in spiritual quality. Happiness that is an expression or result of harmony between mind and soul is a relatively permanent quality, whereas happiness that is based on pleasure or lower-world values is only temporary (and therefore unreal, in the stricter sense). Real happiness is not a distracting emotional quality but a soul quality that comes as a consequence of purified (serene) emotions and a steady mind responsive to inner (higher) spiritual impression. It is a quiet, peaceful feeling of joy that is dependent only upon the inner self (the soul) and its relationship to the personality. Artificial happiness depends on the winds and tides of (apparent) fortune which may come and go and vary with circumstances.

Artificial happiness is rooted in selfishness. Real happiness is rooted in unselfishness. Lasting happiness cannot be attained through seeking; it can only be "attained" through being. Even the spiritual student is vulnerable to a certain extent to artificial happiness, for wherever there is a good (but uncontrolled) emotional response, there is a temporary lessening of (interference with) spiritual poise. The aspirant is expected to be happy in the quiet sense of inner peace and joy. The aspirant is not expected to be excitable or even enthusiastic to the extent that the emotions are involuntary or undisciplined. Where there is true happiness, there are the higher (refined) emotions of aspiration, devotion, humility, peace, and serenity. With the spiritual discipline comes the inner confidence in a greater reality that is unmoved by circumstances. Where there is the natural (spiritual) feeling of compassion and identification with the soul and with humanity, there is also the natural

demonstration of goodwill and quiet cheerfulness so characteristic of the true happiness. Such happiness cannot be deterred by (apparent) misfortune or other worldly events, personal or otherwise.

With discernment comes clarification (in relative terms) concerning pleasure, happiness, joy, bliss, samadhi, and nirvana. Pleasure implies the phenomenal or personality-centered fulfillment of desire. Happiness is the overall sense of well-being of widely varying basis. Joy can imply excitement (pleasurable loss of self-control) or it can imply the quiet peace and inner (real) happiness. In the eastern tradition, bliss implies complete happiness; samadhi is a mystical (higher) meditative state; and nirvana implies heavenly liberation, a final beatitude and a state of oblivion.

In the higher sense, (in the eastern esoteric tradition), bliss is an unemotional, impersonal, abstract experience that involves soul-consciousness; samadhi means self-mastery; and nirvana implies an exceptionally abstract and impersonal state of consciousness, beyond that of individuality-consciousness, where the soul is absorbed in absolute consciousness (beyond perfection). Each of these terms points in some way to a degree of spiritual maturity through which (necessarily) should the real happiness be manifested. For such is the response of a purified personality to the true nature of the higher worlds.

† Commentary No. 1177

Health

To value one's health is rather fundamental to the human condition and the human experience in the lower worlds. Yet although most people value health, not everyone acts (behaves) (feels) (thinks) in ways that facilitate or promote good health. This is so even when certain behavior is known to be inherently unhealthy.

The problem is inertia. People are generally asleep, lacking (full) awareness. People get absorbed or entangled or involved in experience (sensation) (expression) (ego) and there are therefore competing values and priorities. People may do things that are hazardous, either for noble reasons or otherwise

(ego), either deliberately (being consciously aware of the risks) or otherwise (being unaware of the potential consequences). Much of human experience is inherently harmful at some level, but experience itself (gradually, eventually) leads to understanding the various factors (rules) (cause and effect relationships) regarding health (e.g., understanding karma, understanding that there are consequences for every action (attitude) (behavior) (desire) (feeling) (judgment) (thought)).

This is a world based on harmony through conflict, of evolution in consciousness through experience of contrast and then of transcending these conditions. (Good) health results from being in balance, in having all of one's karma fulfilled. In good health, at every level, one is able to experience life unimpeded by lack of balance. But good health is multi-dimensional. Good health relies on clear, non-critical, non-judging, non-separative (harmonious) thinking. Good health relies on clear, non-separative (harmonious) feelings. Good health relies on harmonious behavior. Good health relies on healthy human relationship (goodwill) (harmony). Wherever there is poor health (on any level), there is something out of balance, something not in equilibrium, something (a message, a lesson) to be conveyed.

One should not only value good health, one should also embrace good health in the sense of doing those things which are healthy and not doing those things which are not healthy. This is the real lesson of evolution. That if one aligns oneself with evolutionary force (flow) (Tao), then one is healthy (or at least the creative forces lead to improving health). If one opposes the evolutionary flow in some way, then there will be stress or tension on some level, resulting in (some manifestation of) poor health. This is true for the individual in incarnation and it is true for groups of people (races, countries, humanity as a whole) as well. Thus not only is the spiritual student encouraged to become and remain as healthy as is practical (i.e., as best one can given whatever karmic constraints there may be), the student is also encouraged to promote health within the race as a whole. This is best accomplished not through preaching or through imposition, but through healthy expression (living harmoniously, promoting goodwill).

Of course (apparent) good health does not imply that one is with or without karma (or with or without lessons to learn (there are always lessons to learn at

some level)) (and one could simply be in a sleeping life), nor does (apparent) poor health imply that one is living “badly” (it may be a matter of residual karmic consequences (i.e., the lesson having been learned, the effects may dissolve gradually)). So one should not judge (oneself or others) based on appearances (or otherwise). One should simply live in accordance with metaphysical (spiritual) principles to the extent of one’s understanding and the extent of one’s ability given the circumstances.

† Commentary No. 156

Honesty

One of the most fundamental of qualities to be cultivated by the spiritual student is honesty. It is not enough merely to meet the orthodox standards of honesty; the spiritual student is (ultimately) expected to achieve the very spirit of honesty, the deepest intention and experience that is the realization of truth (reality) that exists at the core of one’s being. Honesty is actually a simple quality, but the implications for the student are quite considerable.

Basically (literally), honesty means fairness and straightforwardness of conduct; and adherence to the facts. Honesty is directly related to both integrity and sincerity. Honesty implies a refusal to lie, steal, or deceive in any way. One of the problems associated with honesty (and dishonesty) is the matter of interpretation (perspective) and meaning. Fortunately, as spiritual consciousness is evolved it becomes (increasingly) easier to discern truthfulness. Considerable effort (intention) may be needed for the student to cultivate (and refine) the concept and expression of an honest nature. It may not be so easy to be completely honest in thought, in word (speech) (communication), and in deed (action). To the extent to which it is possible, however, the spiritual student must endeavor to be entirely honest in every way.

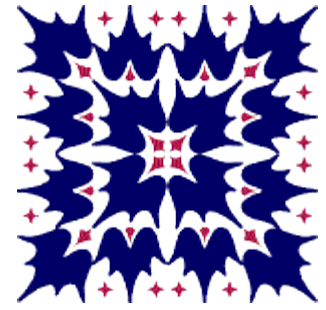
One might ask at this point, why honesty is so important. The answer is that the cultivation of an honest nature is very closely related to the realization of truth (God) itself. If the student earnestly seeks truth (the God within) (reality), then the student must become truthful, in every possible way. How can a student expect to realize truth unless he is of a nature quite similar to truth? There are other reasons why honesty should be quite important to the

student. The consequences of dishonesty are of a nature to undermine and impede spiritual progress. Dishonesty is related to disharmony, not only between individuals but also between the individual and the various cosmic (spiritual) laws, and between the personality and the (overshadowing) (indwelling) soul. Dishonesty actually creates (and sustains) the disharmony (which might be called illusion) which is a barrier between what is said (thought) (done) and what is true (real) (meant). Honesty, on the other hand, sustains reality and discourages illusion.

There are many forms of dishonesty, some quite obvious, others rather subtle. To say one thing and mean another is a form of dishonesty. To believe something but not to live in accordance with that belief is dishonest. To misrepresent oneself, to pretend, or to wear a face (facade) (appearance or behavior) is to be dishonest (to be in disharmony with reality or oneself). Dishonesty is also possible by omission or implication. Dishonesty (disharmony) is also related to disease. Wherever a discrepancy exists between what is said or done and what should be, there is disharmony. Awareness of such (by the person involved) implies dishonesty: lack of awareness of such implies either self-deception (which is worse than dishonesty) or ignorance (darkness).

It is essential that the spiritual student cultivate truthfulness in all regards; to be as honest as possible in all dealings with others (inwardly and outwardly), and to be entirely honest with oneself. Self-honesty is the very basis or foundation of truthfulness, for in self-honesty there is cultivated an awareness of truthfulness. There is no substitute for the cultivation of humility, honesty, and truthfulness in matters large or small, if the student expects ever to find the true self. It is necessarily a progressive cultivation, for as momentum builds, the student will realize more and more the nature and reality of truth and his relationship to (That) truth.

Section 3.322



Personal Values 2

- A second set of selected personal values relating in some way to consciousness and the spiritual path.

Justice

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

The least merited form of (apparent) justice is that which is imposed on individual or personal levels, involving emotional and/or rational energy. Justice (?) imposed on personal levels (retribution) violates a number of basic principles and leads inevitably to greater karmic entanglement (leading to proper understanding). The karmic dilemma (deserved imposition versus the right to impose) is resolved albeit with some difficulty. Man has only a limited awareness of reality; he is normally unaware of cause and effect relationships which underlie and precipitate all experience. Consequently, man has no right of imposing judgment upon others, especially with regard to personal energy.

Karma requires that every experience be merited; an individual receiving some sanction must therefore merit such imposition, regardless of the motives or judgment of the person imposing such sanction. The reality (reasons, cause and effect relationships) is almost always far removed from the reasoning or understanding of the instrument. Though the person performing the imposition (knowingly or otherwise) serves a higher purpose, the lack of proper awareness and understanding coupled with the personal motives (energies) constitutes an impropriety (the end does not necessarily justify the means).

An intermediate form of justice is administered through government sanctions. The same considerations apply for the intermediate form as for the more personal form, except that in the intermediate form there is (hopefully) a greater element of reasoning and understanding. Being less personal, the intermediate form of human justice is more likely to be effective (meaningful) and thereby

contribute to the purpose of justice. In fact, such human justice is allowed (encouraged) to the extent that it is (nominally) fair and reasonable. The significance of the intermediate form goes beyond that of the individuals concerned, for it implies a progressive form of group (cultural) (national) learning, as the group attempts equitable and reasonable self-regulation (analogous to self-control (moderation) of the evolving individual). The entire process of law-making and administration of human laws is a response of the group to the inner (evolutionary) encouragement, and though imperfect, it contributes to the development of the group with which it is applied.

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

† Commentary No. 1134

Knowledge

Knowledge is that body of information that is “known” or believed to be known and understood, that provides a basis for perceived understanding, for relating experience, and for evolving in consciousness through the assimilation of knowledge into understanding. The problem of knowledge is the general lack of objectivity that prevails in human consciousness, given immersion in the material world. It is virtually impossible to determine the validity of information at its own level.

Thus knowledge in the sense of the field of the human mind is compounded by the nature of the world (universe) (manifestation) (and the false perspective that

prevails on material levels), the nature of mind (and the false perspective of self (ego)), and the nature of perception. People tend to make assumptions about these things without necessarily realizing the difficulties and generally without even realizing that assumptions are being made. What is generally believed to be readily apparent and true, may not be generally or actually true. Thus the mind-field of human perception and thinking is fertile ground for contrast leading to evolution in consciousness.

The theme of knowledge provides a focus and foundation for understanding human experience and the worlds of consciousness in which humanity lives. Knowledge properly assimilated produces understanding. Understanding properly embraced produces wisdom. Knowledge is not actually conveyed from incarnation to incarnation, although the ability to retrieve knowledge may be conveyed. Understanding is not actually conveyed from incarnation to incarnation either, but the capacity for understanding is a matter of evolution (achievement) and so conveys progressively, from one lifetime or incarnation to another. Wisdom is definitely conveyed from lifetime to lifetime, directly for those who are attuned to some extent to the higher Self, indirectly otherwise, for those who are able to listen to conscience. Unfortunately, some people are so absorbed (self-absorbed) on material (emotional) (intellectual) (personality) (ego) levels that their ability to draw upon the wisdom of the higher Self, even indirectly (through conscience), is limited.

The real problem of life in the lower worlds is not knowledge, nor the acquisition of knowledge, nor even the assimilation of knowledge, but the assumption of knowledge, and the assumption of understanding. The real problem is maya and glamour and illusion. By presuming (predominantly) unconsciously, the nature of the world (and the nature of self), a person greatly compounds the problem. As the student progresses, he or she gradually transcends maya (inertia on physical and etheric levels). As the student progresses further, perception that is clouded by (through) glamour (inertia on emotional or astral levels) and illusion (inertia on mental levels) is gradually and eventually fully overcome, as the student achieves the alignment of a purified and integrated personality with the soul, through intelligent meditation. This process of waking-up, to higher and higher, deeper and deeper, levels, is the real work of evolution in consciousness.

But waking-up requires a great deal of preparation (and persistence). Waking-up requires sufficient and pertinent knowledge. It requires understanding and open-mindedness. In this sense, knowledge is a legacy, earned by virtue of experience and expression (action and consequence) (karma), (and therefore) always merited, and knowledge (understanding) conveys responsibility, to act sensibly and appropriately based upon that knowledge (to the extent of understanding).

† Commentary No. 1135

Love

Love is the aspect of consciousness, the second aspect of the trinity (life-love-light). In the highest, deepest, most noble sense, love is the quality of the heart of the logos (God), in manifestation, as (Christ) consciousness. This quality pervades all of manifested life, residing within every human being, within every lifeform, within every atom. In this higher sense, love is divine, impersonal (transpersonal), unconditional, and universal.

There are no “kinds” of love, yet a distinction can be made between love (itself) and the many ways in which love can be embraced and/or expressed. Thus there are various kinds of ways in which love is embraced or manifested at the human level. In this (human) sense, love may be embraced or manifested completely and unconditionally or incompletely and conditionally (or partially so).

Whenever and wherever (however) love is embraced in some personal way, it is necessarily partial, conditional, and limited. Whenever and wherever (however) love is embraced impersonally, yet through the heart (chakra) (which is, in fact, the only way that love can be truly embraced) (and not merely intellectually), then love is embraced in a relatively unconditional and unconstrained manner.

In the course of ordinary human experience and expression, one naturally embraces love and expresses love in various (limited) ways, according to consciousness. There is love expressed in the form of attachment (e.g., to a person or group (through identification), to something material or immaterial). There is love expressed in the form of friendship and/or relationship (in various degrees of attachment, entanglement, consideration, etc.). And there is love expressed in the form of non-attachment. Love flows naturally. It is only the

personality (intellect) (ego) that limits that flow by virtue of and to the extent of the sense of individuality (separation). Where love is allowed to flow naturally, rather than constrained by expectations or personal considerations, then it is more natural (more true) and conveys more of the higher nature.

The "reason" that "love" is so potent a quality in manifestation is that it connects the heart of a human being with the heart of the logos (and the heart of a human being with the heart of another). If one is impersonal, and able to work through the higher Self, then one is connected consciously and directly with the heart in all lives. In this sense, all lives are directly connected, one with every other. If one is more personal, then while the heart "connection" is universal, what is actually "felt" is less so (e.g., the connection of two people). A "connection" at the personality level (between personalities) may be quite meaningful, but if the connection is realized on higher levels, then it is much more substantial.

Although in metaphysics and theosophy one tends to consider the second aspect as consciousness, the real nature of the second aspect is love, and consciousness is, depending on perspective, either an attribute or consequence of love (quality), or love itself. Thus love and consciousness are synonymous, yet each is a perspective or framework for the second aspect. While life (the first aspect) is more fundamental than love, it is quality (love) (the second aspect) that makes life meaningful, for love is the means of conveyance of life, the means of growth (development) (experience) (creation) (evolution in consciousness). In the practical sense, there is much experience that may not appear to be related to love, yet, in the final analysis, all meaningful experience is related to love in one sense or another.

Money

Money represents economic opportunity, the opportunity to acquire and utilize material goods and/or services. Though money is not energy, per se, as an opportunity (and responsibility) money does represent energy, and can therefore be considered (representatively) as a form of energy. Like all forms of energy (things, opportunities, experience) money (wealth) is governed by karma (merit) and must be earned (though the cause and effect relationship is not necessarily immediate or direct, as it is interrelated with intended lessons). The energies (and their forces) associated with money (or its relative lack) are quite similar in nature to those associated with health (or its relative absence), in the sense that the dynamics of such energy are relatively easily influenced by the state of mind (disposition) (character) of the individual and the corresponding mental projections (qualifications).

The overriding factor with regard to money is karma and associated responsibility. Money can be attracted or discouraged mentally, directly (via concentrated thought) (objectively) or indirectly (via quality or qualification) (subjectively), depending on karma (freedom). But money (in any form) brings with it not only opportunity and responsibility, but other, associated (subtle) energies (implications) (conditions and burdens) that must also (ultimately) be faced. The circumstances (honest effort, theft, windfall, inheritance, mental projection) of its acquisition play an important role in the associated karma, as do the circumstances (selfish, unselfish; wise, unwise; careful, careless; responsible, irresponsible) of its utilization (fulfillment) (release). Economic karma thus depends largely on motive and discretion (sound judgment).

Accumulated money (like accumulated tension) carries with it considerable consequences, depending on motive (intention) and its ultimate disposition. Since karma is involved inseparably with all events and circumstances, responsibility for the disposition (application) of financial (economic) (material) resources (how money (wealth) is used) should be a major consideration of the individual having such an opportunity. In particular, the spiritual student should exercise discretion in attracting, accumulating, and applying economic resources. Such resources should be utilized reasonably and principally for

constructive and worthwhile purposes. Naturally, the student will utilize some funds in maintaining an appropriate (modest) standard of living, without extravagance (which itself breeds interesting consequences).

In the broadest sense, money is a cooperative energy (more so than health). All energy (money included) is tendered by the greater life (indirectly) along with the (group) responsibility for its effective use. Neither individuals nor groups actually own or possess money (economic opportunity); the various individuals and groups are merely custodians of fiscal resources, responsible as individuals, as groups, and collectively for its intelligent and constructive (humanitarian) use. Like energy, money can be utilized effectively or otherwise with corresponding effects for the lifewave (humanity) (and allied lifewaves).

Though money is usually considered in material terms rather than in terms of opportunity and responsibility, money can nonetheless represent a potent force for the evolution of human consciousness, as that money is properly and wisely used to support efforts which encourage human (spiritual) progress. But even so, money should not be considered too important (via attachment) or unimportant (via carelessness); money should rather be considered in a moderate, practical sense, with the welfare of the whole (in terms of consciousness, not material surroundings) taking precedence over the welfare of the individual.

† Commentary No. 457

Pleasure

Pleasure is defined as a state of gratification or enjoyment, and normally refers to sensual gratification since most people are physically or emotionally polarized. In a more general sense there are three basic types of pleasure.

The first type of pleasure and the one that currently predominates in the mundane world is hedonistic or sensual pleasure. Hedonistic (sensual) pleasure prevails only where the individual is physically or emotionally polarized (or between those two levels). Hedonistic pleasure is largely self-centered and absorbing; i.e., the hedonist exhibits a considerable inertia (resistance to spiritual progress) and typically remains wholly absorbed in the realm of

(sensual) experience. Such a person grows very slowly (assimilating experience only between incarnations where the senses are not a distraction), since the mind is either (relatively) undeveloped and/or dulled by the intensity of the sensual absorption. The pleasure experience (sensual absorption) is appropriate to those who are physically or emotionally polarized, who need such experience, but not for those who are developing mentally.

The second type of pleasure (and the one that is generally (gradually) replacing the pleasure of experience) is the pleasure of (pragmatic) achievement. Pragmatic pleasure is the pleasure of action and accomplishment and is not so dependent on sensual involvement as it is upon the mental ability to value achievement. Thus pragmatic pleasure prevails only where the individual is mentally polarized or in the transition period between being emotionally polarized and being mentally polarized. The pragmatist is content to work for personal achievement or to perform some service for some (perceived) good beyond mere personal achievement. The pragmatist is (potentially) much more responsive to learning opportunities than the hedonist, although the pragmatist may very well be so absorbed in the work (process of achievement) that he (she) is unresponsive to spiritual impression (qualification) (learning). In such a case the individual develops more gradually and the momentum is somewhat limited (albeit more progressive than the hedonistic case).

The third type of pleasure is the pleasure of understanding (the pleasure of spiritual rapport) and prevails only where the individual (student) is wholly mentally polarized or in the transition period between being mentally polarized and being intuitionally polarized. Where the pragmatist utilizes the mind for action and achievement, the mentalist (contemplative) uses the mind for growth, learning, and sharing (service) on a mental or intuitional level. Where the pragmatist forgoes hedonistic pleasure, the contemplative forgoes both hedonistic pleasure and the pleasure of action and achievement. Or in other words, where the hedonist and pragmatist are enslaved by desire and ego (respectively), the contemplative has (more typically) conquered both desire and ego and is free to become the spiritual self.

The momentum of the true (spiritual) student (scholar) (disciple) is quite considerable, the student being free from the distraction and absorption of the senses and the ego. The student (contemplative) is still (potentially) a worker

(and an effective one) but is no longer absorbed by the process of achievement (i.e., the work is important but truth (spiritual reality) is even more important). The proper student is not an intellectual, since intellectuals are a subset of pragmatists, but is rather mental and intuitive (i.e., the intellect is related more to the mind than it is to the physical brain). The pleasure of the spiritual student is more properly a quiet (subtle) (non-distractive) joy rather than pleasure per se.

† Commentary No. 159

Privacy

Privacy is defined as the quality or state of being apart from company or observation. Privacy implies personal secrecy and seclusion. Most people may think of themselves as having complete privacy of thought and feeling; but the sense of human isolation, of independence one from another, is merely a perspective that has no real basis etherically, emotionally, or mentally. Man lives and works in a dynamic field of etheric, astral (emotional), and mental energies, most of which are quite interactive in the superphysical worlds. Thoughts and feelings are continuously being impressed upon the immediate mental and emotional environment. Consequently, there is no real privacy.

As spiritual and psychic sensitivity and understanding increase, the student may become more and more aware of the feelings and the quality of thinking of others. No attempts may be (need be) made, for the properly trained spiritual student will simply be aware of any thoughts or feelings for which such awareness is appropriate, or such awareness may be incidental. The trained esoteric student is as comfortable and capable in the mental world as most of humanity are (apparently) comfortable and capable in the physical world. To the advanced spiritual student, thoughts and feelings are very real energies to be dealt with constructively and intelligently. But before the aspirant can be trusted with such talents and capability, the motives must be purified, and a high degree of spiritual quality and self-control must be attained.

As the spiritual student progresses in self-mastery, his own thoughts and feelings become purified and well-disciplined, almost completely contained (coherent) (controlled). Without such discipline (focus), thoughts and feelings

are usually scattered indiscriminately and unconsciously. The thoughts and energies of the spiritual student should not be wasted, for with each moment comes an opportunity for useful spiritual work, and the effective application of resources and abilities for the good of humanity. Though the spiritual student may need occasional periods of solitude to place the thoughts (and aura) in order (or for serious and undisturbed contemplation), there is still no real privacy. With purified mind and emotions there is simply no basis for compromise or embarrassment; in truth is born true humility and its commensurate fearlessness and selflessness.

The ethics of privacy are actually very well-defined. The spiritual student is seriously warned against the conscious or subconscious (motivated) violation of another's privacy. Though no real privacy exists, there are, however, degrees of privacy; and the esoteric student is pledged to respect the privacy of others. The consequences of the violation of privacy, of interference in the affairs of others, are quite serious. But the esoteric student may still be well aware of the quality of the thoughts and feelings of others, even though he may have no intentions and no realization of particular thought-forms. Such awareness may come simply with the proximity (interaction) of auras.

As human evolution proceeds, everyone must eventually become accustomed to such (conscious) interaction between auras, between minds, as it is already between souls. The personality must be cultivated to accept openness and honesty, for there will someday be no real barriers between the minds and hearts of men. There may still be certain internal and external barriers or mental shields, but even those will be (are) open to view from the higher domain (and even those will pass eventually). There are no barriers between souls; there is only complete freedom (which actually replaces privacy) in open unity. May the minds of men achieve such integrity.

Prosperity

Prosperity is defined as the condition of being successful or thriving, especially in the sense of economic or financial well-being. For those who are not prosperous, or who think they are not prosperous, there may be a considerable concern or desire for prosperity. One of the more prevalent new age notions is that one can become prosperous or allow prosperity to happen. There are several aspects to this notion.

One aspect is a matter of creative thinking. Indeed, through feeling and thinking "prosperity" one can evoke forces that will encourage and facilitate prosperity. Of course this is all subject to one's karma, but within the limits of karma, one can choose to be prosperous and simply become as prosperous as one can under those (karmic) circumstances. Another aspect is ethics, in the sense of becoming prosperous at the expense of others. If one approaches prosperity properly, then it is a matter of tapping into the unlimited (universal) creative potential, so that one's own prosperity does not in any way diminish that of others. On a more subtle level, there are ethical considerations for the spiritual student in the sense that any self-centered creative activity is (can be) deemed unethical. But at the "new age" level those subtle ethics do not apply. It is only as one embraces the spiritual path in the more formal sense that the rules change (and the path narrows) (the path narrows in some sense and broadens in others).

Another aspect is the distinction between creative activity and allowance. The relatively more coarse approach is creative activity leading to prosperity. The strength of the personality (mind) (ego) is involved in this (lower) creative process and prosperity generally comes not fully in accordance with one's expectations, because the practitioner is simply not wise enough to provide safeguards or caveats. The relatively less coarse approach is to focus on allowing prosperity to emerge. Prosperity is real; it is simply a matter of allowing it to manifest, with confidence that it comes in accordance with need.

Yet, for the (proper) spiritual student, for those who are truly prosperous, there is never any seeking of prosperity. Those (spiritual students or otherwise) who

seek prosperity (and those who thereby “find” prosperity) are not truly prosperous. They are simply encumbered by prosperity. The truly prosperous are those who seek merely to be themselves, to serve humanity in accordance with their various opportunities and talents, without any thought of self. In this sense, such people are truly prosperous because they unconsciously evoke whatever is needed and are never really lacking in energy, health, material needs, etc. In short, they are living in accordance with higher law rather than working actively (creatively) in manipulating forces for their own purposes. There is nothing wrong with such creative work, per se, and all spiritual students have passed through such a stage (training the mind to work creatively as a stepping stone to selfless and unconscious evocation).

Thus, in the final analysis, prosperity is a state of mind. For those who are not prosperous or who perceive themselves as not being prosperous, the very perception of not being prosperous is an impediment to prosperity. For those who are conscious of prosperity, who are selfish, and/or who are self-centered, prosperity is an encumbrance. And for those who are unconscious of prosperity or who are merely (genuinely) appreciative of their prosperity, there is no encumbrance. For those who are truly prosperous, prosperity is a responsibility for utilizing one’s relative wealth in the most constructive and selfless manner. For wealth is not an individual aspect; it is universal.

† Commentary No. 321

Understanding

The natural quest for understanding is related to the evolutionary urge (for progress). Understanding can be conscious and/or unconscious; much can be assimilated subconsciously to be available to the conscious mind upon reflection. Understanding is a natural result of effort and experience, of the capacity for understanding (which implies experience, assimilation, and some mental training). But understanding also implies overcoming glamour and illusion, and overcoming the predisposition of the personality to misunderstand through personality-centeredness and presumed understanding.

Understanding is defined as discernment (insight); as an act or result of proper interpretation; as the power of comprehension, the ability to apprehend general relationships of particulars (which suggests that understanding is related to broad-mindedness, and that narrow-mindedness furthers misunderstanding); as the power of making experience intelligible (meaningful) through observation (attention) and proper reasoning (reflection). On the lowest practical level, understanding is closely related to instinct; on the highest level, understanding is closely related to intuition (self-realization). Between instinct and intuition lies a continuum of reasoning. Neither instinct nor intuition leads to misunderstanding; it is the domain of reasoning that provides the opportunity for misunderstanding.

All confusion and misunderstanding is self-imposed. An individual (or group) must ultimately accept responsibility for his own condition of relative understanding (or misunderstanding). All information inputted becomes the responsibility of the recipient. Relative understanding depends upon the perception processes as well as the interpretation of the perceived information. Misunderstanding is far less likely where there is proper observation (attention) and freedom from predisposition (expectation) (bias) (personal energy), impatience, and assumption.

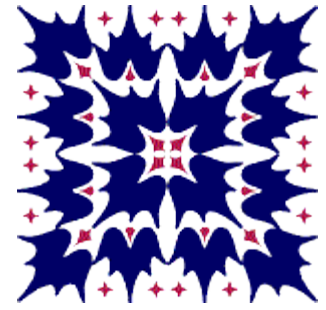
Glamour (illusion) is produced as the human mind (consciousness) assumes a reality (truth) (fact) based upon appearance or unwarranted assumption. Where assumptions are made (consciously or otherwise) and accepted as fact there is a real problem in consciousness, for the presumed facts then form an unmerited basis for further reasoning and further misunderstanding (compounding). The solution (understanding) comes where personal energy is overcome, assumptions are deliberately distinguished from facts, perception and interpretation are relatively free from bias, the intuition is allowed to manifest, the individual takes responsibility for his own condition, and simplicity (broad-mindedness) (open-mindedness) is valued over complexity (narrow-mindedness).

Understanding is actually a continuum, from relative misunderstanding, to a lack of understanding, to relative understanding. With some degree of humility (maturity) the student should prefer a lack of understanding (freedom from misunderstanding) to misunderstanding. Only then is (relative) understanding possible. But that understanding must still involve some (relative) uncertainty

(open-mindedness). Confidence is relative and subject to further experience and improved understanding. Certainty (unmerited confidence) can be an impediment in itself. A mature (stable) posture (conscious disposition) based upon an acceptance of relative uncertainty (i.e., there are no (absolute) certainties) is relatively better than one based upon unmerited confidence (self-deception) or one based upon unwarranted assumptions or premature conclusions (rather than tentative conclusions); spiritual poise (simplicity) (stability) (humility) in the face of uncertainty is a major key to understanding.



Section 3.33



Ethics

- Ethics are concerned with the philosophy and ideal of conduct, the nature of morality and character, and the nature of good. A person's ethics are a very strong indication of personal values.

Ethics

Ethics is the philosophy and ideal of conduct, which considers the nature of morality and character, and the nature of good. Ethics is the practical (personal) branch of philosophy, for it considers individual human rights and the values of human motives, thoughts, feelings, and actions. A standard of ethical conduct and morality can be relatively artificial, personal, or natural (universal). An individual standard of ethics should take into consideration the moral (legal and cultural) standards of society, the inherent (personal) standards realized or evolved, and the understanding of universal (spiritual) law which determines the ideal of conduct.

The spiritual student is encouraged to live in ethical harmony with the external (orthodox) world and the internal (personal) (spiritual) world, to express wisdom in human relationships, and to achieve consistency in the inner life. Though many ethical and moral guidelines are available, the ultimate responsibility rests with the individual to realize and achieve a personal standard. Each must determine for himself a practical ethical code, keeping in mind the consequences of behavior. The only real (general) guideline is that the consequences or results (effects) of conduct should be constructive (positive). Through observation, evaluation, and experience the student should become increasingly aware of the value of right human relations.

Human relations and the science of morality bring about the question of what is right and wrong, and what is the nature (and extent) of individual rights (freedom). Individual freedom can only really be considered in relation to the rights of others. If the student truly respects the rights of others, then the student must determine where the individual freedom ends and the freedom of others begins. Individual freedom cannot remain unlimited if the human lifewave is to progress and evolve. What appears best for the individual must ultimately (spiritually) be subordinated to what is best for the group (universal). Self-centeredness (selfishness) must inevitably give way to selflessness, as the individual identifies with the God within (every form of life). Individual purposes are usually scattered (incoherent) with respect to the greater life, but such purposes provide experience. As the individual aligns himself more so

with (coherent) group purpose, that experience is contributed to the group progress (humanity in its relationship to the greater life).

The natural, personal standard is both inherent (latent or potential) and acquired (developed through experience). Ethical and moral behavior is usually a consequence of intelligence (based on realization) leading to virtue. The science of ethics seeks to understand morality and to put that understanding into practice. Self-realization naturally yields an inner urge to that which is right according to spiritual law. The ethical (spiritual) student seeks to honestly observe and evaluate his behavior (and motives) and the effects of his thoughts, feelings, and actions. The student should recognize the ideal (code of conduct) and determine his practical relationship to that ideal.

The student may observe the behavior of others (and the effects) (with the intention of understanding), but without judgment, remembering that each can only determine what is right for himself. But the student can learn from the experience of others and seek to apply that learning in the individual life. The student can increasingly understand the virtues (as principles) and how they can be applied to ethical conduct (adherence to spiritual law). As the life of the student becomes the life of wisdom (in human relationships), so shall the practical (ethical) philosophy be assimilated and naturally manifested.



Commentary No. 976

Ethics and Psychism

Like any form of human activity and expression, the expression of psychic abilities carries with it some considerable degree of responsibility for the consequences (tempered naturally by karma and the extent of one's knowledge, understanding, and wisdom). The fundamental "rules" of the path apply directly to psychic expression. One should not impose upon anyone nor cause anyone any harm (including deception), physically, emotionally, or mentally, psychically or otherwise.

The problem lies generally (more so) with lack of knowledge and understanding of the effects of various psychic practices rather than with deliberate attempts

to impose or harm others, though in many cases imposition occurs sincerely (albeit wrongly) and more or less consciously and deliberately (e.g., (1) in hypnotism there is a relatively dangerous implied imposition, where, even with the patient's consent, a psychic dependency is introduced that weakens the patient's will, even if there are apparent psychological adjustments or benefits achieved and (2) in "preaching" forcefully there is an imposition of the preacher's (teacher's) psychic energy upon the listeners such that the listener's relative freedom in thinking and feeling is compromised (and it hardly matters whether or not the preacher is consciously aware of this practice of manipulation)). In a coarse environment, there is generally much more psychic energy of an impositional nature than otherwise. In a more refined environment, that psychic energy tends to be more a matter of encouragement.

In short, any form of mind control is unethical, even if the victim is willing, and even if the controller is sincere (attempting to be helpful). A far better practice is the non-impositional sharing of ideas (or energies), where respect for people's need to think and feel for themselves is paramount. The "controller" may think he (she) is helping someone, but, in fact, no real progress is achieved except to the extent that it is learned by the student (and not imposed by the teacher). One cannot force another to learn. Learning requires some degree of experience and assimilation of that experience. To embrace values that are imposed by others (even culturally or legally) does not convey any learning. One must learn for oneself.

Where psychic pressure is brought to bear, these ethical considerations are compounded by the relative ignorance of most psychics and most victims. Every forceful personality interaction (and in many cases even subtle personality interaction) conveys psychic pressure. For every suggestion, there is psychic pressure. And since most people are relatively passive (impressionable), that pressure may have substantial consequences. Of course, karmically, one is responsible for and accountable for those consequences, in the active sense (role) as well as in the passive sense (role). In realization that psychic energy follows every thought and every feeling comes a tempering of one's thoughts and feelings, resulting in better human relationships (more respect and consideration for others).

In the case of the relatively more potent psychic, the consequences of psychic expression (evocation of psychic pressure) are considerable. And since (public, untrained) psychics tend to attract relatively weak and passive people, these problems (imposition, psychic pressure) are compounded. Yet, with spiritual strength, and wisdom in relationships with people, proper ethical values can be embraced and one's psychic (and non-psychic) talents can be utilized more subjectively, to encourage learning, responsibility, etc., rather than attempting to impose same.

† Commentary No. 1178

Personal Ethics

Personal ethics are the ethics that one professes to embrace, and the ethics that a person embraces or exhibits in actuality. Thus even if one has no awareness or consciousness of one's ethics, there is by virtue of values expressed, however unconsciously, through attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, feelings, and thoughts, a system of personal ethics for which a person is (karmically) accountable for.

Personal ethics are therefore an expression and indication of personal values. Most people are not very deliberate or conscious in their ethics, but rely more-or-less on conscience, however dimly perceived and however unconsciously realized. Conscience is the quality of the soul reflected into the mind and heart of the personality. Conscience is the consequence of previous experience, knowledge, and understanding, assimilated by the soul and retained from incarnation to incarnation. Thus conscience (and personal ethics) grows gradually, from life to life, according to experience and assimilation in consciousness.

Personal ethics are generally based as well on a person's belief system. If a person is unaware that people are all connected in consciousness, that the race as a whole (and all of life) is actually one life, then a person generally proceeds separately and according to (consciously or unconsciously) presumed independence. In this sense a person who is selfish or self-centered, who looks after his or her own (apparent) personal interests, even at the expense of others, is simply proceeding according to his or her personal ethics, in ignorance of the underlying reality. On a broader scale, this is true as well for families,

companies, organizations, races, countries, etc. As a person grows in consciousness, and the realization of the interdependence of all lives grows, then the system of personal ethics is also broadened. People then become aware of and concerned about the environment. People become concerned about broader relationships than simply their own.

Similarly, since everything is governed by the law of karma, the extent to which a person understands karma is (generally) the extent to which a person lives therefore in harmony with the world. If a person really understands that a behavior or attitude (or thought or feeling) is harmful, then that understanding tends to discourage the behavior. Of course there is still considerable inertia. People are immersed in physical bodies and a physical (material) world. The ego (personal materialism) is increasingly subtle and deceptive. So it is a continual struggle to emerge into awareness of cause and effect relationships and to live consciously and deliberately in harmony with the law as it is understood.

The first step then is awareness. Then it is a matter of observation, to see how one is behaving (on physical, etheric, emotional (astral), and concrete mental levels). Then in realization of one's behavior, it is a matter of embracing higher personal ethics, actually (gradually) changing one's behaviors in accordance with gradually improving understanding and higher values. In order to be truly effective, one's personal ethics must be based on awareness and realization, real understanding. Rationalization may be a stepping stone in the right direction, but eventually it must be replaced by true realization. Gradually, one's personal ethics embrace harmlessness in its broadest and deepest sense, including honesty in all of its various aspects. Eventually, one's personal ethics leads one to embrace the reality of unity, because it is realized, not merely because it has been rationalized.

Conscience

Conscience is defined conventionally as “the sense or consciousness of the moral goodness of one’s own conduct, intentions, or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good” and as “a faculty, power, or principle enjoining good acts.” The conventional definition arises from psychology and also serves metaphysically and spiritually, although metaphysics deepens and extends the definition through the provision of understanding where conscience actually comes from and how it is actually manifested.

Conscience is, properly, not really a matter of experience or of knowledge. Simply knowing what is considered proper or good does not convey conscience. Behavior based on experience or knowledge, especially regarding consequences of behavior, is not a matter of conscience, although such experience or knowledge may provide incentive or motivation for behavior. Conscience is also, properly, not really a matter of understanding. Merely understanding what is considered proper or good does not convey conscience. Behavior based on understanding, especially regarding consequences of behavior, is not a matter of conscience, although such understanding (also) may provide incentive or motivation for behavior.

Conscience is, properly, a function of wisdom, of being able to respond to the character and quality of the soul (causal self). It is the expression of inherent wisdom gleaned through assimilation of understanding (gleaned through assimilation of knowledge (gleaned through the assimilation of experience)). It does not have to include conscious awareness, but if there is moral (ethical) (higher behavioral) influence, heeded or otherwise, then there is conscience. And conscience indicates (higher) consciousness. Conscience does not necessarily require broad development of the personality, i.e., a person may be relatively undeveloped in many ways and yet be able to evoke conscience in some ways. And even broad development of the personality does not necessarily mean that there is (much) conscience. In fact, sometimes in personality (over) development, there is preclusion of manifestation of conscience. The ego serves as an effective barrier to conscience, even while pretending to be the conscience. So while a person may have developed a

considerable conscience, through assimilation of understanding, it may or may not be present, depending on the character and extent of responsiveness (qualification) of the personality.

Most people seem to behave, unconsciously (mechanically), according to self-interest or superficial understanding of apparent (anticipated) consequences of behavior, including social and cultural conditioning (expectations). Some people seem to behave more nobly, based more on altruism, which is also a matter of self-interest, but on a more subtle (less conscious (collective)) level. The motives for behavior are really quite significant, as they play a substantive role in karmic determination. There is doing the right thing for the right reasons. There is doing the right thing for the wrong reasons. There is doing the wrong thing for the right reasons. And there is doing the wrong thing for the wrong reasons. All of which affects karma. And of course, what is "right" is a matter both of what a person thinks is right, but also (more properly) a matter of conscience (sense of appropriateness based on inner, higher sense).

In some sense, behavior based on "reasons" is better than behavior based on unconscious conditioning. But on the other hand, behavior in accordance with conscience, based in wisdom, without recourse to reasons, without recourse to judging, is even better.

† Commentary No. 1305

Ethical Formalism

Ethical formalism is defined as the "strict adherence to specific formal ethical precepts, rather than unconfinedly embracing the ethical precept openly and broadly." It is a fundamentally cowardly and dishonest practice.

Ethical formalism, like legalistic formalism, is an attempt to appear to be ethical or proper without actually being so. By interpreting the ethical precepts or laws in the formal sense (according to the detailed "letter of the law" and technicalities) the practitioner seeks to evade what is actually true and proper. In part this practice exists because the conscience of society is permissive. In part it exists because many people are self-serving and fail to realize that pursuing what appear to be one's own self-interests is actually, in the long run,

substantially self-detrimental (as well as being collectively detrimental). In some case ethical formalism is an attempt to evade consequences. In some cases it is a matter of attempting to evade accountability. But in the final analysis, neither consequences nor accountability can ever be (actually) evaded. And so ethical formalism is inherently counter-productive.

Ethical formalism leads unfortunately and naturally to legalistic formalism, reliance on the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law (i.e., rather than reliance on a sense of truth and justice). But the problem with formal ethical precepts and formal laws is that the language utilized can never be completely or comprehensively effective. Everything is subject to interpretation, and if one chooses to interpret matters in a strict formal sense rather than according to what is more reasonable and proper, then truth and justice are not served. But it is relatively easy to function strictly according to the formal precepts or laws, because it does not require much in the way of genuine consideration of truth and justice. To more properly examine the circumstances and disposition requires more effort, more attention, and may need to be explained to those who do not understand. It requires more courage to do the right thing than to do whatever is convenient or has the illusion of self-serving benefit.

Of course with most ethical and legal considerations there are two or more "sides" to the issue. But conflicting perspectives can be resolved if one takes a broad enough view. This, too, generally requires more effort, but in finding a reasonable solution there is much more progress achieved. In the final analysis, ethical and legal conflicts occur because (some (most)) people lack the wisdom and insight necessary to live harmoniously and constructively (and, indeed, progressively). People tend to suffer the illusion of individuality, of separateness, and look after their own apparent interests at the expense of others, without realizing that everything substantive is collective, that there is no real advantage to any one person or group within the whole. Where there is apparent miscarriage of justice, through ethical or legal formalism, the situation simply becomes more complicated, and yet will eventually be resolved as those new causes reach fruition.

The opposite of ethical formalism is actually worse than ethical formalism per se. The opposite of ethical formalism, in one sense, is a complete lack of ethics or respect for law (truth) (justice). What is actually needed is ethical and moral

behavior, consistent with reasonable laws, that supports (collective) evolution in consciousness, a devotion to equity and fairness and a conscientious respect and appreciation for the law without succumbing to formalism.

† Commentary No. 1404

Integrity and Judgment

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

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

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

Proper ethics and morals (conscience) are (is) driven primarily by the threefold spiritual practice of (and need for) harmlessness, honesty, and humility. Judging others is inherently harmful and egoistic. As one progresses ethically and morally, in terms of conscience and consciousness, in terms of practice and propensity, one should (properly) temper or balance the tendency to think of oneself as different from others or better than others. Indeed, if the heart is developed sufficiently as the moral and ethical nature is developed then there is no problem, for the heart nature is inherently non-judging and non-separative. But many develop along one line (the head-centered nature) before the other (the heart-centered nature) is properly unfolded (properly, the head-centered nature is developed and the heart-centered nature is unfolded, there being a distinct difference in these two processes (development and unfoldment)).

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

Ethics and Awareness

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

If one's ethics are not consistent with the truth that is embraced and understood, then that inconsistency tends to undermine one's (deeper) awareness. If one's ethics are questionable in the context of the spiritual path, then that also tends to undermine awareness. It is a practical matter, in the sense that one's behavior has import in consciousness. And the propriety of one's behavior likewise. It is also a matter of becoming and remaining awake, which is the real import of (true) awareness. Most of the people in the world are of the world and are asleep. Their perception, their awareness is really quite limited (to immediate personality-consciousness and proximate environs conditioned by that personality-consciousness). To begin to awaken to the underlying reality and to begin to awaken to truth requires a considerable impulse in order to overcome the very substantial (ordinary) conditioning that binds most people to their routine patterns of behavior.

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

any real understanding of propriety with regard to humanity and the animal kingdom. One's actions, one's ethics are driven by one's values, however unconsciously and self-serving.

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

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



