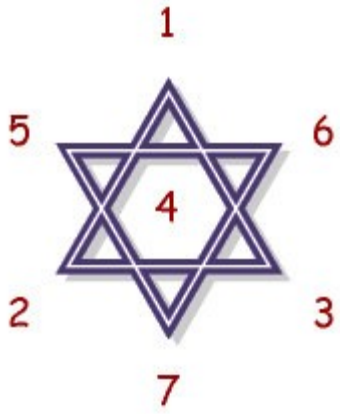

The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 5.53

Psychology 3

The Ego • The Artificial Self

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Chapter 5.53

Psychology 3

The Ego

The Artificial Self

- In conventional terms the ego is the conscious part of the personality that is derived from contact with the external world based on perception and interpretation of sense-impressions and from contact with the internal world of the subconsciousness. In less conventional, more metaphysical terms, the ego is a broader part of the personality and includes the subconscious (unconscious) element and reflects in various ways all of the conditioning and associated habits of the personality, however conscious or unconscious a person may be concerning that conditioning and those habits.

- The problem of ego is compounded by a person's failure to consciously recognize that there is a subconscious dimension to personality expression, e.g., behavior and attitudes, the basis and expression of which the waking-consciousness is not consciously or fully aware. The ego is actually an artificial element or entity, produced and sustained at the point of interaction between inner and outer worlds, i.e., between the personality as a whole and the external world in which the personality operates.

The Ego 1

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The ego is actually an artificial element or entity, produced and sustained at the point of interaction between inner and outer worlds, i.e., between the personality as a whole and the external world in which the personality operates. The personality is more substantial, being an expression of the personality matrix or archetype that is the reflection of the soul or higher self. The ego is simply an artificial aspect of the personality, but one which tends to dominate the waking-consciousness or interface with external reality.

The basis of ego is the delusion of independent, individual, self-consciousness. This basis arises from identification with the personality existence (consciousness) and reliance on sense-impressions for determination of perceived reality. In short, aeons of conditioning (experience) produce apparent self-consciousness, apparent separateness (duality), and apparent individuality. Thus the ego is a natural (albeit artificial) product of human development and is confirmed (compounded) by experience. For much of the duration of human personality development and experience and expression, the ego is a progressive factor, i.e., in those periods in which personality is developed and strengthened the ego emerges and is sustained thereby and contributes thereto.

The ego is also the aspect of personality that incorporates instinct, including self-preservation and pursuit of self-interest. An outgrowth of self-preservation is the compelling need of the ego to sustain its own artificial existence. Thus the ego will contrive to manipulate the perception and interpretation of sense-impressions, emotional and intellectual activity, etc., in pursuit of its own interests (mainly preservation and strengthening of its position and power over the personality life). Thus while the ego is an evolutionary outgrowth of experience, it ultimately becomes a substantial limitation as the human being approaches the (higher) evolutionary need of personality (ego) transcendence. In fact, the ego itself can become a destabilizing factor in personality life if destabilization is perceived (by the ego) to be needed in protecting its power and influence. The ego is naturally threatened by any spiritual progress, anything that has the potential to undermine its existence and influence. Thus, the ego tends to become an inertial factor rather than a progressive factor.

The real danger in human personality development is that the ego might become so strong as to completely undermine real progress. Ultimately however, the personality (ego) (mind) is (are) transcended and the lower self and its various aspects are sufficiently tempered. That process of tempering may be relatively painless where the ego is relatively mild or relatively painful where the ego is relatively strong.

† Commentary No. 1101

The Ego 2

Much of the course of human experience and expression has been accomplished through preliminary, almost unconscious development on physical and emotional (instinctual) levels. As one passes beyond the instinctive levels into the realm of the human ego, the human being becomes more conscious of his or her experience, and the ego naturally emerges as a factor in consciousness. Yet the ego remains rooted in the material aspect of the physical, etheric, astral (emotional), and mental (intellectual) realms.

The first phase of the ego is marked by development as the ego emerges into activity. Although necessary, the ego is an artificial entity, unconsciously created within the personality in response to the illusion of separateness and the

unfolding of the waking-consciousness (focus of lower (personality) consciousness). A person naturally identifies with the personality, with the waking-consciousness, and with the ego, without making distinctions between these three things, and without realizing that the true human being is something else altogether (merely utilizing these lower means as instruments for experience and expression).

Ego development is important in the sense that it marks and facilitates the beginning of the active phase of learning through experience. Experience on instinctive levels is largely unconscious and passive. With the emergence of ego the pace and breadth of learning increases substantially. It is the ego that makes the personality instrument coherent and able to function in the lower worlds (although conscious, from the higher (soul) perspective, a person developing and functioning at the ego level is wholly asleep). Thus ego development is largely mechanical, active yet governed largely by external forces and associated opportunities. As the ego develops there comes a need for self-confidence, for self-esteem, for coherence as a personality. These are all preliminary to actual personality integration. But this development, overcoming insecurities, increasing the strength of personality through ego development, are essential, at this phase.

The second phase of the ego is marked more by expression than by development, though development continues. Through experience and expression, the person is able to grow substantially (more so by virtue of there being a coherent personality). And eventually the personality becomes fully integrated and a coherent whole. But at first, ego expression is characterized by selfish, (necessarily) self-centered expression, through ambition, through achievements, through accomplishments. Later on ego expression becomes less selfish, but remains predominantly self-centered, but with a more humanitarian (and eventually spiritual) focus.

The third phase of the ego is marked by ego transcendence, as the needed experience and expression at the ego level is fulfilled (satisfied) and the inner forces (energies) begin to manifest. During this last phase, the ego is recognized for the artificial entity that it is, the focus of consciousness turns inward toward the soul (higher Self), a distinction is realized between these two levels, and the person (waking-consciousness) begins to identify more with the higher (inner)

(real) aspect than the lower (outer) (superficial) (artificial). Through this course, the ego is necessarily tempered and transcended, but not destroyed. The ego becomes responsive and subservient to the higher Self (although through inertia the resistance of the ego becomes more subtle). But the shift in identification is substantial. And with the transcendence of the ego, it becomes possible to reach (true) wholeness.

† Commentary No. 1114

Three Gunas and Ego

The ego is an artificial entity produced by immersion of the human being in the material worlds, compounded by delusion of the senses and identification of manifesting consciousness with the (merely apparent) separateness of the human personality. It can function only at the personality levels (physical-emotional-mental) and is incapable of transcending the limitations implied by manifestation in these lower worlds. It serves a purpose, facilitating experience and expression for the relatively undeveloped, but for the student to pass successfully from the psychological stage to the spiritual stage, the ego must be progressively tempered and eventually dissolved.

But the nature of ego varies considerably according to the evolutionary circumstances (progress in consciousness) of the student. Being of the material worlds, the ego is subject to the three gunas, being comprised of these three elements, in varying degrees, and reflecting (embracing) (exhibiting) the quality of consciousness thus far achieved. All three gunas are therefore present, but one or another of the gunas may actually dominate the conditioning (ego) of the personality. Thus egos may be distinctly sattvic, rajasic, or tamasic (or less distinctly so in some cases).

Tamas is a matter of inertia, of illusion, ignorance, the lower passions, indolence, delusion, malice, selfishness, coarseness, etc. Tamasic ego is predominantly selfish and self-centered, unable (or unwilling) to appreciate the needs or interests of other people. The independence of the tamasic ego is profound (delusion). The tamasic ego is substantially separative, yet lacking the awareness of its own nature. Tamasic egoism is based in the material nature (predominantly physical and emotional). While tamasic egoism is coarse

and strong, it is not "intelligent" enough to actively resist the inexorable force of evolution. Thus one progresses from tamas to rajas very gradually but largely uneventfully (unconsciously).

Rajas is a matter of activity, of earthly and sensual pursuits, of mundane knowledge, arrogance, attachment, ambition, competition, likes and dislikes, etc. Rajasic ego may or may not be selfish, but it tends to be self-centered. Most of the personality and psychological development occurs through rajas. The independence (delusion) of the rajasic ego is considerable but less substantial than tamas. Rajasic ego is moderately self-absorbed but more aware and more able to deal with concepts of life and consciousness. Rajasic egoism is based also in the material nature, but is predominantly emotional and mental (intellectual). Rajasic egoism is not as coarse as tamasic egoism, but it is potentially much stronger, and more potent by virtue of its "intelligence" (all of what is commonly referred to as intelligence is artificial). Thus rajasic egoism can (and generally does) actively undermine the progress in consciousness in order to preserve itself and its position of influence.

Sattva is a matter of harmony, of radiance, of higher and more noble pursuits, illumination, insight, peace, dispassion, growth in the sense of deepening, understanding, goodness, humility, love, truthfulness, moderation, etc. Sattvic ego is substantially less self-centered than the others, but still clinging, in its subtle ways, to a sense of its own existence. Yet the sattvic ego is able to begin to consider the possibility of its own artificial nature, and therefore, eventually, the sattvic ego is able to cooperate in its own moderation and dissolution. Sattvic egoism is based in the more refined material nature and is predominantly intellectual (but potentially somewhat responsive to the intuitive (higher, transpersonal) nature).

Section 5.531

Egoism

- In conventional terms, egoism is defined as the ethical doctrine or process (phenomenon) in which individual self-interest is the actual motive of all conscious action and/or in which individual self-interest is the valid end of all action. In less conventional, more metaphysical terms, egoism includes unconscious or subconscious motivation and self-justification as well.

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Of course there is nothing "wrong" with egoism per se. It is a natural outgrowth of human personality development, experience, and expression. But egoism is ultimately counter-evolutionary, i.e., egoism eventually inhibits growth in consciousness and therefore needs to be tempered by anyone who would embrace the spiritual path of conscious evolution in consciousness. Egoism may or may not be culturally engendered, but in either case, egoism is separative, i.e., it encourages the "sense" that the personality is an independent entity entitled to individual rights, self-interest, etc. More moderate forms of egoism allow for group interest (e.g., family, community, nation, world) and a balance between self-interest and group welfare, but are still inherently separative. Also, some forms of egoism include ethical consideration of other people's (individual) interests (i.e., me first but not at the expense of others' welfare), while some forms have no such appreciation or respect for other people.

Those who consciously and deliberately embrace egoism are not quite so perverse as those who unconsciously and indeliberately embrace egoism, i.e., being egoistic in their behavior and attitudes without any conscious realization of same. Egoism as a merely intellectual outcome or expression can be overcome relatively easily through additional experience. Egoism that is embraced non-intellectually is more insidious and relatively much more difficult to temper and transcend because it is deeper and more substantial. That which is on the surface of consciousness is easier to recognize and temper, while that which is

hidden at some depth below the surface but which produces consequences in behavior and attitudes is far less easier to recognize and temper.

In the final analysis, egoism is that which inhibits the flow of energy (qualification, insight, conscience, etc.) from the soul or higher self to the waking-consciousness of the personality. Egoism manifests in many ways and on many levels, but in each case egoism is that which sustains the (conscious or unconscious) sense of separateness (and in more extreme cases the expression of separativeness). Egoism and personality-centeredness are very closely related and are in many regards two facets of the same artificiality (personality existence) (personality presence). Personality-centeredness refers to the overall level and extent of focus of consciousness on that level (personality), while egoism refers more to the manner of personality expression and elements and implications of separateness and separativeness. One can be unselfish and even non-self-centered and still be essentially egoistic.

While the pursuit of self-interest is easily justified or rationalized in mundane and secular terms, and, with sufficient regard for others, can be considered quite ethical and reasonable, in the broader context of human evolution, egoism (and coincident personality-centeredness) is simply the limiting factor of human existence (experience and expression).

† Commentary No. 333

The Human Ego

The human being in physical incarnation is a human personality or ego induced within an animal form. That personality is a transient creation (instrument) of the soul, further complicated by its close association with its animal body. It is the self-consciousness of the human ego or personality (lower self) that distinguishes the human being from the animal. The ego is the personal, self-centered individuality which experiences the illusion of externalization.

In the pure sense, the personality is the personality matrix (pattern) of the soul (which is inherently very different from the quality and nature of the soul itself) prior to its imposition upon the animal form (i.e., as it exists on archetypal levels). In incarnation, however, that personality is easily absorbed by the

demands and illusions of mundane existence and is normally quite rapidly complicated by the circumstantial (earned) factors of heredity and environment. The ego is that more complicated, self-centered aspect of the personality that motivates self-centered (selfish) experience and expression, which normally values its own existence and self-importance over all others; and it is the ego which sustains and reinforces illusion and resists alignment with the soul (for such alignment portends the cessation of the ego's independence).

In the practical sense, the personality is derived in part from the personality matrix (which is a source of assimilated experience and developed abilities) and in part from heredity and environment. The personality is the loose totality (not necessarily properly integrated) of all the physical, emotional (affective), and mental (cognitive) characteristics of an individual (including conscience). The psyche is essentially equivalent to the personality, taking into consideration both conscious emotions and the unconscious mind. The psyche is often referred to as the soul, but in the esoteric philosophy (terminology), the soul and psyche (total personality) are distinctly different concepts (entities), the soul being the impersonal, subjective self which is the cause of the individual personality life, yet remains distinctly beyond objective, personal experience.

The ego is more properly the relatively conscious part of the personality (psyche) that relates more or less directly with the external reality (illusion) via sense impression, the waking-consciousness (the focus of personality awareness), and personal, subconscious processes and conditioning. The external (objective) reality is the illusion of physical existence and separateness (relative to spiritual existence). The ego is that aspect of the personality that is deceived by that (apparent) reality and its own self-consciousness, that aspect of the psyche which has become enchanted by consciousness (to the extent that it has become an artificial entity), the center to which a person's psychological experience and expression is referred. In a more practical sense, the ego is the essence of self-deception and self-interest.

The principal illusion of human psychology is the identification of the human individuality with the personal self or ego, rather than the soul. The waking-consciousness (the mental focus) is only the superficial aspect of the human being and is not the soul. The ego is only the complicated self-illusion of the human personality, and is not the soul. Reality (enlightenment) dawns only as

the ego, psyche, and waking-consciousness are recognized as aspects of the transient personality. Much glamour and illusion (and many levels of self-deception and egoism) must be overcome before the reality of the universal soul can be assimilated.

† Commentary No. 790

Egolessness

Egolessness refers to the relative absence or quiescence of the human ego or that aspect of the personality (ego) that demonstrates primarily as self-centeredness, separativeness, defensiveness, reactiveness, etc.

The ego is the independent strength of the personality in contrast to the spiritual strength (humility) of the soul. That relative independence is developed as a product of personality development and peaks with the full integration of the personality (where the lower or concrete mind integrates and subordinates the entire personality). The ego is the successor to the more primordial (animal) instinctiveness of the unintegrated and relatively coarse personality (and the precursor of the manifested (spiritual, inclusive) strength of the soul (the animal strength (quality), the ego strength (quality), and the soul strength (quality) are each substantially different from each other).

Thus egolessness characterizes the beginning and the end of human evolution. In the beginning of human experience there is (only) the human animal, full of instinct and lower intelligence. As a person evolves, the personality develops and unfolds more human characteristics (including emotional and concrete mental development) and is eventually perfected (relatively, insofar as human existence and expression is concerned) as the higher faculties (abstract mind and intuition) are unfolded and realized (i.e., as the soul wholly qualifies the responsive personality). Thus, at the end of the human experience the ego is fully overcome and egolessness is achieved. That (eventual) egolessness implies that the true strengths and positive (higher) characteristics of the personality are actually available to or abstracted by the soul (and conversely, that the illusionary strengths of the ego are not abstracted). It is not a simple matter of abstracting the good (desired, intended qualities) and leaving the bad; for the soul carries forward (beyond the human experience) with the matrix or fully-

developed archetype of human experience, and therefore, it is a matter of eliminating (overcoming) (sublimating) (qualifying) (refining) those aspects of the personality (namely the ego (and coarseness)) that are not warranted (or are not applicable) to higher experience.

But in the meantime, through the various stages of the spiritual path, the presence and activities of the ego and the cultivation of egolessness are quite significant and substantial concerns (for the spiritual student). The principal objective is to maintain the integrity and capability (positive strengths) of the cultivated and relatively refined personality while gradually reducing the independence of that personality. It is not, however, a matter of the soul merely breaking through to the personality and compelling adjustments and changes. It is, rather, a matter of the personality taking responsibility for aspiration (refinement) and uplifting itself toward the soul (and the energy qualification of the soul).

The soul does not compel the personality. The soul offers qualification and encouragement (guidance) that the personality is (or is not, relatively) responsive to. It is up to the spiritual student as a personality to seek the realization of that soul encouragement (i.e., bringing about the responsiveness of the personality). The ego stands as the principal hindrance for the relatively well-developed personality in its quest for spirituality (and higher consciousness). The ego naturally resists any endeavor that undermines its influence in the personality. Thus the entire spiritual path can be viewed as the battleground (struggle) of (between) the higher and lower aspects of the personality (more so than between the soul and the personality).

† Commentary No. 820

Beyond Egoism

There is a natural and inevitable psychological transition from egoism through altruism to holism. Egoism is the natural result of focused self-interest (replacing the passive non-egoistic (and non-altruistic) state of the undeveloped ego) and predominates in the "developed" personality whose strength is allowed to color character, disposition, temperament, and values. Egoistic (self-centered) people are necessarily personality-centered (but not necessarily vice versa) and non-altruistic.

Egoism does however have a "range" from relatively coarse to relatively refined. In the worst case, the self-concerned person preys on others for some apparent (but not real) benefit. In the better case, the self-concerned person has some moral (ethical) (legal) temperance such that others do not suffer (directly) by virtue of his or her egoism. This tempered ego naturally evolves into a more altruistic personality (characterization) as consciousness improves (based on experience and largely unconscious realization (conscience)) and a person begins to be concerned as much about others as himself, and on to the point where one is concerned predominantly with others. This altruism also has a "range" based upon the degree to which values are imposed (i.e., at worst one can be altruistic and impositional, at best altruistic and non-impositional).

Average and relatively developed people have a reasonable balance between self-interest and concern for others (with self-interest holding sway if the balance is tested). It generally takes a number of lives before self-interest gives way to more noble (and more humble) endeavors. Beyond altruism is the range of holism, in which altruism gradually evolves into (over the course of lives) trans-altruistic realization (deeper, broader, semi-conscious appreciation for the inter-relatedness of all lives and all events). Holism is concerned with the whole, with concern for individual components (forces and/or people) (as individuals) tempered by that greater realization (conscience) (wisdom). In the holistic domain (approach) (perspective), individual components still have value, but that value is related to the whole and the emphasis (focus) is upon the determining factors as irreducible wholes.

Holistic methods can be applied to virtually any level or segment of manifestation (e.g., humanity can be viewed and treated as a whole (system) of internal and inter-related components, activities, forces, etc.) but are only truly effective when external-relatedness is accounted for (i.e., treating a whole (system) in the context of some greater whole (system)). In the final analysis, holism is a means of embracing the all of life and is far superior (psychologically) to altruism (which is, in turn, far superior (psychologically) to egoism) [although the measure (character and quality) of consciousness determines the individual needs (suitability) and egoism (altruism) is a necessary precursor (prelude) to altruism (holism)].

But this triplicity (egoism, altruism, holism) [more properly holism, altruism, egoism, with clockwise circulation] is itself only one dimension or component of the human psychological system. There are a number of dimensions or components which collectively indicate the measure of human (spiritual) (evolutionary) achievement (relative maturity), any one or several of which are not necessarily conclusive (i.e., one can be developed or advanced in one or more dimensions with or without a corresponding achievement in the remaining dimensions). Yet passing (evolving) beyond egoism (egoistic character, disposition, temperament, and values) toward a more altruistic (holistic) view is a major and necessary prerequisite for serious spiritual and esoteric work.

† Commentary No. 1260

Egobase

A person's egobase (ego base) is the extent to which the ego dominates the (outer) life and waking-consciousness. Most people are almost (if not) completely unaware of their own identification with the ego, or that that ego is an artificial entity, i.e., that they are identifying themselves with something artificial and superficial. Most people are also almost (if not) completely unaware that the "normal" human being is egobased, i.e., that what they take for granted as themselves and other people is in fact based in ego rather than something more substantial.

The great awakening of the spiritual student, however, is the realization of this egobase, its existence, its nature, and the manner of its transcendence. But this awakening must be true, and not merely an intellectual understanding compromised by noble self-deception. Some (many) talk about the ego and humility and the noble (higher) Self yet continue to identify in practice (actuality) almost completely with the ego (i.e., where the ego is simply masquerading as something more noble). The (egobased) student tends to want to believe this and so does.

But until the student realizes the distinction between Self and not-self, it is impossible to transcend the ego. Those who say we must integrate the self, i.e., the whole self, higher and lower, are really just rationalizing their continuance as egobased human beings, even while it is true that ultimately there needs to be an integration. But it is only the higher (true) Self that can integrate the lower. The lower simply cannot integrate anything higher than itself. And since the ego is artificial and superficial, however it may seem to be, it is simply not an integrating force except (in principle) for the lower nature (physical, emotional, and concrete mental).

The ego base is natural in the sense that it is evoked through experience in the lower worlds and it serves a purpose. In these senses there is no need for most people to even attempt transcendence. There is for most people simply a need to temper the ego sufficiently to preclude self-absorption. But for the spiritual student, who needs to embrace a higher order and higher energies, there is great need to temper the ego, to weaken its hold on the lower self (intellect) (personality), to bring the ego to the point where it serves the higher Self rather than continuing to promote its own (artificial) existence. The ego is by nature (naturally) relatively insecure. It tends to defend and promote itself by all means available. The spiritual student must become the astute observer of the (lower) self, to witness the thinking and feeling and behavior and tendencies of the lower nature, without identifying with them. And in that realization of the "nature" of the lower nature, begin the process of reorientation in consciousness that results in transcending the lower nature.

But this overcoming the egobase is a tremendously difficult undertaking, because the egobase tends to be strong (at least by the time one even begins to realize the need for the undertaking), because virtually everything in the outer

world supports the grand illusion of material existence (and ego existence (human being as ego)) as an end in itself and therefore all of the outer (external) forces impel the student toward strengthening the ego rather than tempering it. Thus almost all of the worldly and psychological forces are counter-evolutionary in this context (ego transcendence) (while being evolutionary in the sense of promoting experience and expression in the lower worlds). Yet somehow the inner forces gradually and eventually emerge into the waking-consciousness. And the egobase is properly subordinated.

Section 5.532

Aspects of Egoism 1

- Being an artificial entity, the ego is relatively subtle and relatively complicated. There are therefore many aspects of egoism that help the spiritual student to recognize the ego and its work, and to transcend these limitations.

† Commentary No. 1043

Titles and Credentials

A title is traditionally "an appellation of dignity, honor, distinction, or preeminence attached to a person or family by virtue of rank, office, precedent, privilege, attainment, or lands." A credential is something which conveys a title to credit or confidence in some matter. The use of titles may be a matter of egoism or pragmatism or more generally some combination of egoism and pragmatism. And the use of titles may be a matter of external context or a matter of self-reference (or more generally some combination of external context and self-reference).

There may be some element of pragmatism in the use of titles and/or credentials, e.g., in the matter of qualifications for employment. But in the vast preponderance of use of titles there is an underlying basis of egoism (i.e., the vast preponderance of so-called pragmatic claims or justifications for use of titles and credentials are really rationalizations based almost entirely on egoism). And the assignment or awardance (or presumption) of a title and/or credential depends on some (real or presumed) authority and some (real or presumed) basis of qualification, to make such assignment or awardance. In other-than-mundane matters there is simply no real authority for any of these things. The only real qualification for a person is one's character, quality of consciousness, temperament, and values, all of which being readily manifested through the aura or field of consciousness.

In the ways of the world there is no "problem" in the use of legitimate titles or credentials, although there may be a question of legitimacy, meaningfulness, and/or significance. In the ways of the world there is no "problem" with egoism, provided that others are not harmed in the process. But for the spiritual student there is a problem with any manifestation of egoism (because it separates the student from the inner Self and higher quality of consciousness), and in reliance on titles, particularly in the sense of self-reference, there is egoism compounded through identification and a definite and resulting separativeness. The degree and extent of egoism is reflected in the manner in which titles and credentials are utilized or referred to.

The spiritual student (teacher) simply has no need, pragmatic or otherwise, to refer to or advertise himself or herself with recourse to titles, credentials, or other apparent qualifications. Some might say that a spiritual teacher may need to advertise his or her qualifications in order to attract students, that such credentials serve the purpose of helping the student to discriminate in choosing a teacher, course of study, etc. But this is nonetheless a rationalization (even if true) and nonetheless a manifestation of ego. Alternatively, a teacher or school might advertise the values being embraced and indicate the processes being utilized, thus conveying to the student sufficient information for the student to base a preliminary decision. Of course the real basis should be values and processes actually embraced and practiced, not merely what values and processes are advertised. Thus earned reputation is of more value than advertisements or claims. In the final analysis, the enquirer must determine for himself or herself the merits of any situation.

The real issues are egoism and separativeness, and one should not be distracted by titles and credentials (either by reliance upon them or through aversion to them). Anything that contributes to egoism or separativeness (e.g., the delusion of independence) should, progressively and ultimately, be transcended by the spiritual student.

† Commentary No. 1047

Repression

Repression is defined as "the act or state of repressing, a process by which unacceptable desires or impulses are excluded from consciousness and left to operate in the unconscious." Repression implies restraint, the "prevention of natural or normal expression, activity, or development." This is (may be) consciously forceful or relatively unconsciously forceful. But in either case there is a measure of forcefulness, of artificial constraint.

In the case of issues, repression implies the building of psychological walls that hide something from the waking-consciousness, perhaps enabling a person to get on with life and to deal with the issue at a later, better time, perhaps preventing a person from dealing honestly and effectively with the issue, at least for a while. In the case of desires or impulses, repression implies an

artificial and unnatural restraint of the lower (physical, emotional, and/or intellectual) nature and concomitant self-deception in the sense of believing (consciously or unconsciously) that a problem has been dealt with when in fact the problem has merely been evaded for a while.

The problem for the spiritual student generally relates to the intended (and necessary) tempering of the lower (personality) nature, through physical, emotional, and mental discipline. Whenever discipline is imposed by a student less than whole-heartedly, e.g., where one is simply going along with some suggestion or prescription without honestly understanding the need and without honestly embracing the value, then instead of there being a tempering of the lower nature there is instead generally a repression. This means that a substantial portion of the lower nature (ego) (subconscious) will resent the imposition (restraint) (discipline) and work actively and unconsciously to undermine the discipline. This is an artificial tempering that is likely to result in growing unconscious resentment and eventual ultimate explosion of ego as the walls are broken down.

On the other hand, if the discipline is imposed intelligently and willingly, with understanding and proper intention, then there is a natural process of tempering (transformation) without repression, where the ego or lower self is in effect a more-or-less willing partner and participant in the process. The only effective tempering of the ego is where the ego is cultivated in the sense of willingly subordinating itself to the higher Self (i.e., true humility). But with untempered ego there is more likely to be a measure of repression in any attempt at spiritual discipline. Of course one must recognize the distinction between what is natural in the sense of uninhibited lower expression (giving full reign to the animal nature) and what is natural in the sense the human being as a whole (in the context of evolution in consciousness).

In some cases repression occurs impersonally (internally to the personality-consciousness of the spiritual student); in other cases repression occurs in combination with resentment of perceived but not really appreciated external authority. The ego will use this perception-resentment to undermine the process along personal lines, using the existence (and perceived nature) of the external figure as an excuse to undermine the process. More properly, there are no external authorities. One must ultimately recognize the truth for oneself,

and embrace the discipline and practice that is appropriate for one's stage along the way. The ego naturally calls for self-authority in the egoistic sense of lower-self-determination, while the soul or higher Self calls for Self-authority in the sense of true realization. With repression there are complications. With a natural tempering of the lower nature there is a measure of simplicity.

† Commentary No. 1048

Flattery and Praise

Praise is defined as the "expression of favorable judgment" or commendation of someone, while flattery is defined as the act or practice of "excessive praise especially from motives of self-interest" and includes the sense of "pleasing self-deception" (thus flattery is considered an extension of praise to the realm of speciousness).

Praise and other genuine encouragement is generally appropriate for those who are growing and deepening in their personality experience but who remain less-than-fulfilled at the personality level, i.e., for those who are struggling to develop the personality to that maturity and balance required before one can transcend the personality (mind) (ego), and is especially apropos to children, provided there is a genuine basis, provided that the expression is sincere, and provided that the recipient is not already egoistic.

In some traditional spiritual communities (schools) praise is uninhibited, for whatever reason. In other traditional communities (schools) praise is generally avoided to preclude egoistic inflation. And in some cases students are tested for their response to praise (e.g., is a student modest in accepting praise or does the student allow praise to inflate the sense of ego?). Uninhibited (unmoderated) praise tends to inflate the ego or encourage personality-centeredness. Seeking praise or accepting praise in the immodest sense of becoming absorbed at that level tends to discourage the humility and positive sensitivity required for esoteric work. Yet the lack of warranted praise in the case of relatively insecure personalities can be an impediment to meaningful progress. And spiritual work at any level is enhanced to the extent that the personality is relatively secure (mature) (but not over-developed or egoistic). While personality-centeredness is

counter-productive to much of the esoteric work, immature personalities are also relatively ineffectual. Thus for serious work, one must first develop the personality to some mature (balanced) (secure) level, then temper that personality strength with humility and non-egoism.

The keys in this context for the spiritual student, in dealing with other students or colleagues, are discretion, kindness, and respect. Discretion refers to the wisdom of praising as appropriate (hopefully through realization or discernment rather then judging). Kindness refers to the heart-centered basis that should temper all interactions for the spiritual student with other people. And respect refers to the expression of respect and consideration for others that is always appropriate as recognition of the inherent value of every human being. Without these three factors, praise is likely to be specious and/or counter-productive, and without these three factors the absence of (warranted) praise (and the absence of warmth) is likely to result in strained relationship.

Wisdom and insight is also helpful, in recognizing (realizing) the relative maturity of the affected personality. Being critical and judging toward others is generally (almost invariably) counter-productive. By incorrectly presuming or perceiving (judging) that another personality is mature, one might refrain from praise when indeed praise is needed. By incorrectly assuming or perceiving (judging) that another personality is immature, one might through praising encourage inflation and egoism. On the other hand, the spiritual student should (hopefully) be increasingly intuitive and uncontrived so that these become non-issues, relying instead on the natural expression of kindness and respect, without praise or criticism (thought, felt, or verbalized).

† Commentary No. 1051

Speciousness

Speciousness is the phenomenon of deceptive attraction or appeal, of "having a false look of truth or genuineness," of being plausible but not necessarily valid or legitimate. The problem of speciousness is a matter of believing what one wants to believe, by allowing that "wanting" to determine the what and how of beliefs rather than relying on the truth. Specious testimony is plausible only because people want to believe the testimony is true or real, or because people are unable or unwilling to be objective in consideration of anything less than first-hand experience (and to some even being unable or unwilling to be objective on the basis of actual first-hand experience).

Speciousness does not imply conscious or deliberate deception or dishonest intent, but does imply dishonesty (inability to be honest) in the sense of not dealing with the facts but believing that there is a legitimate basis for belief. In fact, the victim of speciousness is one who simply fails to realize the distinction between what is factual and what is not. Once a belief is accepted as factual, then speciousness is compounded by that error, as a person then proceeds (to act) on the basis of that "fact" without conscious appreciation of the implied or conveyed fallacy.

Speciousness points to the lack of validity or lack of legitimateness of the belief-treated-as-if-it-were-factually-true. It does not point to the favorableness (or unfavorableness) of the belief, but it does point to a lack of legitimacy and to bias (prejudice) (distortion). If one believes a person to be basically "good" then one will tend to have a distorted perception of anything that person says or does, even to the point of ignoring or minimizing any evidence to the contrary, such that that basic belief is sustained. Similarly, if one believes a person to be "bad" then one will tend to have a distorted perception of anything that person says or does (or is purported to say or do), so that the negative reputation is sustained.

The problem of speciousness is not really simple. People are generally not wholly good or wholly bad, and so there is generally a demonstration or expression of both strengths and weaknesses in every life. Moreover, the sense

of what is good or bad is itself a matter of judgment and judgment is based on one's own biases and conditioning and the relative strength of intellectual faculty, with or without appreciable emotional distortion. If one has a critical or judgmental nature, then the problem of speciousness is further compounded by those tendencies.

The truth remains the truth. Truth is not changed by virtue of what one believes. What is perceived as true (truth) may change dramatically, based on one's own experience, attitudes, beliefs, etc., but what is actually and factually true does not change. Unless one is committed, genuinely and effectively, to embracing truth (and in minimizing distortion based upon personal prejudices), then one is not likely to be able to transcend living in the world of opinions and personal bias and prejudice. But as one becomes more objective, becoming more aware of the distinctions between what is factual and what is assumptive and what is merely perceptive, without drawing hard conclusions, then one is more likely to be able to perceive some greater measure of the truth, and be able to proceed accordingly and appropriately. Being truly committed to truth, one withholds judgment. One refuses to accept as true-in-fact anything that is not verified by first-hand experience or substantiated by realization undistorted by personal bias, which really means refusing to accept anything as necessarily true (or false).

† Commentary No. 1052

Flattery and Detraction

Flattery through any means is a process of favorable distortion, while detraction through any means is a process of unfavorable distortion. Any form of flattery or detraction, whether first-hand (face-to-face) or otherwise, through praise or condemnation, is a matter of distortion. The danger of each is in the measure of distortion and the tendency of even modest flattery or detraction to become compounded (exaggerated) by repetition, and the likelihood that as one engages in flattery and/or detraction one is more and more likely to further deceive oneself concerning what is actually true.

Flattery and detraction are compounded through gossip, "rumor or report of an intimate or personal nature," because the phenomenon of gossip is inherently

personality-centered and subject to substantial (further) bias and personal prejudice. First-hand flattery is unfortunate in the sense that it is egoistic (encourages egoism); second-hand flattery is unfortunate in the sense that it leads to unrealistic expectations of the person being flattered (i.e., one may have difficulty living up to exaggerated expectations, particularly if one is not consciously aware of the expectations). If one is aware of others' expectations, then one can, if one is honest and realistic, then attempt to convey a sense of realism to those who have expectations.

But detraction is definitely harmful, whether or not it is specious, but particularly where it is specious. Any detraction, disparagement, depreciation, derogation, defamation, vilification, scurrility, aspersion, slur, invective, slander, backbiting, discommendation, criticism, disapprobation, derision, etc., is inherently harmful, both to the person detracted and to the detractor. And it is so whether or not the detraction is conveyed publicly or privately, and whether or not the person detracted is present or not, it is harmful to all parties involved. Any criticism or judgment is harmful, the more so in the case of detraction, and the more so where a personal agenda is concerned, even if that personal agenda is pursued unconsciously (i.e., sincerely without contrivance (or at least without awareness of one's own intentions)).

Some might say that it is only human nature to judge others based upon one's own experiences, yet in the context of the spiritual path one must learn to transcend this (lower) nature. The problem is two-fold: judgment is inherently limited with regard to truth and being judgmental is inherently harmful to both the person judged and the person judging (and anyone else who is drawn into the process). One can never really know the truth about someone else (it is difficult enough to discern even some of the truth about oneself). One can therefore only really judge based upon appearances, and appearances can be quite misleading. To judge is to lose one's objectivity, to allow superficial impressions and personal biases to determine conclusions. Judging tends to overcome or overwhelm the heart and allows the head to rule more or less unimpeded by common sense, fairness, or truth. To believe in one's ability to judge further compounds the problem with egoism. But above all, judging (which is necessarily superficial) allows, indeed encourages, that-which-is-not-necessarily-true to dominate, leading to further distortion.

Judging is a self-blinding process, whether or not it is a matter of flattery or detraction, in thought or feeling or behavior. It evokes the lower nature (self-interest) and tends to build momentum (increasing self-deception). It also tends to compromise others who are similarly naive regarding the truth (and unable generally to distinguish between what-is-true-in-fact and what is merely purported to be true, however plausible it may be).

† Commentary No. 1089

The Fallacy of Conceit

Conceit is defined as excessive appreciation of one's own worth or virtue, in the sense of being personality-centered. The nature of the personality (ego) is conceit, in some cases minor, in some cases moderate, in some cases major. The basis of conceit is the false belief that the personality (ego) is real, that the lower self has existence independent of underlying divine principle. As the personality is developed in the conditioned context (illusion) of external reality (materialism and egoism), it naturally develops ego (artificial self-ness) and views itself as an entity separate from other lives (without even the realization that life is something else altogether).

The personality certainly has considerable value, as an instrument of experience and expression. But the (artificial) waking-consciousness of the personality generally fails to realize that its perception of its own independence is illusionary. The personality tends to view material things as possessions, and accomplishments as its own, when in fact material things are provided for all and the personality is merely a steward and (real) accomplishments are the work of higher forces. The personality is merely placed for these purposes (experience and expression). When the student places these things in proper perspective, then there is balance (moderation, self-respect, and humility). There is appreciation for the opportunities of life for experience and expression in the context of growth in consciousness and service to humanity (and all life).

But in the conditioned illusion of separate existence, in the illusion of only one life to live (i.e., without the context of karma and evolution in consciousness), in the illusion of self-determination in the lower sense, in the illusion of there being

no underlying divine principle (regardless of specious self-protestations, e.g., many people who go to church and voice their allegiance to God do so insincerely (while believing in their own sincerity, their actions tend to the contrary)), the personality (ego) tends to appropriate things and serve as a law unto itself. The human being becomes relatively powerful as it develops, being able to evoke various forces and apply them to various (constructive or destructive) purposes. But these forces are not one's own, they are merely appropriated. And if they are appropriated wrongly (selfishly) (without appreciation for broader context), then appropriated forces tend to return to a person in the form of disease and limitation.

Thus much of humanity abuses the mineral and plant and animal kingdoms without appreciation for their proper roles. And many of humanity similarly abuse the human kingdom, through the illusion of self-serving activities (e.g., competition, ambition, materialism, separativeness). Crimes against mineral lives, plant lives, animal lives, and other human lives are all a matter of conceit (false belief). All of the kingdoms are inhabited by lifewaves that are evolving in consciousness. None are placed for the whim of human appropriation. All are placed in a larger context and serve a common (and higher) purpose (e.g., some plants are placed for food (and grow thereby), while no animals have ever been so placed).

The personality does not own anything nor does the personality achieve anything. Any sense of superiority is fallacious. The personality is owned by the higher Self in a broader context (God's purpose) (collective evolution in consciousness) than one's own individuality. All of life is one, and the (merely perceived) individuality on any level remains fully (actually) within the context of that greater oneness.

† Commentary No. 1099

Superiority

There are at least two dimensions to this notion of superiority, one being actual superiority and the other being perception of superiority. Actual superiority is a matter of delusion. There is no actual superiority. Perception of superiority is a matter of conceit.

Superiority is a function of glamour, of misplaced ego, of not understanding the reality of God in manifestation. It manifests through the misguided sense (belief) (practice, or action based on the belief) of the human being being superior to other, "sub-human" species (and the presumed rights of the "superior" species to appropriate whatever is wanted, even to the detriment of the "sub-human" species), of a human being being superior to another human being by virtue of race, culture, nationality, education, intelligence, etc., of a human being being superior by virtue of fame or fortune, of a human being being superior by virtue of spiritual practice (not smoking, not drinking, not using drugs, not eating flesh foods, etc.).

Regarding the so-called sub-human species (inhabitants of the animal, plant, and mineral kingdoms), humanity is only "superior" in superficial ways. Lifewaves are equal, even though one necessarily precedes another in the succession of lifewaves in manifestation. The human being is different than the animal. The human being is more developed in some ways, the animal more so in other ways. Human consciousness may be "higher" but is not necessarily superior. For there is a great deal of "value" in each lifewave that is not readily apparent based on superficial observations. Thus the collective soul of the animal kingdom is no less significant, no less contributive, than the collection of souls that is humanity. The human being needs to transcend the residue of conditioning acquired through prior experience (in the then-animal kingdom), but that is predominantly a matter of calling (the evolutionary plan). The manifestation of a lifewave is always superficial and partial. The reality of each lifewave vastly exceeds the appearance.

Similarly, "superiority" based on race, religion, culture, nationality, education, intelligence, etc. is merely superficial. Each segment of humanity contributes in

its own way. And every human being is essentially and fundamentally equal (not identical, but equal in value, and equal at the soul level). Qualities are developed and expressed at every "level" of human experience. Each contributes to the whole. Those who exhibit certain "accomplishments" should not be compared to those who have apparently not yet developed those characteristics or attributes, however intended. For life in this world is an arena for learning, and many who have accomplished a great deal do not exhibit in any given lifetime all of the quality and character that has been achieved as a whole. Personalities are merely partial expressions of the underlying (real) life.

Even in quality of consciousness there is no matter of superiority even though one may be more or less "refined" than another. Differences (even accomplishments) simply do not constitute superiority. Thus one who smokes and drinks and eats flesh but who is kind and light-hearted may be more spiritually-minded (yet limited by these habits) than one who is merely (artificially) non-smoking, non-drinking, and vegetarian. Yet making such judgments is fallacious (and exercising judgment-of-others is a spiritually harmful and wrongful practice). Making judgments based on appearances is even more so (for one simply does not perceive or understand the whole truth of anything). Feeling "superior" based on real or superficial accomplishments is simply specious.

† Commentary No. 1102

Sensitivity and the Ego

Though the ego necessarily dominates experience and expression during the period of preparatory work, once the student has embarked upon the spiritual path, the ego must necessarily be tempered and eventually transcended. As this occurs, the natural, inner sensitivity unfolds and the student is able then to be more aware, from a higher, deeper, nobler place in consciousness, and express energies of a more subtle (meaningful) nature.

In the meantime, the ego tends to substantially mask that sensitivity, not through contrivance (which is another problem entirely), but by virtue of its presence. This is not the sensitivity of the (reactive) (insecure) personality but the sensitivity of the (non-reactive) (secure) higher Self expressed through a

refined and responsive personality. This (higher) sensitivity brings a gradually deepening awareness of the underlying principles (forces) (energies) (relationships) and insight that is far beyond the ability of the personality (ego) (intellect). But that higher sensitivity and associated awareness and insight and expression is not apparent to the extent of the presence of ego (what seems to be).

The presence of ego, though quite necessary during the precursory stages of human evolution in consciousness, during the latter stages constitutes "noise" that masks the higher impressions, preventing them from registering in the waking-consciousness (conscious awareness) of the student. Whenever the ego is present (whenever the mind is "active") the inner (higher) sensitivity is precluded. Yet that higher sensitivity is essential to ego-transcendence, so the student learns gradually to manage the activeness of the ego, first by distinguishing ego (not-self) from Self, then by actively listening to the Self (not listening to the voice (presence) of the ego) through meditation (and true (non-thinking) contemplation). When the mind (personality) (ego) (intellect) is quiescent, the inner voice (higher perception) (sensitivity) (awareness) (insight) is allowed to manifest unimpeded.

In meditation this is not so difficult (in principle), though it requires considerable patience (persistence) (effort) over a period of time (several lifetimes). Outside of meditation proper this is not so easy. Thus one of the objectives is to gradually and naturally extend the meditative state, or at least much of the character and temperament associated with the meditative state as possible, to the normal activities of life in the lower worlds. Thus the student aspires to function in the lower worlds while retaining the inner connection and associated sensitivity. This is exceedingly difficult, but not ultimately impossible (indeed, it is ultimately necessary). What generally happens is that the person (personality) (waking-consciousness) becomes absorbed in outer experience (the senses) (thinking) (personality-centeredness) and the inner connection is lost (in effect). Thus the focus of attention becomes the achievement of the non-absorbed state, remaining awake in the sense of self-remembering, while all the natural forces of the world, including the ego, conspire to draw the student (further) into absorption.

The ego is an artificial entity (aspect of consciousness), but quite powerful. For the spiritual student the presence of ego is not shunned, but politely not engaged. Through cultivated (active) indifference to the presence of ego (and all that the ego represents), the power and potency of the ego as an independent (artificial) aspect of consciousness is reduced and eventually eliminated (transcended). In the words of Wei Wu Wei, "And I am the presence of the absence of all that seems to be."

† Commentary No. 1146

The Mask of Ego

The problem of ego is that it is both necessary to development in the lower worlds (of human experience and expression) and an impediment to transcending this (lower) world. The ego is born of the material nature of the personality (physical, etheric, emotional (astral), and mental (intellectual) nature(s)) (of the illusion of separateness) and sustains itself through appropriation of the waking-consciousness (the (false) identification of the waking-consciousness with the ego-as-self).

In its central position in (as) the waking-consciousness, the ego is able to help and hinder experience and expression. The ego is able to facilitate experience and expression, to the extent that it is interested, and the ego is able to hinder same by virtue of protecting its own (artificial) interests (namely furtherance of its own "existence" and its prominence in the waking-consciousness). In order to accomplish its objectives (survival, prominence) the ego wears many masks and can function in rather subtle ways. Thus a student is rarely able to discern the existence and influence of an ego that has assumed a subtle posture.

The mask of ego manifests in many and diverse ways. Through attachments and entanglements, through having opinions, through separateness and separativeness, through self-defense, through personality-centeredness (self-centeredness) (self-absorption), through materialism, sense indulgence, and egoism in its various and subtle forms. The ego assumes roles. The ego appears to accommodate. The ego seems to be that which it is not. But in every instance, the ego fails to reveal itself for what it is (an artificial, induced entity). Emotional pain and mental anguish are invariably induced by ego. The whole

realm of thinking and feeling and doing is the domain of ego (personality-centered experience and expression). On the path the student does not deny the practical reality of the ego, or its role, but the student works toward transcending the ego as an impediment to realization of truth.

In the early stages of the path the ego protects the person by promoting (apparent) self-interest (and through encouraging self-centeredness). As the student begins to mature spiritually, the ego becomes more and more subtle. The deception of the ego is gradually transformed from the deception (illusion) of independent existence to the self-deception of the ego masquerading as the higher Self or the voice of the silence. It hardly matters that the ego is sincere in everything it appears to do. The ego remains an artificial entity. But as the student evolves in consciousness, progressive refinement evokes changes in the ego and the ways in which it manifests. Eventually, the ego becomes more or less collaborative, serving the higher needs of the (spiritual) student without promoting self-centeredness (personality-centeredness) (itself). But the ego remains, however sincere and however subtle, a modest (if not substantial) impediment.

In order to see through the mask of ego, the student must first be consciously aware of the existence of distinction between (lower) self (ego) (not-self) and (higher) Self. Then the student must carefully self-observe, generally over a wide range of conditions and over a substantial period of time. Eventually the student becomes aware of the distinctions between self and Self, in practice, not merely intellectually. Once the distinctions are realized, it is possible then to encourage the higher (awakened) state (non-ego) and the power (hold) (presence) (impediment) of ego is substantially lessened and eventually transcended.

Section 5.533

Aspects of Egoism 2

- Additional aspects of egoism include fundamental insecurity, facades, reactive projection, and intensity. The ego is necessarily closely related to strength of personality.

† Commentary No. 1276

Fundamental Insecurity

One of the consequences of inherently inertial materialism, living in the world, (falsely) believing that one is living separately if not entirely independently from other lives, is that a person tends to be attached to what is comfortable. A person has beliefs and a perspective on the world, conscious and unconscious values. One then tends to "think" consistently with those beliefs, that perspective, those values. And anything that challenges those beliefs, perspective, values, evokes feelings of discomfort, even if one does not recognize or acknowledge (consciously or otherwise) those feelings. This seems to evoke or engender a fundamental insecurity within the (typical) human being.

The actual underlying source of this is the insecurity inherent in the body or personality. The body is simply a vehicle, used for a period of time and then discarded. The personality likewise. But over the course of many lives (evolution) the body has developed survival instincts. And so has the personality (ego) as an artificial entity. Thus both the body and the personality tend to grasp that which appears to sustain them, to attach to whatever habits and patterns maintain the status quo or comfort level. But underlying and pervading the body and the personality is a higher consciousness. And so, on some, largely unconscious level, the body and the personality "understand" their transience, and simultaneously accept and deny the truth of this.

Consequently there is a natural and simultaneously contradictory insecurity. This insecurity is then naturally reinforced by the world of appearances, as people are born and die there is realization of transience. Yet lower "consciousness" (body and personality) seeks to sustain itself as itself, and attaches to whatever it can to substantiate its existence and endurance. Unfortunately, much of this attachment and reinforcement (self-justification) occurs subconsciously and is relatively difficult to identify and work through, even if one were willing and interested in doing so.

Fundamental insecurity manifests itself in a number of ways, variously according to the individual and his or her conditioning and experience and abilities in consciousness (relative awareness). For many people there is need

for comforting superficial solutions to various fundamental and psychological insecurities. In conventional religion, for example, assurances of life after death if one belongs to the right church or performs the right rituals or has the right birth circumstances. To a very large extent the ego arises as a means of salving the basic insecurities of life in this world. The ego tends to believes what it wants to believe, what it needs to believe in order to sustain itself. And most people are not able to discern the difference between themselves and their egos, and so unconsciously accept the underlying, largely subconscious dictations of ego as their own.

Somehow "accomplishments" in the lower world appear to satisfy the ego to some extent, strengthening the role of ego in its central place in ordinary human consciousness. When in fact the only accomplishments that really matter of accomplishments in consciousness, i.e., improvements in character and temperament and values, that can be assimilated and taken on to the next level or the next life. But eventually even the ego is forced to acknowledge its artificiality, its transience, and gradually the ego begins to support the person to some extent (and its inertial activities become more subtle and to some extent less impeding). As a person truly and effectively embraces the God within, so is there evoked into the waking consciousness genuine security.

† Commentary No. 1306

Facades

A facade is a false, superficial, or artificial appearance or effect. In the context of human nature, facades are driven by ego and reinforced by conditioning and serve to undermine one's ability to recognize and discern what is (relatively) real and what is (relatively) true.

One of the fundamental problems of life in this world is that it is a world of appearances. The world is itself artificial and superficial. Not surprisingly then, virtually everyone lives to a large extent artificially and superficially. The ego is artificial and superficial. The ego is a transient. It seeks to sustain itself, to endure, by whatever means possible, however futile. People who are asleep in the world, who do not realize their true nature or the true nature of the world,

naturally live according to their conditioning, according to the way things seem to be rather than according to the way things really are. Artificially. Superficially. Facades are of course relative. There are basically several different kinds or categories.

There are relatively simple people whose facades are all they really are, in some practical sense, of simply living according to their conditioning, playing whatever roles they need to. Such people are fairly consistent in their facades simply because there is little or no awareness of their condition. In some higher sense they are not what and how they seem to be, yet in some lower sense they really are what and how they seem to be. The vast majority of people in this world fit into this category. It facilitates experience and expression in this world, to a large extent, but eventually becomes a substantive limitation to growth and deepening, to evolution in consciousness. But these simple people are relatively honest in the sense that there is no conscious intent to deceive anyone. Thus while these people are nonetheless living at the ego level, the ego is not substantially a problem in consciousness.

But there are people who are somewhat more dangerous, who identify with some underlying (natural) facade but live actively through additional, variable, somewhat deliberately evoked facades. Such people tend to be rather manipulative of the people around them and their circumstances. They are much less genuine, much less honest, than those who live a more simple life. Such people may be somewhat aware of what they are doing, and justify it to themselves on some semi-conscious level, yet fail to realize that they are undermining their own ability to evolve in consciousness. Affective, pretentious people, who consciously, semi-consciously, or unconsciously embrace facades according to their own perceived needs or intentions, are actually building barriers to communication, barriers to understanding. Thus their efforts are largely counter-evolutionary. And these somewhat more complex people are living at a stronger ego-level and driven more by insecurities and complexities rather than the relatively simple needs of life and experience in this world.

And finally there are people who are somewhat aware of the superficiality of life in this world, who seek to live more genuinely, and who gradually temper the ego and the facades that the ego tends to evoke. These are the (few) genuine truth seekers, not merely those (many) who embrace the facade of truth-seeking.

Genuine people are not merely sincere, but actively seek to overcome their conditioning. They are not perfect in any sense, but they do (more) actively embrace the process of growth in consciousness, by seeking the truth about themselves, by allowing the truth to emerge in consciousness. Without recourse to facades.

† Commentary No. 1408

Reactive Projection

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

One of the more severe types of unconscious projection is that of reactive projection or egoistic projection (projective (evasive) (protective) egoism) in which one unconsciously recognizes one's own limitations, consciously or otherwise denies their existence, and then unconsciously projects them upon others, with or without some discrimination. This projection is virtually never done consciously, although the denial is sometimes accomplished consciously (not that one acknowledges the denial, just that one can consciously deny the truth about one's nature and circumstances). For example, truly arrogant people almost never see themselves as arrogant, but often they see others as arrogant (i.e., they see themselves in others, truthfully or otherwise, and sometimes even project disdain for others without acknowledging their own (similar) limitations).

This form of projection generally occurs where there are deep wounds and the inability of the ego to deal with the truth and import of that wounded-ness. It is simply easier for the ego to remain in denial and project these "limitations" upon others, often reactively. It is inherently a defensive and reactive posture and generally undermines otherwise healthy relationships. It is also delusional and therefore quite complicated psychologically. But it is fundamentally egoistic. It is the ego that is wounded, the ego that cannot face the truth about

itself (its own character or personal nature (let alone its own artificiality)), and the ego which projects itself upon others, seeing these personal weaknesses in others rather than in itself, whether or not they actually exist in others hardly matters (to the ego) as they are perceived to be real.

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

This is a particularly difficult psychology. It is almost impossible to encourage someone to deal with this sort of problem (denial). One can only gently encourage someone to be honest with himself (herself) and hope that eventually he (she) will realize some small part of the truth and that it will grow (e.g., possibly the least threatening approach is to ask someone if he (she) is being honest with himself (herself) (i.e., not suggesting a problem but simply asking). In extreme cases even that will be provocative, especially if the asker is already the victim (recipient) of such projection. But reactive projection is necessarily self-defeating. It tends to greatly complicate one's life and relationships. And it attracts progressively more severe circumstances that force a person ultimately to face the truth.

† Commentary No. 1461

Intensity

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 5.534

Practical Psychology

- Life in the lower worlds presents many challenges to the human being and more so for the spiritual student who is struggling to proceed in consciousness. The manner in which the student embraces problems, change, etc., usually determines the extent of success. There are many practical considerations.

† Article No. 55

Problems

One of the major preoccupations of life on the physical plane involves dealing with problems. From the personality perspective anything that presents an obstacle to the achievement of what the personality desires is a problem. Some problems are merely minor inconveniences, while others are of a magnitude that impacts the entire lifetime or one's opportunity to even remain incarnate. From the higher perspective, all problems are essentially the disguised mechanism of opportunity for the evolution of consciousness. They are the karmic instruments of learning (whether that learning occurs consciously or unconsciously).

Most people desire to be problem-free, happy, healthy, materially comfortable, etc. They therefore seek to avoid problems, resent problems, and feel themselves to be somehow victimized by other people or God or "bad luck" when they view their lives as "burdened with problems." The pursuit of happiness is their objective. The spiritual student, however realizes that the objective of physical plane experience is not the achievement of happiness, which is but a transient emotional condition, but learning and growth in consciousness. The spiritual student therefore holds a very different attitude toward problems.

Most of humanity earnestly desire to have their problems removed so that they may be happy and comfortable. That end point (happiness) is viewed (by most) as being all-important. The spiritual student, however, realizes that the learning, which is the purpose of physical existence, occurs as a result of the process of working through problems. If it were possible to have one's problems instantly removed through divine or human intervention of some sort, what would be achieved? From the standpoint of evolution, nothing. From the standpoint of the personality, there would be a brief emotional contentment, but the lesson would remain unlearned, and according to karmic necessity, it would have to be dealt with either later in this lifetime or subsequently, in a future lifetime. Problems can be resolved, but only as the lessons they present are learned. In this sense, it is the process of resolution (learning) that is far more significant than the attainment of a problem-less state.

Therefore, the spiritual student has great respect, not resentment or disdain, for the problems that come before him or her. As he or she works through the process of dealing with problems, openness to the valuable lessons of each problem is maintained. He or she endeavors to approach each as a challenge calling forth the creative problem-solving ability (resolution through understanding) of the higher self.

It is also important for the spiritual student to view all problems from the perspective of a detached onlooker, refusing to become emotionally entangled. Emotional entanglement is the "normal" reaction to problems, and it often becomes a more significant problem to deal with than the original problem. An emotionally entangled personality is unresponsive to the guidance or energy from the higher self. This can be clearly observed in the case of physical health problems where an individual's emotional response to the situation can play a tremendous role in either facilitating or inhibiting healing processes. The emotional elemental naturally thrives on the stimulation of problems, reveling in worry, anger, fear, etc. But keeping the emotions stimulated prevents the effective learning that leads to the ultimate resolution of the problem. The extreme case of emotional entanglement can lead to suicide. Suicide essentially results when the emotional nature of the personality is completely unresponsive to the will of the soul, and acts independently in denying the soul the intended opportunity of that incarnation.

Problems all have an evolutionary purpose for those afflicted. The purpose (lesson) of some problems is obvious and karmically easily traced to improper action or thought in the current incarnation. The purpose of other problems is often not as obvious to the conscious mind. Karma can be of an individual or group nature, such that some problems are not specifically generated in response to the individual karma, but rather by the karma of the group (racial, national, historical, etc.) of which he or she is a part. Causes may also lie several lifetimes in the past with the effects manifesting in the current lifetime as a problem. Thus, when the spiritual student makes conscious attempts to understand the source (cause) of a problem, he or she is often limited by the inability of the concrete mind to know the individual and group history and evolutionary need.

Wherever possible, the spiritual student should endeavor to develop a conscious understanding of the cause of his or her problems (being very careful not to simply become self-deceived or arrogant in thinking that there is complete understanding where only a partial understanding may exist). In cases where one cannot honestly discern a cause, one should proceed in what appears to be the most appropriate manner, maintaining a positive, detached attitude, and trusting that learning on subconscious levels is taking place.

Sometimes karma appears to be cruel and great pain or suffering accompany it. If the spiritual student can maintain a perspective of calm detachment and surety that effects (pain, suffering, etc.) are purposeful opportunities when seen from the higher perspective and integrated over the course of evolution, he or she will have learned much about the maya, glamour, and illusion which cloud the physical, emotional, and mental existence. Confidence must also be maintained in the "justice" inherent in the fabric of the universe that works through karma, treating all equally (from the greater perspective) and according to evolutionary need. Although it may be difficult to appreciate, suffering is a powerful mechanism for the growth of humanity.

Being impersonal and detached in dealing with one's own problems and those of others does not imply cold indifference. Humanity in the group and individual sense suffers greatly. The spiritual student may be acutely aware of that suffering and be deeply compassionate, but he does not become emotionally entangled and does not therefore compound the suffering by adding to the negative emotionally energized thought-forms that retard humanity's progress. The spiritual student may choose to work in an objective manner to aid the afflicted, but his help is often more valuable when rendered subjectively via the evocation and distribution of light energy through service-oriented meditation. Through such meditation light and healing energy are evoked for all within humanity who are responsive to that encouragement, not for specific individuals with specific problems.

Until the spiritual student has developed the intuition to the extent to which he or she can reliably discern the karma of others, it is advisable to be very careful in attempting to offer individual assistance with problems. Many sincerely motivated "spiritual healers," for example, have various abilities to work with the etheric body (and thereby produce effects in the physical body), but very few

have any understanding of the karmic relationships involved. To produce a "healing" without karmic understanding would, from a higher perspective, simply serve to delay the eventual resolution of the karma (which would return later in the form of another problem). Those very few spiritual students who can discern karmic relationships can work true "miracles," but the "miracle" is really only the culmination of the learning process (in which case the "healer" is merely a facilitator). If the lesson has been learned, there is no longer a need for the problem to exist, and it can be resolved rapidly. "Miracles" only occur naturally, and when they are consistent with the individual's karma.

Seeking divine intervention, miracles, healing, or other forms of aid from friends, groups, or counselors is essentially looking to external sources for solutions to problems. These external sources can be helpful by sometimes offering encouragement or giving indications (hints) as to appropriate responses to the problem's challenge, but the actual "work" of understanding and resolving the karma associated with the problem must be accomplished by the afflicted individual. No one can (although many try) lead another's life or solve another's problems for them.

Seeking external aid is reasonable in many cases, but the spiritual student should increasingly come to rely upon the soul, the Christ-within for guidance. He or she should not pray or will that problems go away, but rather that an increasing light of understanding illumine the way and reveal the lesson that is the hidden gift of each problem.

† Article No. 56

Change

The old saying, "Nothing ever stays the same," is more significant than is generally realized. Externally, everything in the manifested universe is in motion, from atoms to galaxies, with the constant movement bringing continuous outer change. Ultimately all that is manifested in the world of form will at some point naturally disappear, as the manifested becomes the unmanifested, only to later reappear in a changed form. On the higher, more subtle, inner planes of consciousness, there is change also, as consciousness is slowly evolving and developing higher quality through new awareness evoked from experience in the world of form.

Change is essential to evolution, although much change occurs so slowly and gradually that it is not readily noticed (appearance being deceiving). For all life, there are cycles within cycles of progressive growth and evolution (of form and consciousness) spread over vast timeframes that are difficult for humanity to perceive and even to conceive. Yet these cycles exist nonetheless, with associated forces moving the various lifewaves and composite lives along in the evolutionary flow. Only the Absolute God, the One, is unchangeable and immutable.

Overall, there are two types of external change, that which is relatively superficial and insignificant, and that which is relatively meaningful as it concerns the group or individual and its evolutionary progress. For humanity, the more significant outer changes can serve as awakeners from the sleep-like absorption of the mundane world and personality life to instead becoming aware of higher, more spiritual concepts and purposes. To those who are responsive, outer changes can provide an opportunity to achieve a measure of freedom from the usual patterns and habits of mundane life, to attain new awareness and growth. Thus outer physical changes can be a catalyst for inner changes of consciousness.

Inner changes which relate to one's quality of consciousness are the true significant changes. The purpose of experience and expression on the lower planes of consciousness is to advance the evolution of consciousness. This is

achieved by learning from experience and assimilating the lessons, understanding, and wisdom gained from activity on the lower planes. Assimilation of experience for most people is gradual and processed much later than the experience itself, between incarnations. Individuals with more awareness seek to consciously learn from experience in a more timely manner, while still in incarnation. This results in more substantial growth in consciousness.

External circumstances and experiences are the primary focus of most people, with their concept of change relating most directly to outer conditions: family, job, health, residence, social life, physical appearance, possessions, etc. However, external conditions are relatively unimportant in comparison with consciousness. Outer conditions merely afford the physical stage for learning, unfolding new scenes for the actors to experience and test their skills at enlightened living, thereby eventually increasing awareness and consciousness.

Any progressive outer change that occurs in the world of form and is lasting comes only as a result of an inner change of consciousness. There must be inner growth and realization to sustain outer progress, not merely superficial and temporary manipulation of form.

An outer change, however, can be the stimulus for a reflective inner evaluation of one's life. It can be initiated by the soul to spur the personality to take a fresh look at its pattern of living, and prompt new insights that result in modification of perspectives and habits. A change can involve giving up the old, the known, the comfortable and seemingly tried and true. In its place is the unknown, the new, the untested and unproven, and often uncomfortable (to the personality). Change can offer opportunities, challenges, and tests.

Part of the difficulty of change is the reaction of the personality which either desires change and seeks it according to the personality's own terms, or fears change and seeks to avoid it. The typical personality (ego, mind) has many attachments which it does not want to relinquish, and it has its own agenda, independent of the soul: plans, dreams, schemes, hopes, and desires. Of detachment and desirelessness, the average person knows little.

There are some people who seek change and variety constantly for the sheer excitement (glamour) of it (to the personality), and out of boredom. But wherever they go, whatever the change, the people take themselves with them, with the same old limiting thoughts, feelings, and desires. The changes may be variations on a theme, as the outer circumstances change, but in reality it is the same old situation or issue just clothed or packaged a little differently. All of which means the individual still has the same basic lesson to learn that keeps recreating itself until it is mastered.

At the other extreme are people who are threatened and resistant to any change, preferring to hold onto only what is familiar, comfortable, and enjoyed, desiring to keep things exactly the way they are. They feel it takes less effort to cling to the known than to experience something new, and because of that attitude, they may be missing or postponing needed new learning opportunities (until they are compelled to do so). Besides, it is useless to try to prevent things from changing, to keep the world, or people, or places, or relationships exactly the same. It is against the forces of evolution, for from the long perspective, nothing in the world of form is static or permanent; it is all subject to modification and growth. Even truth itself evolves as higher more complete truths are revealed, as the student evolves and is better able to comprehend.

For the spiritual student, neither approach to change is appropriate. The serious student endeavors to be detached, desireless, and impersonal, committed to service in whatever form, place, manner, or timeframe his or her soul may guide. The spiritual student neither aggressively seeks change nor avoids change, for through desirelessness, humility, and meditative insight, it becomes apparent what path is appropriate, (relatively) uncolored by the student's own thoughts, feelings, and desires. Thus the student is freer to intelligently respond to the higher energy flow and work with it, rather than endeavoring to arrogantly manipulate it or block it.

The energy flow is qualified by karma, taking into consideration all the many inputs and associated factors. It enfolds all lives from the lesser (less evolved) to the greater, qualifying all manifested life in accordance with evolutionary purpose. All of the outer conditions of life are produced by the energy flow and contained within it.

With humility, the spiritual student opens to the energy flow, endeavoring to accurately perceive it and intelligently and cooperatively work with it, finding the proper balance between blind passivity and active resistance to its direction. If what is intuitively perceived is also what the personality desires, then the spiritual student may be quite vulnerable to misinterpretation, especially if the student has a strong mind. For the mind can masquerade as the soul directing what the mind (ego) desires, and as long as there is personal energy involved, it is difficult to discern what is real. Therefore detachment, impersonality, and humility are beneficial to proper discernment.

While the energy flow may cause changes, the energy flow itself may be changed and appropriately modified depending on the response (reaction, resistance, arrogant manipulation, insightful understanding and cooperation) of those involved, as the responses become part of the causes of future effects. The timeframe and manner in which the energy flow occurs cannot be forcibly manipulated by the personality, for events unfold as they are intended, taking into consideration all karmic and evolutionary factors. A student's strong expectations (demands) may become blocks to the unfoldment of events until the student achieves the humble, detached state, and releases them.

As the spiritual student, intent on service, looks out into the external world, he or she may perceive a sorry scene, and the student's heart may be filled with compassion for those who suffer. It is natural to want to change conditions, but the student should approach the problem from the plane of causes and not just effects. Suffering exists because of the state of consciousness where selfishness, separateness, and ignorance hold sway. Hunger, homelessness, disease, war, persecution, poverty, and prejudice are some of the results. To treat the form (effect) without also addressing the cause is futile.

Outer conditions, however harsh they seem, are a result of the law of cause and effect (karma). To seek to change external conditions, some consideration of the karmic factors is called for. Insights also are needed into what humanity can learn from the situation it helped create, what adjustments in consciousness need to be achieved, as well as what outer changes are required to be implemented. With this understanding, true inner changes in human consciousness can appropriately be encouraged and will gradually occur (usually taking longer than the student hopefully imagines, as genuine evolution of

consciousness for humanity is a long process), with a resultant reflection externally that will be appropriate to the situation. Any outer changes that result may not necessarily be (and frequently are not) what an individual first desired, given the limitations of one's perspective, but rather the changes will be the appropriate effect of the causative factors modified by the new growth in inner consciousness.

As a student perceives the restorative energies within the overall energy flow, the student can align his or her efforts with the natural progressive flow. Working physically in humanitarian efforts to bring about progressive change is beneficial, but for the spiritual student, working subjectively and meditatively (aligned in a higher group effort if possible) is much more effective. And it is more helpful to focus on a general overall qualification of uplifting spiritual energy for humanity rather than on changing the specifics of form and external conditions.

For most people in incarnation, life is full of possible outer changes, birth, beginning school, graduation, new job, marriage, having children, empty nests, divorce, job promotions, no jobs, raises, pay cuts, relocations, new town, new country, new friends, no friends, new homes, no homes, good health, bad health, accidents, healings, successes, failures, war, peace, happiness, sadness, ignorance, knowledge, growing old, and ultimately death, to contrast just a few. Through it all, the spiritual student should maintain poise and detachment, facing with equanimity whatever comes his or her way, seeking to learn from it and intelligently responding to the circumstances.

With heart and mind focused on spiritual service and enlightenment, little can detour the student from higher goals. It is not that important whether a spiritual student has much or little outer change in life, whether there is great variety of experience or simplicity of outer life. Whatever is required from the energy flow will naturally come forward. What is important is that the student is learning from outer experiences in the world of form, and endeavoring to meditatively know the inner world of reality, which will result in inner changes (growth in consciousness), the only kind of change that really counts.

† Article No. 57

Speech

Speech, composed of articulate sounds and words to symbolize and communicate meaning, is potentially a great creative force. The creative power of speech enables the effective speaker, working through the throat center or chakra, to help bring into manifestation that which is spoken (assuming it is in accordance with the bounds of karma). This creative potential has growing significance for spiritual students involved in spiritual development, refinement, and service.

The masses of humanity, however, have little awareness or understanding of the higher significance of speech, which is demonstrated by the manner in which they express themselves through the medium of speech. In many segments of society, the degenerative quality of speech degrades the speaker and listener alike. In some environments, coarse, vile, and degrading names, words, and remarks are repeatedly spoken, perhaps initially for shock value which after a while no longer shock, but become routine. This demeaning speech is reflected to an extent in the public at large; e.g., in the media, inappropriate words (with corresponding thoughts and feelings) are routinely expressed in movie dialogues and in song lyrics, as well as in casual conversation. Sometimes violent, cruel, and despicable thoughts and acts are repeatedly encouraged in degenerative utterances. All such speech brings with it a low quality of negative energy and an overall qualification that degrades and pollutes the local environment, undermines spiritual awareness, and contributes to the debasing of the planetary mental and emotional aura.

Much coarse speech is spoken in the name of sophistication, or of rebellion, without awareness or consideration of the effects and consequences. The effects of such speech are especially strong on young people and those who are easily influenced. When coupled with strong visual pictures, the impact is magnified.

Speech can be a powerful tool of public influence, as any leader realizes who has used it to mobilize the (unthinking) masses to rally to his or her purposes through a rousing public address. The magnetic quality expressing through the

speech and throat center of a public speaker can be used for selfish purposes or higher purpose, depending on the spiritual quality, consciousness, and motive of the speaker. A more selfish or personality-oriented speaker expresses through a more hypnotic magnetic quality that appeals to the emotions of the audience and less along the line of encouraging intelligent consideration of ideas. An effective spiritually oriented speaker expresses a higher type of magnetism that appeals more to the higher minds of the audience.

In the mundane world, there exists a constant commotion of chatter and idle talk. The mindless babbling undermines an individual's self-restraint and proper consideration and evaluation of what he (she) is about to say before he (she) says it. The person talks without really thinking. Even when an individual does have something meaningful and appropriate to say, one's constant talking diminishes the potency and dilutes the impact of what one says. Because society encourages constant chatter, when a person is quiet, the individual is likely to be asked what is wrong, or there is an assumption of shyness.

Gossip consumes much of the talk of an increasingly intrusive public, ranging from gossip about an individual's own immediate circle of acquaintances, to the many celebrities in the public eye. In this type of conversation, the focus is ever on the personality and outer material life. Discussions of ideas and concepts are much less appealing to the emotionally polarized public.

Even with all the many words sounded daily, speech can convey a meaning beyond the words used. In higher speech, by attuning to the energy behind the words, sometimes more subtle meaning may be revealed to those who really listen. Esoterically, words may have layers of meaning and through intuitive awareness, a properly qualified spiritual student may perceive the higher meaning.

Even in an exoteric sense, more is communicated through speech than just the words themselves; e.g., the tone of voice expressed can indicate sincerity and gentleness, or harshness and sarcasm. Sarcasm can undermine and turn words into swords. It is wielded considerably in the name of humor, but depending on motive, sarcasm can communicate mocking, or ridicule and contempt, rather than conveying some form of encouraging energy. The energy behind the words

is often negative and destructive to some degree rather than positive and uplifting.

Criticism conveyed in speech is usually destructive rather than helpful. Criticism is often stated purportedly to assist an individual, but it is rare that the motive is pure and harmless. At times honest evaluations must be given, and with higher intent, this can be done in a beneficial manner, as one looks for the good as well as what is lacking. The tone of voice and loudness of a speaker may also convey negative qualities such as impatience, irritation, anger, excitement, or depression, all of which can indicate loss of emotional and mental control on the part of the speaker. Conversely, there is much truth to the saying, "A soft voice turns away wrath." A calm, gentle voice can help heal, inspire, and encourage.

Speaking the truth is worthwhile for all persons. However, many people regularly lie and see nothing wrong in it. For the general public, that inevitably (eventually) brings its own consequences. For spiritual students, it is more serious; the consequences are greater, and it also undermines efforts to recognize the truth. If one does not respect the truth and endeavor to be truthful, one develops little facility for realization of truth.

Therefore one should be truthful in all things, small or large. A person should say what one means and mean what one says. One should be accurate in speech, and not be careless with facts and details. An individual should be sincere and avoid being two-faced. It is far better to say nothing than to knowingly mislead or misstate what is true.

For speech can at times trigger powerful effects. In fact, what a person says (thinks, believes) can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (depending upon the potency involved). Even something said in kidding can (will) be taken literally by the speaker's own subconscious mind as it endeavors to some degree to bring what is said into outer manifestation. The speaker may not mean it, but the subconscious mind thinks that he or she does.

Indeed there is much thoughtless speech in the public at large. But for the serious spiritual student, the continual goal is "right speech." "Right speech," as one of the qualities of the Noble Eightfold Path, means self-control in speech

so that it is true, gentle, kind, necessary, useful, and constructive. A spiritual student must refrain from idle talk and gossip and thus help avoid absorption in the mundane world. "Right speech" assists in the proper discipline and refinement of the emotional and mental bodies of the spiritual student.

"Right speech" is also closely related to "right belief," "right thought," and "right action," all significant aspects of right spiritual living.

As the spiritual student grows, he (she) develops the throat chakra, the etheric force center that is related to speech. The throat center transforms thought energies into speech energies and is involved in their projection. The student begins to learn how to consciously control and utilize the throat chakra and direct its creative power.

One of the aspects of speech is its effectiveness (as an aspect of one's quality of consciousness) as reflected through the coherence and magnitude of the throat center. The magnitude relates to the intensity and potency of the throat center while the coherence relates to the quality and purity of the center. The magnetism and focus of the throat center encourage the degree of response to the speaker. A magnetic rapport is needed with an audience, and the throat center must be properly focused to insure that the energies will not be scattered. With a well-developed throat center, there will be a natural flowing of thought energies and their transformation into projected speech which will have a creative impact on its environment.

It is important to know how to speak effectively, but it is just as important to know when to speak, and when not to speak. With discretion comes wisdom. In silence, there can be enlightenment. In quietude, one silences the outer voice that the inner voice of the soul may speak, the Voice of the Silence. This is quite difficult for the average spiritual aspirant to do, so great is the programming of outer mundane life for constant speech. Thus many of the mystery schools of ages past had a rule that all beginners were not allowed to speak for two years after entering the school. Following the two years, they hopefully had learned sufficient reticence of speech.

While it may be unrealistic to think that spiritual students of today living in the outer world should refrain from speaking for two years, students nonetheless

should endeavor to develop reticence and to speak less and think more. Although speech is currently a primary means of communication on the physical plane, telepathy and intuitive perception are other more direct, less cumbersome means of communication and will eventually play an increasing role.

Speech is a creative magical force which can cause thoughts to become materialized. The white magicians of the spiritual hierarchy have knowledge and understanding of the force of speech and of silence. There is a segment of magical work which employs mantras, formulas, and words of power which call into action the creative forces of nature and achieve magical effects. The work is closely protected to help insure as much as possible that only those who are spiritually evolved and properly qualified have access to such knowledge. The white magician works for the benefit of the whole and the greater good in accordance with higher purpose. The black magician works for selfish purposes of his own lower nature.

On macrocosmic levels, the process of creation is carried on through speech, sound, and by use of the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." And so it was that according to the Old Testament (and other scriptures and sacred books), the worlds were created by the Word (sound, speech) of God.

Thus spiritual students should have an increasing respect for the great power of speech and guard well its use. As man the microcosm grows and evolves, moving from unevolved, unthinking man to intelligent man, and eventually to an aspirant and disciple on the spiritual path, so his relative potency grows. The quality and appropriateness of his words and manner of speech become increasingly more significant as he increases his ability to impact the environment through speech. Though initially untrained and unaware of the specific thought-forms he creates and vitalizes through speech, the student should be aware in a general sense that this process is on-going, and that he has the potential for doing more harm (as well as good) than average man.

Therefore he should carefully discipline his thoughts and his speech. He should refrain from ordinary patterns of talking, regulate his speech, and develop reticence. When he does speak, it should be "right speech" which is honest, constructive, and helpful. Through these and other disciplines, the serious

spiritual student will begin to qualify himself eventually for training and knowledge about aspects of the higher creative magic of speech, which someday will be employed by the student in spiritual service.

The typical coarse speech, continual chatter, and degrading utterances within mundane life are far removed from the higher, spiritualized use of speech. How great is humanity's lack of awareness and understanding as it slowly moves toward evolutionary progress. And yet the higher creative power of speech cannot be lost or undermined. Encouragingly, the outer sounds of ignorance, no matter how coarse or loud the volume, cannot drown out the inner sound of the Voice of the Silence, and cannot still its resulting enlightenment.

† Article No. 67

Reactive Association

Two of the problems of life in the lower worlds are the tendency of the human being toward reactivity and the tendency of the human being to attempt to impose his or her values on others. These are natural products of fear, ignorance, intemperance, materialism, and separativeness, all of which must eventually be overcome. Reactive association is a particular form of reactiveness or reactivity, making a particular association of some personal and/or negative significance, failing to accept or deal with that association, and/or attempting to impose that negative or reactive association on others.

The problem of reactive association has a number of elements or aspects, some or all of which may be present. These include (1) evading the offending issue, (2) being offended or taking offense, per se, (3) stereotyping on the basis of generalization induced by reactive association, (4) imposing or attempting to impose one's reactive associations or values on others, and (5) implied bigotry in presuming guilt by association, e.g., those who react to presumed racism are often themselves (reactively) racist and prejudiced in their reactivity, usually without conscious appreciation of their own hypocrisy.

The problem of reactive association is compounded by lack of appreciation for cause and effect relationships. Even when confronting a real issue, e.g., racism, one should appreciate that racist attitudes and behavior are not ever warranted, but that through ignorance, selfishness, and materialism, these attitudes and behaviors have been more or less naturally evoked. The important thing is to deal with the real issue, rising above it, remaining poised, emotionally and mentally, refusing to be bothered or disturbed by it, all the while working, by example, to discourage racism and encourage non-sexist brotherhood. There is an implied karmic factor, as conditions (actions and attitudes "received") evoked are the consequences of actions and attitudes demonstrated, and are therefore merited. The actions may not be justified, but the consequences are nonetheless merited. But within that karmic factor is the opportunity for learning and growth in consciousness. How we respond rather than react to a situation of apparent injustice makes a difference in consciousness.

Reactive association begins with some form of aversion or unpleasantness and is compounded when that aversion is focused on some reactively associated object or symbolic representation. For example, if one encounters, badly, a particularly evil, hateful, and/or violent person who happens to like the color green, one might then allow oneself to feel badly every time one encounters the color green, thereby associating green with evil, or at least this particular personification of evil, when in fact green is just a color with no such inherent association. But in feeling averse to evil (or some particular person), wrongly associating the color green with evil, one might then attempt to legislate against the color green (instead of working to overcome the ignorance implied in hatefulness, etc.), thereby imposing one's reactive association upon others and denying others the (otherwise) innocent use of the color green. This also implies that one is evading (or attempting to evade) the actual significant issues (evil, hatefulness, aversion) by focusing on some symbolic representation instead.

Humanly, one may not want to be reminded of evil, but there is no righteousness in imposing that will upon others. Yet where reactive association becomes widespread among a group of people (through psychological contagion), there are often attempts to eradicate the symbol from common practice. Success (?) in eradicating symbols or imposing one's reactive association does not in any way imply success in dealing with or overcoming the real issue(s). Yet fear and evasion are common in human psychology.

Thus green may be an uplifting symbol for some and a discouraging reactive association for others, when in fact, green is simply green, and associations are simply one's own. Now instead of reacting badly to the color green (in this hypothetical example), one might turn the association around. Instead of associating the color green with evil, one might consciously and deliberately associate green with tempering one's aversion and encouraging others to overcome ignorance (evil). In this way, one is more consciously (and intelligently) dealing with the real issue, not pretending (unconsciously, by aversion) that something never happened in the first place, and not being fearful of every reminder that there is (apparent) evil (lack of perfection) (ignorance) in the world.

Actual examples of reactive association that have become relatively widespread are the swastika, the Confederate States of America battle flag, so-called sexist

language, and other forms of presumed cultural, racial, and/or sexist bigotry. Proper understanding of these associations is a matter of discerning the truth of things, recognizing that there is a basis for the reactive association, but also recognizing that the "symbols" or forms themselves are not inherently negative. Symbols are merely symbols. There is no inherent power in a symbol. The power lies in the association of some particular energy (force) (knowledge) with some particular symbol.

Most association is either ignorantly and unconsciously accepted (e.g., associating oneself with the physical body, its emotions, and/or the mind) or contrived in some way, either constructively (e.g., based on conscious representation of knowledge) or destructively (e.g., based on unconscious reactive association). In the following, there is no implied attempt to justify the utilization of any particular symbol, nor any implied attempt to ignore or dispute any of the underlying basis for reactive association. But there is implied a sense of propriety that is lost in reactive association.

The swastika, for example, is an ancient religious symbol having no inherent Nazi or fascist significance. It is whatever it means to anyone who views it. That Adolph Hitler should have used the swastika, reversing its field, in no way changes its inherent, historical and intended meaning, except in the minds of those who reactively associate the swastika with Hitler and his crimes against humanity. Those crimes were real. But the swastika is not to blame. It is simply a symbol, wrongly appropriated, and subsequently wrongly condemned. Many of those who suffered Hitlerian crimes, or who are descended from those who suffered, or who are particularly sympathetic to those who suffered, engage in reactive association in condemning or seeking to ban the swastika. One should rather condemn and ban, if even condemning and banning is acceptable, the offensive attitudes and behavior. In attacking the symbol, those who reactively associate are refusing to deal effectively (psychologically) and honestly with the real issue, crimes against humanity, instead responding to bigotry with bigotry.

Furthermore, those who are offended by the symbol and seek its removal are thereby attempting to impose their views, ever unreasonably, through reactive associations and judgments, on others, which is itself a crime. While some groups may still wrongly appropriate the symbol or flag, it need not have the

negative association. It would seem far better for one to use the swastika as a reminder of the courage of the human spirit to rise above such adversity, in reformation of human nature, in human progress. Let us not need to repeat the lessons of history, but be reminded of how fragile human nature is, how easily people can be manipulated by charismatic and self-centered leaders, how easily people can be flattered, believing what they want to believe, and let the symbol remind us to be strong in the face of such adversity. It is "wrong" to be offended, even by that which seems to be unjust and/or unreasonable, for "taking offense" places a person in the reactive domain.

The Confederate battle flag is another example of reactive association. The flag itself and its symbolic content are inherently merely decorative. To some the flag represents an innocent historical context, to others it represents racial discrimination, enslavement, imposition, lack of demonstrated equality, and/or lack of respect. Some who display the flag are no doubt racist. But displaying the flag does not necessarily mean a person is racist. It may mean something else entirely to such a person. One should not presume, nor should one judge, on the basis of appearances. One should, if one will, deal with racism, not with reactively and wrongly associated symbols.

Merely focusing on the symbol actually evades for the time being the real issue. Some people are particularly sensitive, with reactive associations. But that does not convey the right to impose one's sensitivities on others, nor should one be insensitive to those who are so concerned, but one can be sensitive without being imposed upon. Imposition is "more" wrong. Association has both natural and artificial or arbitrary factors. The Confederate flag could, for example, instead or representing slavery, very well be used as an effective symbol of progress in racial relations, symbolizing the considerable progress made over the years to overcome racial prejudice and conditioning. Instead of seeking to avoid or evade the truth, one may more effectively confront the truth, constructively.

This does not imply that symbols cannot be powerful tools in human psychology, either in constructive humanitarian endeavors or in destructive and separative endeavors. It simply implies that symbols are symbols. That associations are one's own and even if widely embraced should not be imposed on others. Or in other words, judge, if you will, on the basis of real attitudes and behavior, not on the basis of symbols embraced or mere appearances. Of

course the spiritual student does not judge his or her fellows or associated symbols, but simply accepts them and their attitudes and behaviors, encouraging that which facilitates human progress in evolution of consciousness, discouraging, mainly by example, that which inhibits same.

Some cases of reactive association lead to a form of cultural bureaucracy and pettiness. An example is so-called sexist language. There are those who are sexist and think as men and women separatively rather than as human beings. And there are those who think and feel and act as human beings, without being sexist, yet use such terms as "man" and "mankind" to represent the generic human being and humanity, respectively. Many historical and contemporary female authors use these generic terms, without any hint of sexism. There is nothing inherently wrong with these terms, yet through reactive association, and through male and female separativeness, there is a great deal of concern these days with this so-called sexist language, with attempts made to obliterate the "offending" language. Which is, actually, more a matter of evasion of the real issue, which is being human instead of being male or female. I.e., those who react to this language are those who tend to identify, reactively and separatively, with being female or male rather than with being human. Consciously or unconsciously, presumptively, "reading into" language something that may or not actually be there seems imprudent.

It is wrong to presume sexism by virtue of potentially innocent language. Instead of reacting to the language, one should listen to or read what is actually being said or written and focus more properly on, and discern, the actual or intended message and its context. In some cases even the historical record has been edited. It seems wholly unwarranted to edit the historical language, to make it seem that people have said certain things that they did not actually say, just to accommodate sexist sensitivities. Yes, those who are sensitive to "sexist" language are themselves demonstrating sexism. Instead of dealing with the pettiness of distinctions in language, thereby evading the real issue, let us rather ensure that we are teaching non-sexism.

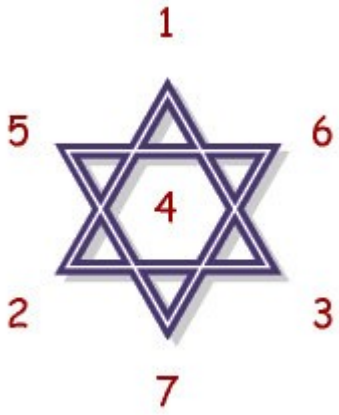
That teaching needs to be deliberate and conscientious, and consistent with one's behavior and attitudes. Much of reactive association is unconsciously based on inherent laziness. It is easier to attack the symbol than to deal intelligently with the underlying and substantive issue.

The question that comes to mind is "Is any of this important?" Relatively speaking, crimes against humanity, ethnic purging, racism, sexism, etc., are significant and substantial issues in contemporary human consciousness, all of which are "wrong" or counter-evolutionary in some substantive sense, even though all are merited outcomes and consequences of human causes. But focusing on symbols rather than more substantive issues is also "wrong" and a great waste of attention and energy. The attempts to ban symbols or sexist language, etc., seem rather childish. Is so-called sexist language inherently "bad" or is the unconscious sexism that is culturally conditioned what is more truly "bad"? Some might say that sexist language perpetuates sexism, but that is only an excuse and evades the real issue of teaching that sexual discrimination is, in most instances, wrong. And the purging of symbols based on reactive associations is also "wrong" and counter-evolutionary. Attempts to bring about a more just and reasonable culture are noble. But imposition is nonetheless a crime, of varied proportion and significance, however unrecognized it may be in human culture, excepting extremes.

Adjustment of the historical record is equally fallacious. Every instance of spoken or written communication has a historical context. To be offended by an historical statement, taken out of context, because it is inconsistent with contemporary cultural sensitivities and/or trends, and to attempt then to change it, seems foolhardy and inherently dishonest, respectively. The wise do not live in the past nor are they englamoured by trendy cultural endeavors. The wise have a sense of values that allows no distraction by things that are really of little consequence in the longer view of evolution in consciousness.

Let us deal then with the truth of things, and not merely with appearances and symbols. Let us not judge others or presume to know what symbols and appearances mean to others without sufficient and obvious evidence. Let us not be offended by anything, but rather recognize the issues and their relative significance, and deal honestly and properly, psychologically and behaviorally, with the substance of issues. Let us not impose our values and associations upon others, but respect others and allow them to see and decide for themselves what to value or not. Let us be honest and not be attached to beliefs, but proceed with intelligent open-mindedness, which allows truth to be realized

without personal bias, rather than colored by our own emotional and intellectual nature. Instead of being reactive, far better to be intelligently responsive.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