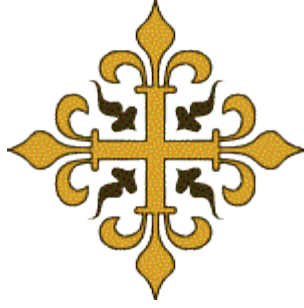


# The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 5.6

Education

Preparation for Learning and Growing



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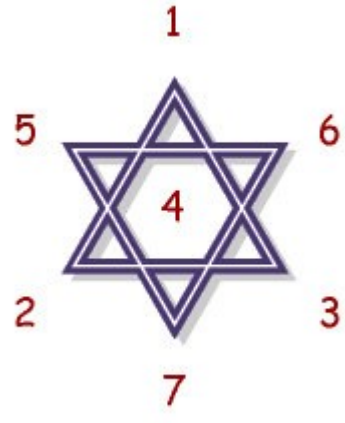
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# Chapter 5.6

## Education



## Preparation for Learning and Growing

- In the deeper sense, education is a second ray endeavor, but in the more conventional and more practical sense, education is a fifth ray endeavor. In this practical sense, there are really only three purposes for incarnation, (1) to learn and grow in consciousness, (2) to restore the balance (fulfill karma), and (3) to serve.
- Education is involved with all three of these. Education is, fundamentally, about preparation (and continuing refinement of preparation) for engaging the world and the experience afforded in the world. To facilitate life-long learning.

## Education

Education is the human context of the fifth ray and is involved in the three purposes of incarnation or experience and expression in the lower worlds, namely (1) evolution, in the fundamental sense of learning and growing in consciousness, (2) equity, in the sense of restoring (more properly maintaining) the balance (i.e., the fulfillment of karma), and (3) service, in the sense of noble expression, expressing oneself in various and meaningful ways in support of the whole (collective consciousness).

Education is defined conventionally as “the field of study that deals mainly with methods of teaching and learning in schools” and the actions and processes of actual teaching and learning. Education in the formal sense involves course work and schools, students and teachers. Education in the broader sense involves all of the experience and expression of life in the objective world and how to assimilate experience such that one grows in consciousness and contributes more effectively to the overall growth in consciousness of the whole. In the formal sense there are students and there are teachers. In the informal sense all people are both students and teachers. In the formal sense education is intended (conventionally) to prepare the student for a life and career in the world, while in the broader (non-conventional or relatively more metaphysical) sense, education is simply intended to expand the student’s capacity for learning and growing and serving.

While conventional education emphasizes knowledge and the development of needed skills, there is also a need for understanding and comprehension as a basis for cultivation of wisdom. While conventional education presumes a world that is superficial (materialistic and egoistic), the world is actually multi-dimensional and much more than merely physical; thus education in the broader sense needs to also embrace cause and effect relationships among the various levels and dimensions. So while conventional education supports the needs of the majority (those who are more or less asleep in materialism and egoism (self-centeredness, personality-centeredness), who simply accept the world at face (superficial) value), the minority (those who are more aware of the underlying

nature of reality and the purpose of life) need to be more deliberate in opening themselves to learning on more levels and in a broader sense.

Conventional education more or less satisfies the needs of most people, in preparing them for conventional (worldly) lives. And those (conventional) people who are more effective in their (worldly) lives are those who more actively learn from their experiences and adapt to their circumstances. But spiritual students tend to be more focused on understanding than learning knowledge, and increasingly focused on principles (wisdom) than even understanding.

The educational process very much involves karma. The student's capacity for learning (and the student's relative intelligence) is a consequence of karma (previous experience) (quality of consciousness). But the experience of life is inherently karmic, as the student attracts the lessons and opportunities (for karmic fulfillment) that the student needs. The student's attitude toward learning, the student's genuineness, the student's openness, all make a big difference. The student needs to be open to assimilation of experience in order to more effectively grow (learn), to more effectively maintain the balance, and to more effectively serve humanity (the common cause). Which ultimately means transcending materialism and egoism (separateness and separativeness), which tend to serve as barriers.

† Commentary No. 1259

## Education and Intelligence

In conventional thinking there would seem to be a relatively high correlation between higher education and intelligence. If a person is highly educated, then that person is (sometimes wrongly) presumed to be relatively intelligent, and if a person is not so highly educated, then that person is (sometimes wrongly) presumed to be not so relatively intelligent. But in fact there is no real (absolute) correlation between (formal) education and actual intelligence. Some intelligence is required in order for one to succeed in higher education, but lack of formal education does not imply a lack of intelligence. While most well-educated people are nominally (relatively) intelligent, and while some highly educated people are very intelligent, some poorly educated people are also very intelligent.



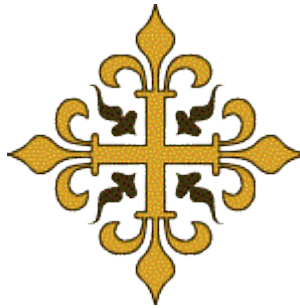
The problem, in part, is in the conventional understanding of intelligence. Intelligence is defined conventionally in academic terms, in terms of reasoning abilities, in terms of knowledge and the ability to apply knowledge in conventional ways, with a strong presumption that formal education and knowledge are important ingredients. But while formal education has considerable (potential) relative value and provides credentials and opportunities that might not otherwise be realized, real intelligence is not so much a matter of knowledge or training, or even of understanding and comprehension, as it is a matter of awareness and perception and wisdom, i.e., quality of consciousness and the capacity for learning and applying that understanding wisely. Thus a relatively uneducated person may sense things that a highly educated (and more nominally intelligent) person might not perceive or understand.

In a sense, formal education provides tools, much like the intellect and its training are tools, but in many ways education also limits the perceptive process, through conditioning and the introduction of presumptions and biases. Since intelligence is really the capacity for learning, many intelligent people are largely self-educated. And truly intelligent people continue to learn substantially throughout the lifetime and well beyond the boundaries of their formal education. And the very truly intelligent people simply very effectively apply whatever understanding and wisdom is realized. The key is to learn without being encumbered by knowledge. To think of knowledge as relative rather than absolute. To see things in a broader, deeper context than most formal educational institutions can provide.

Another dimension of intelligence is conscience and discretion (intuitive insight). A self-absorbed person is simply limited by personal focus, and unable to perceive things (very) clearly, being largely unable to discern the more subtle (and more meaningful) aspects of truth and reality. A person of conscience, i.e., who senses the inner wisdom and lives in accord with it, tends to be relatively more insightful and therefore relatively more effective in dealing with the challenges of life in the lower worlds.

And of course the final factor in intelligently embracing experience and expression is the (lack of) ego. The ego is substantially preclusive. It tends to

filter out what is inconsistent with its own interests. The truly wise person does not allow the ego or intellect to be (so) preclusive. The truly wise person transcends the limitations of ego and intellect and allows the conscience (higher consciousness) (intuition and insight) to manifest naturally. In the final analysis, it is not education and training and knowledge that matters, though these all have some value. What really matters is awareness and perception and conscience.



## Factors in Education

There are a number of factors and sub-factors that determine the efficacy of education. First and foremost are the student and the nature of the student. Second, the home and community environment in which the student lives. Third, teachers and how effectively they perform their duties. And last but not least, the academic environment, including school administrators and the manner and character of administration. All of these factors are important.

- The Student and the Nature of the Student

The student himself (herself) is the central factor. The primary purpose of education is to meet the needs of the student, i.e., to effectively educate the student and prepare him (her) to function effectively in the world, including proper employment and contributing positively to the community, to some extent according to his or her talents and interests. The secondary purpose of education is to educate and guide the student in such a way as to meet the needs of the community. Healthy, effective education does both. Effective education is tailored to both the needs of the particular student and the needs of the particular community.

The role of the student is simply to learn as much as he or she can, given the various educational opportunities, personal interests, talents and abilities, and community needs. There is a core of material (knowledge, understanding) and learning experience that most students need to learn, regardless of interests, talent and abilities, and community needs. And there is additional material and experience that students need that is more unique to their particular needs and interests.

Learning is not so much about knowledge, though knowledge is certainly an ingredient. Understanding is much more important than knowledge, but there needs to be a sufficient knowledge base. Ultimately it is wisdom that matters (accumulated wisdom is what one takes on to the next life).

Thus perhaps the most important accomplishment on the part of the student is learning how to learn, to develop the capacity for learning, for effectively accumulating and assessing knowledge, for effectively assimilating that knowledge into understanding, and effectively assimilating that understanding into wisdom. But much depends on the central factor of the student himself, namely his or her inherent consciousness, intelligence, learning abilities, and receptivity to learning.

A person is born into this world with a certain inherent consciousness and certain inherent abilities, based upon previous experience and assimilation of experience, and tempered by whatever accumulated karma there may be. That karma both limits and affords various abilities and opportunities. So the most basic factor is whatever the student brings into the world. This is not merely a matter of genetics, but mostly a matter of consciousness, where genetic conditioning is simply one of a number of boundary conditions. Regardless of circumstances, some students are simply able to learn more effectively, and others less so. In other cases circumstances are a major factor in the student's potential for learning. A student of relatively good consciousness will have a much better chance of overcoming whatever circumstances there may be. Thus the student's consciousness and concomitant attitude are key.

Closely related sub-factors are the various learning abilities and disabilities a student may have. Some people learn more effectively in certain ways, and less so in other ways. Education that takes this into consideration, for individual students, without compromising the integrity of education for other students, and without leaving a student overly reliant on his or her preferred means of learning, is simply more effective. But care must be taken to cultivate a broadening of a student's abilities to learn. For example, if a student has a natural preference for learning visually, i.e., has less ability to learn aurally or in other ways, then the student needs to learn how to learn aurally and in other ways as well.

The student needs to enjoy learning, or to learn how to enjoy learning, so that learning becomes a lifelong process. The student needs to take education and learning seriously, but without unnecessary pressures or intensity. If this "learning nature" is not already present, then it needs to be encouraged, cultivated, and developed.

- The Home and Community Environment

The next immediate factor, beyond the student himself, is the home and community environment. Parents and their nature, their effectiveness as parents, their effectiveness as role models, their ability to provide a comfortable, healthy, nurturing home environment, is important. Though many can overcome limitations in home and community, many cannot easily do this. "Good" parents encourage their children to learn and grow, to embrace good character and consideration for others, to take education and learning seriously, to respect their peers and teachers alike. "Good" parents create, sustain, and develop a home environment that is conducive to learning and growing. "Good" parents support the formal and informal education process, and while they are themselves "teachers" ... they do not compete directly with teachers or administrators. Parents must also respect and show respect for teachers and formal education, in order to cultivate these qualities in their children.

Beyond the immediate home environment are peers and the community, both of which are potentially influential factors, even more so if the parents themselves are not very effective in their positive influence on their children. Of course these factors are inter-related in the sense that all influence the student, in various degrees depending on the student and circumstances. Some students may be more or less responsive to one or both parents, peers, and/or community influence. "Good" students tend to attract "good" parents, "good" friends or peers, and "good" circumstances or community, or at least "good" learning opportunities. But students who are not inherently responsive to learning opportunities are not "bad" ... they are simply not (yet) "good" students. Thus all of these factors (parents, peers, and community) can potentially make a difference, for good or ill (again, some students can overcome these factors, for good or ill) (which means, for example, that in some cases even "good" parents may have little or no influence). But a positive, healthy influence from parents, a positive, healthy influence from peers, and a positive, healthy influence from community, each and all usually help a great deal.

Realistically, not every community is healthy. If a student is worried mostly about survival issues, or various less-than-healthy peer pressures, he or she is likely not able to focus on learning in any higher sense. Thus not only is the student ultimately responsible for himself, his abilities, receptivity, and

attitude, so are the parents, peers, and community also responsible for whatever influence is afforded. When the student enters the formal learning environment, all of these factors play a conditioning role. They are (all) what the student brings to school, and determine some of the initial conditions that teachers have to then work with (the other initial conditions being teachers themselves and the academic environment).

- **Teachers and their Effectiveness**

The role of the teacher is, of course, to encourage and facilitate learning. In the formal sense, the teacher is responsible for the immediate learning environment, the means and effectiveness of instruction, and the cultivation of understanding on the part of the students.

But the teacher is not infallible, nor is the teacher necessarily an authority in any field of knowledge. He or she is (hopefully) simply well-educated in that field, well-trained in teaching methods, and temperamentally well-suited to the role of teacher. But the teacher is also a student, and needs to learn from the teaching experience, to learn as well from the students, and to evolve in his or her teaching role. The most effective teachers tend to be non-prescriptive and non-imposing, creating an effective learning environment, earning the trust and respect of and rapport with his or her students.

In modern society, education and the teacher are generally considered to be important, but the “rewards” and status afforded most teachers is not commensurate with the value professed. In an enlightened society, the best people in each field become the leaders and teachers in that field, without consideration for rewards or status. But in our society, some teachers are both noble-and-well-qualified and others are not.

Most teachers are conditioned by current educational philosophy and psychology, which may or may not be healthy. Though most teachers are properly motivated and care about teaching, care about students, and how effective they are as teachers, some may not be well-qualified as teachers, and many are not well-qualified in the material or fields in which they teach. This is because most school systems are more concerned with superficial indications of teaching ability (e.g., how well the teacher matches the educational philosophy

being embraced by the system) and are less concerned with mastery of the material being taught. In short, many who are well-qualified in the material, and who are also good teachers, are not drawn to teaching because of the biases that exist in the system.

But even where teachers are well-qualified and properly motivated, where they are inherently very effective, they are still subject to the limitations of the student (what the student brings to school) and the limitations or boundary conditions imposed by school administrators. Within these various initial conditions and boundary conditions, the challenges facing the teacher are considerable.

And yet, teachers can make a considerable difference. Teachers are in a position to motivate and challenge their students. Teachers are in a position to be positive, healthy role models. Teachers are in a position to provide needed knowledge and an appropriate context for that knowledge, to the considerable benefit of their students. Students will learn from their teachers, for good or ill, and usually both. So it is very important that teachers be well-qualified both in their field and as teachers, and well-motivated, and properly supported by parents, and properly supported (financially, materially, emotionally, professional, and otherwise) by the school and community itself.

- **The Academic and Administrative Environment**

A fourth factor in education is the academic environment, i.e., whether or not and to what extent the academic environment facilitates learning. And this is generally the result of administrators and educational philosophy. The school system as a whole determines qualifications for teachers and administrative conditions (policies) through which teachers and administrators work, and through which students learn. These are usually a reflection of the values of the community, the qualifications of administrators, and the various abilities and biases of administrators. And the school system and community generally (through consciousness and policy and practice) determine the caliber of teachers attracted to their schools.

But most important in this factor is the basic educational philosophy that is embraced by the school. It seems that today many, if not most, schools have a



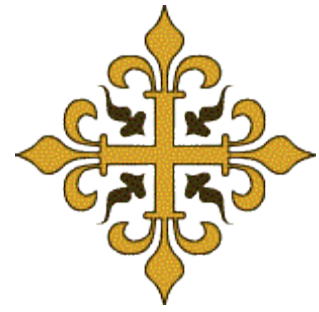
rather permissive educational philosophy and lack a healthy environment of discipline, structure, and expectations, to provide a context for learning. The result of this is that disruptive and disrespectful students are tolerated to such an extent that the teaching and learning environment is severely compromised. Of course the better students rise above these factors, but they are still limited to some extent, and do not learn as much or as effectively as they would in a more healthy environment. And the students who are not as well-disposed to learning tend to learn very little. So an environment where students are properly disciplined, where there is sufficient but not too much structure, where the primary focus is upon learning, and enjoying learning, is essential.

It is also important for the school administration (policy) and administrators (practice) to effectively support both the authority and abilities of teachers. In short, teachers need to be qualified, motivated, and empowered, to teach effectively. And what is taught needs to be placed into a meaningful context, so that students can see that context and anticipate the usefulness of what they are learning. To be effective, administrators cannot simply be teachers who are promoted into the administration. They must understand and appreciate being or having been teachers, but they must also be well-qualified as administrators. A poor school administration makes it extremely difficult for teachers to teach and students to learn. A healthy, effectively academic and administrative environment facilitates both effective teaching and effective learning.

Ultimately, all of these factors are important. The student and the nature of the student, his or her abilities, disabilities, attitude, and potential for learning. The home and community environment, parents and peers. Teachers and their abilities, disabilities, attitude, and capacity for teaching. And the academic and administrative environment in which all of these factors are combined.



# Section 5.61



## Learning

- Learning in the sense of assimilation of experience is a fourth ray consideration, while learning in the more formal sense of acquiring knowledge through education and training, and assimilating that knowledge is properly a fifth ray consideration. What really matters are the attitude toward learning and learning how to learn.

## Learning 1

Though every incarnation is dedicated in one way or another to the evolution of consciousness, the two principal activities within incarnation might properly be called learning (experience) and service (expression). The relatively unevolved are almost entirely concerned with experience (albeit not necessarily consciously), while the relatively evolved of humanity are much more concerned with service (constructive evolutionary expression (encouragement)). But even though a spiritual student is concerned primarily with service, continued learning is still an important part of the student's life, for evolution (and learning) is an unending process of expansion of consciousness based upon the acquisition and assimilation of knowledge (understanding).

There are essentially two reasons for learning. The real reason is to live in accordance with evolutionary law (to live otherwise to any extent proceeds from folly (illusion) (ego)). The superficial reason is to become more effective in consciousness (i.e., to grow), to be able to contribute (serve) more effectively to (in) group (human) consciousness, through purification, experience, and assimilation, leading to understanding, wisdom, discretion, and improved quality (and capacity) of consciousness. The superficial reason, albeit not as real, is still significant and worthy of consideration.

Learning is defined as the process of gaining knowledge or understanding or skill by study, instruction, or experience. Since learning is such an inherent part of evolution, the opportunity for learning is quite considerable, encompassing (potentially) every moment of incarnation. The opportunity for learning is essentially boundless, but effective learning is limited by a person's ability or capacity for learning, a person's disposition or attitude toward learning (receptivity), a person's character, temperament, and quality of consciousness, and a person's natural personality inertia (the resistance of the material aspect of the personality).

Some souls progress (learn) (evolve) much more rapidly than others, not due to greater inherent opportunity (although the evolved soul is more able to take advantage of the learning opportunities and therefore progress progressively

more expeditiously), but due to a better (different) fabric (texture) (quality) (tenor) of consciousness (better in the sense of being able to learn more effectively, not better in any absolute sense, for those who do not progress as rapidly also contribute, albeit in different ways (being an essential part of a necessary, overall balance)). The fabric of the soul necessarily contributes to the corresponding fabric of the soul's personality, as the nature of the soul qualifies the personality to the extent that it is responsive (the responsiveness of the personality being related to the progressed quality of the soul and the consequent (concomitant) earned (developed) (induced) (progressed) quality of the personality (the soul being a higher quality of consciousness, but there being a correspondence between the quality of one and the relative quality of the other)).

Even though the fabric of the soul may be more or less conducive to learning, that texture can and does change (improve) in the normal course of evolution, and, more importantly, the individual in incarnation can consciously (or otherwise) qualify the personality to actually improve the capacity for learning and overcome many of the limitations of the personality which impede learning. In essence, part of the charter of the spiritual student is to progressively improve the capacity for learning, to learn and grow (and refine the consciousness) continuously, and to ever serve more effectively.

† Commentary No. 432

## Learning 2

One of the basic differences between the relatively unevolved human being and the relatively evolved human being, is that the latter has learned how to learn effectively and has cultivated a proper attitude and disposition toward learning. The spiritual student is (properly) one who also seeks intelligently (and consciously) to learn and understand in order to improve consciousness and contribute (participate) more effectively in dharma. All who are either upon the spiritual path (at any level) or approaching the path are properly considered students (of the esoteric philosophy (life) (wisdom)) and servants of humanity (God) (the path) (vice aspirants, probationers, disciples, initiates, and masters (although the term "disciple" connotes the student/servant balance and suffices for all succeeding grades)).

Besides the innate ability relating to the fabric of individual consciousness, of central significance to learning is the student's attitude toward learning. The person who looks at every experience and activity as a potential learning experience (opportunity), who seeks to discern the significance of the experience (and therefore minimize unworthy or absorbing experiences) will more likely learn from experience as not. One who is absorbed on personality levels (being self-indulgent) will learn indirectly, over the course of many repeated experiences (opportunities). One who is not absorbed in mundane (trivial) (personality) matters (details) who actually welcomes learning, is more likely to learn directly (more effectively) from the initial experience or from observation, and therefore progress more readily.

The attitude of the spiritual student toward learning is quite positive; the attitude of the esoteric scholar is even more deliberate. The scholar specializes in learning and contributes to the progress of humanity by establishing the learning patterns, understanding, and resulting wisdom within the immediate potential of humanity. To a larger, broader extent, the spiritual path plays this role, with the true scholar acquiring, correlating, assessing, and providing (sharing) knowledge and (understanding) within the context of the path. Knowledge is never sufficient for true progress; there must also be the correlation of knowledge (discerning the relatedness of things and their correspondences) leading to assimilation and understanding.

In addition to the inherent intelligence (capacity for learning) and the proper attitudes, a student must also cultivate a balanced receptivity and responsiveness to learning and experience (the resistance and bias of the ego must be properly overcome) in order to be effective. The student should be receptive to the potential for learning implied in every experience, observation, activity, communication, etc. To be open-minded and receptive to the potential for learning is one matter (inherently positive); to be reactive, passive, or accepting indiscriminately is another matter altogether (and inherently negative and not conducive to proper learning). Thus the spiritual student must exercise discretion in the consideration of all experience. There should not be any blind or passive acceptance, but intelligent (thoughtful or intuitive) acceptance where merited, or a deferral of that which is not yet properly discernable.

A final and perhaps most significant contributing (positive) factor in learning is humility, for the ego tends to distort the truth in self-accommodation and to absorb the whole personality in more personal energies. But with proper, spiritual (balanced) humility, the student is free to learn and grow and share, most effectively.

† Commentary No. 589

## Awareness and Learning 1

The entire human experience is intended to contribute to the evolution of consciousness and the extent of that contribution depends necessarily upon the learning process and the relative awareness of the individual. Thus learning is a central focus of individual and group experience, particularly so in the context of the spiritual path of accelerated evolution in consciousness.

There are a number of factors and relationships that affect learning. The principal impediments to learning are a relative lack of awareness, a lack of interest in learning, and the preclusive ego. Conversely, where awareness is properly cultivated, where a positive (open, honest, active) attitude toward learning prevails, and where the ego is properly qualified for learning, the individual (student) is able to learn much more effectively (with greater depth (correlation), breadth (integration), and relative ease (expedience)).

The bulk of humanity are asleep in the mundane (personal) drivel of self-centered (material) existence. For the bulk of humanity, real learning (assimilated experience (wisdom)) is an indirect, relatively unconscious (sleepy) process whereby the soul gradually integrates and assimilates the experience of the personality, with little feedback (qualification) during incarnation and the bulk of assimilation occurring between incarnations. That learning process is enhanced and accelerated where the individual mind is properly developed and trained for learning, where the student earnestly seeks to learn, and where the ego is not a significant impediment. Such a person naturally (unconsciously) (indirectly) cultivates the requisite awareness.

On the spiritual path, learning is further accelerated and the individual becomes more active (more conscious, more aware) in learning, with more and more of the

assimilation occurring within the incarnation (and ultimately in real or near real time). This is a direct result of the consequences of commitment to the path (those consequences being accelerated and intensified karmic pressure (more rapid evocation of karmic consequences) and increasing qualification of the (responsive) personality by the soul (which includes direct stimulation of consciousness and expansion (depth and breadth) of awareness)). But even on the path, there are impediments to learning that must be (systematically or otherwise) overcome, by degrees (else considerable conflict (in consciousness between the ego and the path) will ensue).

The more obvious impediments to learning include preclusive habits (attachments and distractions) (absorption in personal or mundane matters) (which require deliberation (persistence) (self-discipline) for overcoming), lack of observational training (proper mental focus) (which simply requires training in observation and analysis), closed mindedness (the preclusive habits (rigidity) (linearity) of the concrete mind) (which require some intensity (determination) to overcome), and lack of earnestness (which simply requires realization of need). The less obvious, more subtle impediments to learning involve the ego and relative awareness, and include concerted (unconscious) resistance to learning, personal bias (in perception and interpretation) (compounded by inertia and lack of awareness of that bias and inertia), and limited (relatively narrow) perception (awareness) (again without realization of same). All of these things and more preclude or inhibit effective learning, and all of these things and more must be faced and overcome (eventually), by the earnest spiritual student. One who actively (honestly) approaches these issues with some determination (will to succeed) will indeed progress in improving the disposition toward and capability for effective learning.

## Awareness and Learning 2

The principal key to effective learning and to improving the capability for effective learning is awareness. In general, the greater (broader) (deeper) (less personal) the awareness, the more effective will be the learning process. Awareness is related to the path in the sense that (extent of) awareness is a broad consequence of evolution in consciousness and in the sense that the awareness of the student is stimulated to the extent of the student's relationship to the spiritual path.

To complement (supplement) (integrate) the relative awareness evoked (or potentially evoked) by (upon) the path, the student must endeavor to utilize that awareness (or potential) or suffer degradation in awareness (a dulling of the capabilities through lack of exercise and consequent absorption). Properly exercised (energized) awareness will deepen and broaden naturally, and enable the student to learn (and serve) more effectively.

The real key to overcoming all of the various (obvious and subtle) impediments to learning (preclusive habits) is the application of awareness to those various impediments (i.e., to be aware of a particular impediment (in the sense of conscious realization of that impediment and its effects) as an impediment to learning (or to consciousness (awareness)) is to evoke energies inherently qualified to overcome that impediment (energy follows thought)). As awareness is properly applied (i.e., as the conscious mind and its subconscious correspondence are programmed to trigger conscious realization of any impedimental process in real or near real time), then the energy (and associated forces (applied energies)) of the soul is brought to bear on the problem (impediment) and the problem (weakness) is gradually transformed into strength.

The first step to proper conscious awareness (in this context) is conscious realization (knowledge) of all the various habits and preclusive tendencies. The second step is the conscious realization (recognition) (assessment) of the magnitude (depth) (breadth) (presence) of particular impediments. The third step is periodic self-analysis in which each such habit or preclusive tendency is



evaluated in terms of how it manifests (i.e., under what conditions in consciousness) and what are its effects or consequences. The fourth step is periodic (e.g., daily) qualification for learning (i.e., impersonal (individual) meditation, philosophic and psychological study, and continued self-assessment). The fifth step is the simple realization that the fourth step continues indefinitely, as the active resistance of the personality (ego) becomes more and more passive (more subtle) and less obvious.

Dealing with attachments (distraction) (absorption) (closed or narrow mindedness) (lack of earnestness) (personal bias) (limited perception) is relatively easy (at least straightforward) as long as the student (waking-consciousness) is aware of their existence and operation. Dealing with the various subtleties of the ego (i.e., concerted resistance to learning and other inherent inertia) is another matter altogether, since layer upon layer and aspect upon aspect of dynamic self-deception must be faced, realized, and overcome. The ego is fully capable of pretending to cooperate while deliberately undermining the various noble attempts of the conscious mind. This capability is further complicated by the personal nature of the conscious mind (and feelings) which tends to see (hear) (feel) (believe) whatever it wishes, often regardless of contradictive indications. Thus the only real solution to dynamic self-deception is the cultivation of proper humility (that cultivation being a necessarily indefinite process (never fully achieved)).

† Commentary No. 877

## Learning and Experience 1

One of the attributes of the spiritual student is his or her recognition that the purpose of life is the evolution of consciousness through progressive experience and expression (leading to service). This recognition leads to the wholesome attitude of seeking to learn and a certain measure of openness to learning or responsiveness to the lessons available through experience, both of which are inherently crucial to learning in near-real-time (or at least within the present incarnation).



In this context, the principal challenge for most people is the development of that recognition, positive attitudes toward learning experience, and openness to that learning. In other words, most people “learn” passively and unconsciously (indirectly) as they pass through many experiences over a relatively large number of lifetimes (incarnations). Such passive learning requires a great deal of experience in order to leave sufficient “impression” in consciousness for “learning” to occur. As one progresses further, and particularly along the spiritual path, one begins to learn more consciously and more deliberately (directly) [and about more relevant things], as one applies more conscious awareness and deliberation (consideration) to each experience. As one progresses even further, the direct or active learning begins to dominate the indirect or passive learning (and “learning” is gradually transformed from primarily a matter of knowledge through being primarily a matter of understanding to being primarily a matter of wisdom).

The mechanisms (processes) of both dharma and karma provide consequential experience and opportunities for learning in virtually every experience. The flow of life (karmic consequences and opportunities therein) for someone or some group involves challenges both consistent with dharma and karma and commensurate with the attitude toward learning and measure of openness demonstrated. A smooth flow does not necessarily mean that one is receptive and responsive to learning experience; indeed, it may imply the opposite, or it may just imply that one does not merit substantive opportunities for growth. Similarly, a harsh flow need not imply receptiveness or responsiveness, but it does necessarily imply that lessons or adjustments are thereby potentially conveyed.

But both dharma and karma are not merely individually inspired; there is a group context as well as particular relationships with others to be considered. So a smooth flow (or a harsh flow) may be inspired with regard to a particular person in some group or broader context or it may actively involve all of the affected participants. Thus circumstances may or may not relate to a particular person, though that person may be involved (incidentally) in some manner. Thus significance may not be apparent nor even substantial for all participants.

More correctly, the flow is always and ever “smooth” while one’s interaction may be relatively smooth or relatively harsh depending on the measure of

responsiveness. For example, if one is attached to some notion and one has sufficient consciousness (potentially) to progress beyond that notion, but one has sufficient inertia or resistance (unresponsiveness), then “difficult” circumstances may be relatively dramatic and persist until the intended lesson is learned or the intended adjustment is made. On the other hand, difficult circumstances may unfold and convey more subtle lessons or be primarily related to other people. In this sense one may (should, ever) embrace difficult circumstances in a harmonious and poised manner, learning more or less directly throughout the experience. And it is in difficult circumstances that real learning opportunities are mostly afforded.

† Commentary No. 878

## Learning and Experience 2

For the more earnest student, the seeking to learn from every experience can itself be a problem, for not every experience, difficult or otherwise, may convey even potentially any significant learning opportunity or opportunity for adjustment in consciousness, i.e., looking for something that is not “there” can be a great waste of time and effort. Each “difficult” experience certainly conveys an opportunity for learning or adjustment, but not necessarily for all who are involved or affected. But being responsive and receptive to learning opportunities is still important, as long as one understands that there is not necessarily any particular significance in every particular experience. For the serious student, making anything (particularly) important can be a substantial distraction and needless entanglement.

Most serious problems require that the student become detached and unentangled from the problem in order for a solution to be realized. Being attached to and/or entangled in the problem or being attached to or entangled in the process of understanding the problem (and its solution or resolution) definitely “blinds” the student to some extent and inhibits or retards the learning process. In fact, the single most significant impediment to learning is, paradoxically, the most effective instrument one has for learning, and that is the ego or strength of personality. As the ego is more fully overcome and tempered by higher values and deeper (less personal) focus, the student is able to be more detached and unentangled in personal (superficial) (circumstantial) (mundane)

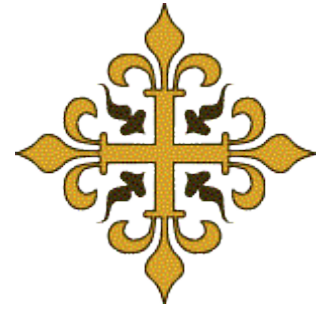
aspects. On the other hand, being so detached that one is wholly unconcerned about learning is comparably ineffective. Thus one should strike a balance between responsiveness and detachment. One who is thereby detached (unentangled) and responsive to learning has optimized the whole process.

At some stage, however, in this process of learning and experience, the spiritual student makes a rather (relatively) remarkable transition from a "learning" or developmental focus to a "service" focus. The more the balance shifts in favor of service, the more effective the student is in the dharma or work of the path, for, in the final analysis, evolution is a group process and individual development is relatively less important and less significant than the corresponding group development in consciousness (character, quality, temperament, etc.) and much less so than group realization (particularly at the level and scope of humanity as a whole).

In the service focus, the disciple is still subject to karma but is increasingly subject to dharma, as karma becomes a more or less incidental phenomenon at the individual level. The karmic bounds (rules and consequences of karmic law) for the disciple are more severe than those for the aspirant, but the disciple is, by virtue of his achieving discipleship, less encumbered by karma, having little or no residual karma and being relatively highly responsive to learning opportunities, however incidental they may be. The disciple is actually more able to learn and grow and adapt and adjust in consciousness to the extent that he or she is devoted to the service focus (the dharma of the path). Moreover, one who is primarily concerned with learning and growing is thereby and inherently less responsive to the flow (dharma) of the path.

For the advanced spiritual student, service naturally takes precedence over individual development, growth, or even self-realization. The keys to this effectiveness are the service orientation, increased awareness and clarity of perception, and minimal personality presence (absence of ego). Learning and experience go hand-in-hand, but both are subsumed in sincere spiritual service.

# Section 5.611



## Aspects of Learning

- There are many aspects of learning, both in terms of opportunities, the process, and the facility of learning. But there is also a matter of learning what life is all about, i.e., the purpose and process of life, taking responsibility for one's life and embracing life in the context of learning, growing, and serving.

## Personal Responsibility

One of the most potent of lessons to be learned in the lower worlds is that of personal (individual) responsibility. Every human being is responsible for the consequences of his own behavior, whether those consequences are perceived as such or not. Every waking moment is a consequent (effect) related to action (performance) (causes), personally evoked through the law of karma by virtue of thinking, feeling, and behavior. The first lesson of personal responsibility is accountability, and as the student realizes his own accountability he takes a major step forward along the evolutionary path. But the conscious acceptance of responsibility for one's own actions is not such an easy step to take.

The acceptance of personal responsibility is simply the conscious acknowledgement of the fact (of action and consequence), but it also leads the student a step closer to truth (and reality), for the student can no longer blame other persons or even circumstances for the experience that is faced. It is a difficult lesson to learn because it challenges the natural (selfish) human vanity, and because the inherent justice (balance of merit) of life is not easy to perceive. One must simply accept the reality of karma and the reality of personal accountability, and make the best of every situation and experience. As long as vanity persists, and as long as the individual is bound (limited) by desires, this lesson will be a painful one.

The spiritual student should always accept every situation as a consequence, not necessarily as a condition or circumstance that cannot be changed or improved. Actually, a significant part of personal responsibility involves the acceptance and improvement of circumstances. By improvement is meant the adaptation for constructive and meaningful purposes, as lessons are learned and work (dharma) is performed. The student must accept that which cannot or should not be changed and accept and improve that which can and should be changed. In each case, the student should accept each waking moment (and associated circumstances) as a merited consequence.

There is another dimension to personal responsibility that must likewise be accepted, but it is not as simple. That dimension is one of group accountability

and group consequence. The karmic force of the individual is necessarily complicated by that of each group to which the individual belongs. Such groups include the family, the community, the race, the country, humanity, the rays, the planet, etc., as well as strictly esoteric relationships. Even the karma of form is taken into consideration, for the personality instrument (form) is made up of atoms of elementary lives on physical, emotional (astral), and mental levels. One cannot escape the consequences of any karma, whether it be individual or group karma. Furthermore, no one is an exception (in spite of the glamour of exception); each must face all of the circumstances of life in the lower worlds, realistically (through the conscious acceptance of personal responsibility) or otherwise (by denial or self-deception, and the coextensive consequences of denial or self-deception (ignorance) (fear)).

In addition to consequence and accountability, the spiritual student shares the specific responsibilities associated with his place upon the path (as well as those associated with merely being human). The student is responsible for his share of the needed activity. The spiritual student is actually responsible for evolutionary progress, to the extent that realization (higher consciousness and understanding) is achieved. In simple terms, the student is directly responsible for his own health, for his own growth, for the quality of his relationships with other lives, and for his contribution to the group (service).

† Commentary No. 579

## Reactivity and Responsibility

The reactivity inherent in the material nature of the personality is a most difficult obstacle for the aspirant. The spiritual student must learn to be (intelligently) responsive and not reactive. Through proper discipline and qualification, the student brings about the basic transformation of the personality from a predominantly self-centered, relatively coarse, reactive nature to a predominantly relatively refined, intelligently responsive nature.

The problem of being reactive on emotional or mental levels is that being reactive is essentially separative, a matter of (one's own relative) coarseness reacting to some external coarseness. Any separateness (separativeness)

hinders the individual from realization of soul consciousness and the inherent spirituality that that represents. Thus the spiritual student must learn not to be reactive or separative if he is to fulfill the basic objectives and realizations of the spiritual path. The student is of course responsible for all of his character, temperament, values, etc. and all of his reactions and responses to any and every situation, whether consciously engendered or otherwise. Thus a reactive (separative) person is inherently responsible for being reactive (separative) and if that person is a spiritual student then he is also responsible for overcoming such reactivity (separativeness).

In addition to the responsibility for character and temperament there is the responsibility for consequences. Reactivity (an expression or experience of reactivity) generally leads to a significant clouding (distortion) (exaggeration) of the senses, which generally leads to further consequences in disposition, at least for some duration, until the particular reactivity is realized and overcome consciously, or until the intensity of the effects fades and diffuses to the point where the person (student) returns to his normal disposition. Some people are normally in the excited states of reactivity and those cases are particularly difficult to address for qualification and refinement.

In many cases, illness or disturbed emotional and mental circumstances are the immediate consequences of reactivity, and the spiritual student is nonetheless responsible for such (personal) consequences and the (further) consequences or implications of being ill or disturbed. It does not matter (from the standpoint of the reactive individual) what the external forces were (or whether those external forces were unwarranted from some other standpoint). What matters (in this sense) is that those external forces were necessarily warranted for the reactive individual (i.e., karmic consequences are always warranted) and that the individual is nonetheless responsible for his disposition and reaction (response) as the case may be. If a person is disturbed by a situation, then he is necessarily responsible for his being disturbed. If in being disturbed a person is unable to meet any other responsibilities or duties he may have, then he is nonetheless responsible for these incapacities (e.g., if a person is sick or emotionally disturbed by some experience and unable to work as scheduled, then that person is nonetheless responsible; it is not the fault of someone or something else, and any presumption of such compounds the problem with self-deception).



Taking conscious responsibility for reactivity and its direct and indirect consequences is the first positive step toward overcoming reactivity and separateness. As that responsibility is consciously realized, then one's disposition and temperament are naturally qualified and refined to mitigate and eventually eliminate reactive and separative tendencies.

† Commentary No. 969

### Three Factors in Life

From the metaphysical and theosophical perspective, there are three factors in life in the lower worlds of human experience and expression. These are the force of evolution (the primary force in (of) manifestation), the force of karma (the secondary force in (of) manifestation), and free will (the tertiary force in (of) manifestation).

The force of evolution is the underlying and overshadowing factor that conditions everything and every life in manifestation. It is the cause of relative existence and provides the momentum for progress in consciousness from the most elementally (microscopic) conceivable level to the most macrocosmically conceivable level of manifestation. The force of evolution qualifies every aspect of life for every species, with evolutionary purpose (the projection of the evolutionary pattern or archetype for each species and the broader context) and evolutionary pressure (slow, yet inexorably accelerating). But although evolutionary force is ever-present, it is not all-determining. It creates the stage, provides the context (opportunity), provides the broad and underlying conditioning for consciousness, and relentlessly pushes all lives onward and upward (or comparably, depending on their place in the scheme of manifestation).

The force of evolution is a generalized force. It is not tailored or customized to any specific lifeform, although it conveys the various patterns (archetypes) lifewave by lifewave or component by component, but not individually. How individuals respond to the force of evolution of course varies greatly by species (potential), place in the evolutionary scheme, and the relative ability of the particular and collective consciousness to respond. The force of karma is also a



somewhat generalized force, subsidiary to the force of evolution (consequentially), that provides the rules or interpretation of evolutionary experience. While "evolution" provides the purpose and goal and overall conditioning for manifestation, "karma" provides the means (rules) and opportunities for experience and expression in support of evolution in consciousness. Yet karma is also part of the conditioning. Evolutionary pressure gradually accelerates through the course of manifestation, likewise karmic pressure, until the "person" realizes the greater context and makes a commitment to conscious, deliberate evolution. Then the rules change (are advanced), the pressure increases, and the person becomes part of the leading edge of the lifewave instead of remaining in the bulk consciousness.

Free will is the third dimension and only really begins to be operant as self-consciousness in the higher sense is achieved. Until then, individuals simply respond rather mechanically to their conditioning and according to their (passive) abilities (condition) (potential). So-called self-consciousness is really just the delusion of self-consciousness, without appreciation for the mechanicalness of existence in the conditioned (personality-centered) state. Real self-consciousness comes about as the consciousness is raised beyond that of the personality. Then and only then does free will truly come into play.

The key is responsiveness to the three factors. Those who are more responsive to evolutionary pressure naturally progress faster than those who are relatively unresponsive. Those who consciously embrace their own karma and seek to learn from their experience and adapt according to the rules of the path naturally progress faster and more fully than those who remain relatively self-centered (and personality-centered (self-indulgent) (unresponsive)). Those who truly exercise free will do so in accord with the factor of evolution and in accord with the factor of karma (in the broader, non-personal sense).

## Learning From Experience

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

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

At first (in earlier epochs of human development), the new life (which had recently individualized and become self-conscious) has little past experience, knowledge, or wisdom from which to draw upon for understanding and insight. Thus many lives are initially spent simply gaining experience. Gradually the conscience is built as the personality learns through trial and error what is appropriate at this elementary stage. Karma, the law of cause and effect, serves to indirectly teach as the person experiences the consequences of his actions. This learning of basic appropriateness is stored in the conscience and is

available on unconscious or conscious levels, depending on the personality's responsiveness.

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

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

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

Frequently, evaluations are made superficially, using faulty observation and reasoning. While a person should not over-simplify the assessment process, he (or she) should not over-complicate it either, seeing significance where none exists. Even where experience is not strongly biased or diffused by the

emotions, if the individual utilizes only his concrete mind and rationalization, he will fail to discern the greater insight available through the higher abstract mind and (soul) intuition (as he develops these). He also will be unable to properly correlate the many diverse factors and inputs to achieve proper understanding.

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

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

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

In the assessment process, one can ask one's self: "How could I have better handled a particular situation or response? What can I learn from this? What was the quality of my motives, my thoughts, and feelings? Do I need to make any compensation for inappropriate energies (or actions) that I have created and sent out? Do I need to forgive others for any wrongs directed to me? Have I utilized the opportunities for learning presented to me today? Have I met all my obligations and duty? What have I done to help others? What has been the over-all quality of my life expression today? What is the quality of my physical,

emotional, and mental bodies, and is there anything I should do to help restore vitality, health, balance, and purity? Am I ready to meet tomorrow as another opportunity for growth, determined to make it an even better day of livingness?"

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

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

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

However, the personality in the early and intermediate stages of development generally is focused predominately on physical and emotional living and mundane/personal concerns. Most individuals in incarnation today live mainly for day to day pleasures and material pursuits. The majority of people are not aware of their higher self, the soul, and their spiritual aspect, the monadic spark of God. They see themselves (by default if not consciously) as being separate from God, and from other men and women, and from other life. They believe they exist only as their physical body, emotions, and mind. They are unable to

grasp the purpose of life in general, and their own purpose specifically. This, consequently, results in much confusion, conflict, and unhappiness, as well as the unfocused, selfish, and inappropriate activity expressed by so many who are in incarnation.

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

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

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

Interestingly, the mind, for all its initial limitations, after development, purification, and refinement, becomes the tool for the overall development, refinement, and self-discipline of the entire personality. It is the mind, responding to evolutionary pressure and the promptings of the soul, which

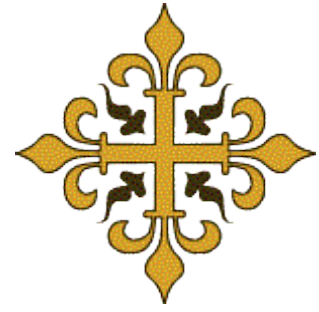


institutes measures of control, balance, and purification over the physical body and the emotions of the personality. And it is the mind which finally unifies the three competing and fragmented aspects of the personality (physical body, emotions, mind) into one coherent, functioning unit. The achievement of personality integration is one of the many significant accomplishments for the evolving human life. Additionally, development of the abstract mind is essential for the personality to achieve a measure of alignment in consciousness with the greater soul consciousness.

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



## Section 5.62



### Teaching

- Teaching in the context of the spiritual path is properly a second ray consideration, while teaching in the broader sense and teaching as a process are more properly fifth ray considerations.



## Prescription

Throughout history, spiritual leaders have offered prescriptions for spiritual development or advancement along certain lines. In many cases these prescriptions are well-founded, being based on discernable underlying principles, but applying only to those who are properly suited. Yet there are a number of problems associated with prescriptiveness.

A prescription is defined as authoritative rules or directions. A prescription often implies (or may be perceived as implying (presumed)) authority. A prescription often implies some intent to impose (or may be perceived so). A prescription often implies some sense of exclusiveness and/or rightness and/or uniqueness (without necessarily an appreciation for its context). And people tend to react to prescriptions either passively (accepting a prescription as authoritative) or reactively (not accepting a prescription merely because it implies something authoritative). Passive acceptance is a matter of lack of self-development (coherence at the personality level). Reactive non-acceptance is largely a matter of egoism (a personality that is too strong to be responsive to higher influence). The word "should" should be considered in the context of encouragement and suggestion for consideration rather than a matter of (presumed) authority or imposition.

There are discernable rules or directions for spiritual development and advancement, and it does not really matter where and how those rules are discerned or recognized. The validity of the rules (in context) does not rely on external authority. The rules are recognizable in context, and with sensible (non-passive and non-egoistic) consideration the spiritual student can recognize the extent to which these rules are applicable. There is no need for authority. The spiritual student should be intelligent enough to consider for himself or herself the need, the context, the applicability, the appropriateness, etc. of any prescription. The problem in reactive non-acceptance is self-centeredness (egoism), the tendency of the personality to resist any spiritual process that appears to undermine its (artificial) position. Thus people tend to resist prescription, not on the basis of its inapplicability but for whatever reasons a

person can contrive in order to avoid any real commitment to spiritual development and unfoldment.

As the spiritual student gradually overcomes the limitations of personality (materialism) (egoism), the student begins to be able to discern the various rules in the context of the path (the rules of the path are only really applicable to those who are committed to the path at some level). Then the student is able to commit to those aspects that are understood and recognized and having value. The encouragement may come through some teacher or through some teaching (prescriptive or otherwise), but the decision remains one's own (except that it is really the soul that make a commitment to the path, and the personality can only make a commitment to cooperate with the soul in that process).

The spiritual student is encouraged to consider the path (way) (Tao) and the various approaches to the path, and then to recognize which approach seems best given the student's position and needs (character, consciousness, temperament, and values). The intelligent student should not rely on others' testimony or prescription, though such testimony and encouragement may be meaningful, nor should the student rely on the personality strength (ego) (intellect), though there may be considerable insight there, but rather the student should seek understanding and guidance through reliance upon the (inner) Self.

† Commentary No. 1108

## Teachings and Context

Every teaching has a context. Depending on the particular circumstances of the student (human being), the student will be naturally drawn to the teachings that are pertinent for his or her current circumstances (abilities, needs, responsiveness, conditioning, context).

What this implies is that no teaching is really complete or perfect for everyone. No teaching is the highest, deepest, etc., for everyone (or in any absolute sense). Every teaching has some context, some purpose, some role, and is eventually transcended (completely in some cases or more generally to some extent) as the student grows and deepens (and achieves the understanding or wisdom that a

teaching can convey), and eventually finds something more meaningful to his or her new circumstances. Attachment to teachings thus becomes an impediment to further growth and deepening (and yet, to achieve at some level the student must take the teachings at that "level" seriously enough to accomplish the attended results).

The field of metaphysics is replete with examples of teachings and context. The various metaphysical churches, for example, generally provide considerable encouragement regarding personality development, self-esteem, heart-centeredness, diversity, etc. But eventually, the student must begin to transcend the ego and in order to accomplish this must go beyond conventional or mainstream metaphysics to something more subtle. Going "beyond" does not necessarily imply that the "new" teachings encountered are higher, deeper, or better overall, only that they are more pertinent to the student who needs them. The same is true for the focus on mindfulness encountered in various Buddhist traditions. Mindfulness training is very important and quite valuable (necessary), at some stage of unfoldment, but eventually becomes a limitation, and the student must then go beyond mindfulness.

Even the Upper Triad material has its context and limitations. It is not really appropriate or meaningful for most people, nor for most spiritual students of various paths and traditions. While the underlying principles are sound (at this level), the student may properly need to focus in other ways, that are more meaningful to his or her context (circumstances). So the student should always be amenable to discerning the needs of the particular incarnation or phase of life, assessing one's circumstances and recognizing the needs and appropriate methods. The student should not be attached to any of the teachings, but embrace them to whatever extent they are understood and remain pertinent.

In this process there are a number of "teachings" that seem to remain pertinent but are not necessarily dominant. The preliminary discipline, for example (not smoking, not drinking, not eating flesh foods, meditating, etc.). Once a student has embraced these disciplines, they fall below the threshold of focus, remaining true and meaningful (valuable) (i.e., the student continues to live in accordance with these practices) while the student is more properly focused on deeper and more pertinent issues. Thus most of the teachings remain relevant (in context), but as the student grows and deepens, the focus naturally shifts to more subtle

levels. In this sense even mindfulness remains valuable, even as the student passes beyond mindfulness. It is, after all, a means rather than an end in itself. The path is naturally structured, with various phases, stages, and dimensions. The wise student honestly and effectively discerns his or her context, and lives the spiritual life that is meaningful at that "level" to whatever extent the student can.



