

4 UNDERSTANDING

4.1 Introduction: Some Thoughts on What Characterizes Esoterics

¹Why is certain knowledge esoteric? We have heard the three usual explanations: the knowledge must be protected from abuse, protected from distortion, and the carriers of the knowledge must be protected from persecution. But there is a fourth explanation as well: esoterics essentially remains esoteric even if it is publicized, since in the current age the overwhelming majority of people cannot understand it and do not care for it.

²Esoterics consists of three parts: world view (hylozoics), life view (knowledge of the laws), and application (the method of consciousness development, the simultaneous work at knowledge and being, the work on three lines). These three parts are connected with the three aspects of reality: the world view is principally bound up with the matter aspect, the life view with the consciousness aspect, and application with the will or force aspect. Just as reality is always a unity of the three aspects, and none of the three can exist without the other two, esoterics cannot possibly exist, be studied or practised in only one of the three parts; disciples must devote themselves to all three parts, they must not neglect any one of them.

³Esoterics differs entirely from the exoteric disciplines studied in the ordinary systems of education. In these disciplines, everything is taken on the same everyday level of consciousness, it being presumed that all normally intelligent people will be able to assimilate them, provided they devote sufficient time and energy to their study.

⁴In contrast, esoterics is a “state-specific discipline”. This means that one and the same text, one and the same teaching, has a different content to different readers and receivers, or the same reader and receiver at different times, depending on the actual states of consciousness of these individuals. A receiver may at first grasp the teaching given him very imperfectly, only to understand it as it was intended to be understood twenty years later. A reader may understand a text in the morning, only to have lost his understanding in the evening, since he is always in different states of consciousness, and esoteric truths are perceived differently in different states. It follows from this that in order to absorb fundamentals of esoteric knowledge, you must read essential esoteric texts many times during many years. Esoterics is a life-long study, an ever-recurring study of texts that you “are never done with”. It is the direct opposite of such university courses the material of which students rush through in order to pass their exams, whereupon they soon forget it all.

4.2 Esoterics is the Qualitative Viewpoint

¹Esoterics is the qualitative viewpoint, not the quantitative viewpoint reigning in our times. Questions of quantity are about what and who are bigger and more, questions of quality are about what and who are better, possess a higher degree of conformity to purpose, or finality. The esoteric world view (hylozoics) is qualitative: describes a series of realities of ever higher kinds, qualitatively higher worlds to be attained by the monads. The ever higher kingdoms of ever higher worlds are higher in a qualitative sense, since they constitute higher stages in the realization of the meaning of existence, are increasingly better aligned with the all-embracing cosmic purpose, cosmic finality. That this is so is connected with the fact that the kinds of consciousness and kinds of will that are possible and are acquired in those worlds and kingdoms enable individuals and collectives to have an increasingly better understanding and equip them with increasingly better tools for this realization. In the most simple formulation: The higher the world and kingdom, the better the individuals and collectives work for what is best for the whole. The esoteric life view is qualitative: it is concerned with issues of how the monads are to learn how to obey laws of life, laws of finality, in ever better ways (with increasingly better understanding). Therefore, esoteric thinking must be qualitative, must start

from quality. This implies a constant, unflagging effort of raising oneself out of the mechanical and automatic tendency of undeveloped man to think quantitatively in everything.

²One example of the difference between quantitative and qualitative thinking. Quantitative thinking has a tendency to view things in categories of “everything or nothing”, “all or none”. It disregards the fact that a certain quality may exist, a certain qualitative force may operate, even though not “all individuals” or even the “majority” participate. For this qualitative factor to assert itself with force, it is sufficient that “local dominance” or “local concentration” is achieved. A certain bucket contains nothing but lingonberries, and it does so regardless of the fact that not all the lingonberries growing in the wood enter into it. The *quality* here is in principle lingonberries and nothing but lingonberries (not bilberries, not cloudberries, etc.). The *quantity* is negligible compared to the totality of lingonberries of our particular wood, all woods. A similar reasoning is valid when discussing the influence wielded by various human groups, the appearance of schools in mankind, etc.

4.3 Insights that May Lead Us to Esoterics

¹Some insights have existed in us before we came in contact with esoterics. Sometimes they were clearly formulated, but more often than not they were non-verbalized “inklings” or “assurances”. Some of these are:

²1) There is an invisible reality which is much bigger and more important than the visible one.

³2) The reality we know, the “visible world” or “earthly existence”, is only a preparation of this “other” and “higher”. Death is not the end, but the beginning of a new existence.

⁴3) Ordinary human thinking, conventional science, can only exceptionally establish causes. Therefore, there must be some higher knowledge which comprises the causes of all things.

⁵4) Things are what they are quite regardless of our knowledge or ignorance of them, our right or wrong ideas of them.

⁶5) On the whole, everything has a meaning. This does not imply, however, that everything that happens, even the least significant event, has a meaning.

⁷6) There are things that are in themselves right, good, true, regardless of the views people hold on them, public opinion, what “everybody knows”, and the dictates of those in power.

⁸7) Justice will finally prevail. Justice is done, if not in this world, then in another world.

⁹8) There is no such thing as a “free gift”. Everything must be paid for some time.

¹⁰9) There are superhuman, wise, and good intelligences.

4.4 Some Reminders about Esoteric Studies

¹Anyone studying esoterics must constantly remember that there is immensely much he cannot understand and that the ideas he forms of such things are often grossly erroneous. This is not to say that he should not try to understand. Only by trying to understand, and necessarily misunderstanding, will he finally approach understanding. Just as there is no other path to success than the one going through failures, there is no other path to understanding than the one going through mistaken views. According to the law of self-realization, the individual himself must see through his own misconceptions. This will afford him the truly deep understanding. Only when, through your own understanding, you have seen why, on what grounds, your misconceptions were erroneous will you understand and appreciate the knowledge of reality.

²Another important insight is the fact that we raise the lower and drag down the higher to our own level. In so doing we view existence in a false scale, compressed, and the more compressed the further away something is from us, just as large objects appear small when seen from afar. We read about superhuman and divine levels of consciousness and of will and treat them in our thought and speech as though they were familiar to us merely because we have names for them, names to which we have eventually become “used”. We should consider the fact that to

undeveloped man both causal (47:1-3) and essential (46) consciousness are incomprehensible, and to developed man in any case superessentiality (45) is incomprehensible. The right scale is actually the opposite of compressed: the further away from us a higher consciousness is, the greater are the distances between levels and stages. It is a greater distance in capacity between 45 and 46 than between 46 and 47, a greater distance between 44 and 45 than between 45 and 46, etc. Or to use fourth way terms: there is a considerably greater distance between man number 5 and man number 4 than between man number 4 and man number 1, 2, and 3 (the three last mentioned taken as one group at the same stage).

³To the disciple in his own process, understanding appears to be “everything” in the beginning. This is connected with the fact that the intellectualist exaggerates the importance of thought, and disregards the ability of doing, and also with the fact that the seeker is shifting the focus of his interests in life away from the matter aspect (possessions, position, status, etc.) to the consciousness aspect (experience, relationships, understanding, etc.). With time, however, the disciple will understand that realization, too, is important, then “equally important”, and finally the “only essential thing”, so that understanding will appear only as the necessary preparatory work for realization. Understanding is connected with the consciousness aspect, realization with the will aspect. And the consciousness aspect (the second triad) dominates during aspirantship and the earlier part of discipleship; the will aspect (the third triad), during the latter part of discipleship and on the path of initiations.

⁴Beginners in esoterics usually believe that their “spiritual” experiences, states they achieve during meditation and such things, are those higher kinds of consciousness and powers which they read of in esoteric literature. A similar case is that of the yogis, who read their own experiences into the descriptions made by Patañjali in *Yogasūtras*. However, no non-initiate can determine his own states of consciousness, and also an initiated disciple must be aided in this work by his teacher: Under the guidance of his teacher he undergoes all kinds of experiences, which his teacher will explain. Thanks to the teacher’s explanation, the disciple will subsequently be able to “place” these experiences, know to which kinds and states of consciousness they belong and (equally important!) to which kinds etc. they do not belong, their names, conditions, etc. That it must be done in this manner is logic pure and simple: No one who has not already walked the path can know its stations and stages, and the teacher walks the path anew, from beginning to end, with each new disciple he takes. But the uninitiated hold erroneous beliefs in these matters not only because their logic is weak, but also because their wishful thinking is strong.

⁵Anyone who starts studying esoterics on his own is wise in not demanding to comprehend what he reads at once, for this is impossible. The right method is to read the book through many times attentively. Then you will find that you understand more at each new reading, until finally everything has been clarified. You should allow some time to pass after each reading in order to give the unconscious the time to do its work, which facilitates comprehension.

⁶How many times do you need to read an esoteric book? You need to read it many times over also because you constantly change your state of consciousness, you apprehend what you read differently in different states and only in your highest states apprehend correctly what the text intends to tell you. In other words: a certain statement, a certain paragraph in the text may have a meaning that passes you in usual states. This meaning may be clear to you only at the twentieth reading, and it may be important to the understanding of the whole. Then perhaps you will forget that you had this insight, perhaps you must reconquer it at the thirty-fifth reading. The condition mentioned explains why nobody can say of basic esoteric works: “I have read that book. Now I want to read something else.”

⁷You should also, when reading, ask yourself: “Who is reading now?” which is connected with the insight saying “I am not one, I am many.”

4.5 *Esoteric Thinking*

¹The logical method of thinking starts from concepts as such. It views concepts as isolated, as self-sufficient, and as having a given and fixed import. The psychological method of thinking uses concepts only as temporary supports in its effort to perceive reality behind or beyond concepts. The psychological method of thinking perceives that the things of reality are all connected, have an inner link – the direct opposite of the tendency of the logical method of thinking to view things as isolated from one another. Furthermore, the psychological method of thinking sees that things have an inner meaning, an insight that as a matter of principle is alien to the logical method of thinking.

²Esoterics views things from above, makes explanations start from the higher, looks at processes from their end, their goal. That is also the reason why the disciple is always wrong when trying to judge the actions or non-actions of his teacher. The teacher knows the end, the goal, the purpose; but the disciple does not know.

³Esoterics has regard for the ideas existing in higher worlds, not for their imperfect, more or less failed expressions in lower worlds. For instance, an esoterician speaks about “school”, almost never about “esoteric school”, because school is originally an esoteric organization (the Atlantean temple schools where the rishis, or the members of the higher priesthood, were teachers), and so “esoteric” is an unnecessary addition. The esoterician views profane, exoteric schools as distorted manifestations of the idea in lower worlds. In esoterics, it is always a matter of viewing things from above downwards.

⁴It is necessary to think in different scales. Many things are true on a large scale which are not true on a smaller scale, and vice versa. For example, “Everything that happens has a meaning” is true on a large scale: every manifestation of a monad in the cosmos has a meaning. “Everything that happens has a meaning” is not true on a small scale: somebody has a toothache, happens to run his big toe into a table leg, has lost his eye glasses – accidental happenings without a meaning and without connection to cosmic purposes.

4.6 *What Esoterics is not*

¹In order to understand what esoterics is one must also understand what it is not: it is not mysticism, not religion, not sentimentalism, not moralism, not academic study.

²The mystic is passive and not self-determined, makes himself dependent on “guidance” and receives it not knowing what entities (“guides”) are involved. The esoterician is active and self-determined, walks the path of initiations which is incompatible with such passivity and obedience to unknown entities. The mystic lacks mental control, drowns in emotional ecstasy, falls prey to his clairvoyance and mediumism – all of which temporarily makes higher intellectual development impossible. On the other hand, the endeavour of the esoterician agrees with that of the mystic in respect of ennoblement of emotionality. The esoterician learns how to use emotional dynamics, however, not to be used by it, as the mystic does.

³The esoterician is not religious in a proper sense, but he has a religious attitude: reverence for the sacred, for higher beings, views existence from above, strives for “reconnection” (which is what the word “religion” means) with the divine. He has respect for the original truths of the universalistic religions, but is skeptical of the later additions and distortions made by the clergy. He has an understanding of the symbolic content of the “sacred writings”, but rejects dogmas, literalism, and fanaticism. If he performs rites, he always knows why he does so.

⁴Esoterics is understanding of the laws of life working implacably and justly, which is the direct opposite of human sentimentality and moralism. Some people say: “I don’t want to believe in that horrid karma doctrine. The Christian teaching of the forgiveness of sins and saving grace is much more sympathetic.” As if life and laws conformed to what they believe!

This subjectivism, this attitude of making individual or collective arbitrariness their guiding principle, is what destroys people's instinct of reality and prevents them from arriving at an understanding of esoterics.

⁵Esoterics is not academic study. Such study is pursued on a level where, in principle, everything is accessible to all, everything is supposed to be comprehensible to all. Then that level is as might be expected. Esoterics is the direct opposite of this: its truths are to be found lying in "layers upon layers", so that at the beginning of your study you must be prepared to comprehend just a very small part of it and always the most superficial and least essential parts first.

⁶The academia is controlled by dogmatists who set definite limits to research, prescribe what reality is supposed to look like, and persecute those who dare to exercise some independent thinking. Not one scientific discipline is free from dogmatism. Dogmatism rests on a multitude of unproven and unprovable prerequisites which must not be questioned and which distort the students' thinking from their first term at the university. Academic dogmatism is reinforced and exacerbated by the tyrannical influence on thinking wielded by diverse lobby groups who establish the temporarily ruling politically correct "truths" and strictly watch lest lapses and deviations from them are made.

4.7 *The Inner Emancipation of the Esoterician*

¹The esoterician must be emancipated from the ruling spirit of the times, the *zeitgeist* of his age, and the ideologies of those in power; must have set his thinking free from the religion holding sway in his society. In the ancient schools they were taught not to believe, and they were taught this in the first degree already. In their external life, they could pay respect to the ruling religion – in order not to run into trouble with the mundane powers – but they were no believers in that religion. On the contrary, they had seen it through. The criticism of Christianity voiced by such esoteric authors as Blavatsky, Besant, Leadbeater, and Laurency should be regarded as in complete harmony with school principles, for at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Christianity was the religion controlling all thinking in the West, the religion having tyrannical claims on the inner life of people and possessing the keys to the prison (in a symbolic and a literal sense). Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, the Christian Church has no such influence or power anymore. Nobody is fired from his job or put into jail for saying in public that he does not believe in some Christian dogma. Present-day esoteric students, therefore, must direct their critical eye to other tyrannies of thought that are stronger in our times and in our part of the world, such as the belief in the so-called Holocaust which is enforced by many governments, so that they jail or fine people who merely express their doubts about this event (or myth) in public.

²Craig Murray: "As a rule of thumb, if the government wants you to know it, it probably isn't true."

³The esoterician can never be a fanatic or an intolerant person. He has acquired an insight telling him that people are at different stages of development, and this must entail tolerance. The fanatic wants to force his opinion on other people, not comprehending that understanding has to grow from within. The intolerant person, who is upset when people do not think as he does, is a deplorable and ridiculous phenomenon. It should be added that you are not a fanatic because you are consistent in your own private life. You have a perfect right to be however unwavering and firm in your views as long as you do not desire to force other people to embrace them – there goes the dividing-line which the fanatic can never understand and respect. Neither does tolerance imply that you "accept everything". You may very well have definite, negative views on lots of things, also generally accepted "truths", and yet not in the least wish to force your views on other people.

⁴The esoterician does not at all want to convert occultists or new age people to esoterics. On

the contrary, he views occultism and the new age ideologies as inevitable phenomena in our mankind, where the great majority are at the emotional stage and do not possess any latent understanding of esoterics, so that they must distort all esoteric truths they happen to come across.

4.8 Being Serious in Your Esoteric Study

¹Question: Is there any simple rule of thumb that you might use to decide whether yourself or somebody else is serious about their esoteric study and are capable of having success on the path of esoterics?

²Answer: Yes, there is. Serious people are prepared to begin at the beginning, to take one step at a time, not to skip “those things that are only for beginners”, pouncing at once at the “advanced stuff”.

³The factor which most of all favours this undesirable tendency is vanity. That is why most systems stress humility. Humility is not so much a virtue as a quality which the disciple needs in order to be able to learn.

⁴Success in your study comes from your ability to learn, and is irresistible. Nothing may stand as an obstacle between you and the knowledge, if you are ripe for it. This implies that anything, even the least essential thing, may stand as an obstacle between you and the knowledge, if you are not ripe for it.

⁵Therefore, the teacher makes himself or the knowledge – or both – difficult of access in various ways. In so doing he protects the unworthy and unready from contacting a knowledge that could only harm them. In contrast, the worthy and ready cannot under any circumstances be put off except temporarily. Half-awake junior disciples, therefore, do a disservice to the teacher and the teaching when trying to attract the unripe to the teaching or begging the unwilling to stay on by glossing over unsympathetic traits in the teacher or the teaching, “sugar-coating the bitter pills”, etc.

4.9 Esoterics Cannot Become a Mass Movement

¹Esoterics cannot become a mass movement, but must for a long time be reserved for rather small circles of people. These circles do not proselytize in the society in which they exist, but co-opt only those who have independently found their way to the right literature, assimilated its content, and then searched for like-minded people.

²One of the grounds why esoterics cannot become a mass movement is the material nature of the knowledge. Everything has the three aspects – matter, consciousness, and motion (force) – and this is true of the knowledge as well. A reality idea (in contrast to fictions and illusions) is a molecule of causal matter, possibly involved into mental matter. In order to understand esoterics, you must have a sufficient number of such causal molecules in your causal envelope, you must have activated them and, if you are to grasp them by your mental thinking, you must have involved them into mental molecules. This is the material side of the process. The consciousness side is that you incorporate reality ideas with your thinking, work actively at the knowledge, through study, reflection, meditation. Few people, relatively speaking, have done this. The result is that there is a limited number of such activated causal molecules, so that the ones that do exist cannot be distributed among too many people. If the individual has only a few such causal molecules, then his understanding of esoterics will be very deficient, and one result of such a condition is the new age phenomenon. Therefore, it is better that a limited number of individuals receive quite many causal molecules, so that they can reach a sufficiently deep understanding of esoterics that will enable them to apply the knowledge in an expedient way.

³Mass “thinking” is alien to the esoterician. Mass “thinking” is not even thinking. As in all other things, the issue of the degree of intentionality, purposiveness, takes the top priority.

4.10 Motives of Esoteric Study

¹Many different motives may impel people to start studying esoterics. Some of these motives are better, that is: in better conformity with the purpose. Other motives are worse. The student must see through the latter in order to abandon them, the sooner the better. To seek the knowledge for its own sake is good, to seek it in order to be more useful to one's fellow human beings by its aid, is even better. Esoteric study must not for any long time be used as a self-therapy. Therapeutic needs may for some people be an entrance into the study. There are many such entrances that can work as such but not much more: a comfort to anyone who mourns the loss of a dear one through death is an example. There are many such things as may do a certain service at the beginner's stage, but not at all at intermediate stages, and which are outright hindrances at higher stages.

²Esoterics must not be viewed instrumentally, must not be exploited for purposes that are alien to it. Some people have tried to exploit esoteric knowledge for other purposes than the furthering of consciousness development. It is true that pursuing esoteric study you might acquire a greater general ability which can be useful to you in work life, in business life, etc. But if this is the case, it must be a quite unintended side-effect and must not under any circumstances be an essential motive, something intentionally strived for.

³In the equipment of the beginner there must be something more than curiosity and the urge of acquisition, which is camouflaged greed. There must be something deeper and also the ability to forgo, the ability to let go of something already acquired. Curiosity and the urge of acquisition are among the most mechanical manifestations in man, have nothing whatever to do with higher consciousness. Curiosity is irresponsible, mechanical thirst for sensations which is found also in animals such as cats, dogs, monkeys, etc. To many people curiosity and the desire to know come first, and spirituality comes next. But the inverse order must prevail. The desire and search for knowledge is, at best, an intentional will to expand one's consciousness.

⁴If your esoteric study is conditioned by greed, then it is more greed than esoterics. If it is conditioned by fear (fear of death, for instance), then it is more fear than esoterics. If it is conditioned by vanity (to bask in other people's admiration, for instance), then it is more vanity than esoterics. The wrong attitudes mentioned are based on the misconception that "the object ennobles the study". It does not. That misconception is a typical formative one or, to use the gnostic term, a hylic one.

⁵Early in his esoteric study, the disciple is taught the difference between person and thing, the individual and the general, curiosity and the desire to know. Later he is taught the equally important distinction between the desire to learn and the aspiration to insight. Curiosity deals with personal and individual matters, and is typically emotional. The desire to know rises above personal and individual things, is directed to the impersonal, superindividual, and general, and is typically mental. However, the desire to know often degenerates into some sort of craze for intellectual possessions, a hunger for more and more facts without consideration of their usefulness for the consciousness development of the individual or the collective. Aspiration to true insight rises above the desire to know just as the desire to know rises above curiosity. The aspiration to insight can be a manifestation of incipient causal consciousness.

4.11 Understanding of Different Esoteric Systems

¹In a school, the teaching usually starts from a definite system which all the disciples must assimilate, so that they master it. Normally, this should not take more than two years. Disciples shall not put questions to the teacher or senior disciples until they have thoroughly mastered the material and pondered upon it. They are taught to put whatever is not clear to them aside for the moment to return to it – over and over again until it is finally clear. The clarity and insight they gain must be the fruit of their own work. They must pay for these fruits with their own efforts.

²At the same time – from their first day in the school – they are set to work at their being. They are instructed to observe how their being improves and their understanding of the knowledge increases as well. They are taught to observe, at every moment, the temporary and somewhat more enduring changes of their own being and to delay their attempts at understanding difficult things till they reach better states. There is trust in life in this: the path lies there before me and I am walking it, life has a meaning and I am realizing it. Trust in self: I have all the higher and better states potentially, and I shall some time reach them. Trust in the Law: everything will come in due time, according to the manner in which the laws of life work, but until then I must be patient. This includes the understanding that one’s own consciousness expressions are not manifestations of some unitary, unchanging essence, some permanent “self”, but emanate from small, transient apparent selves; furthermore that non-transformed man always thinks, feels, acts, and tries to understand from a very small part of himself and that he insists on calling this small part “I” and “me”. The understanding that he may possess in such small parts of himself is much more limited than he can possibly suspect.

³Two or more systems can be taught in the school, with different applications and without confusion, just as people learn several languages which they then use in different circumstances, not mixing them. Hylozoics is such a system, a theoretical one. Vedānta is another theoretical system. Gurdjieff’s and Ouspensky’s teaching is a more practical system, just as yoga is a more practical system. The gnostic school used hylozoics as theory and hermetics as practice. It is not the intention that you should “translate” the terms of the one system into those of the other. Such efforts almost always are formatory. You should strive to understand every system from within itself. You can understand hylozoics in a purely intellectual way; you can understand the fourth way teaching by observing yourself and others and by working at the exercises given you.

⁴You can understand hylozoic terms such as “physical self”, “emotional self”, “mental self”, and “causal self” by acquiring the corresponding concepts, which you do by understanding their places in the general system. You can understand fourth way terms such as “man number one”, “man number two”, “man number three”, and “man number four” by pondering on the descriptions given and then observing yourself and other people. You make a big mistake, however, if you take “man number one” as “physical self”, “man number two” as “emotional self”, “man number three” as “mental self”, etc. It is a typical instance of formatory thinking: jumping to a conclusion on the basis of minimal study, scanty understanding, and mechanical identification without reflection.

⁵Even if in some individual cases these identifications may be correct, there is a principal difference between them which is clear from at least two facts: 1) “physical self”, “emotional self”, and “mental self” refer to three definite stages of development, whereas “man number one”, “man number two”, and “man number three” as a matter of principle do not refer to distinct lower and higher stages but to people at essentially the same stage. 2) We cannot ascertain in the concrete case whether George is a physical self, Kathy is an emotional self, and Andrew is a mental self. However, we can ascertain that Kathy is a woman number one, George is a man number two, and Andrew is a man number three. In this appear the theoretical nature and language of hylozoics, and the more practical nature and language of the fourth way. The difference between theory and practice is connected also with the difference in the scales on which we observe phenomena in reality and life. Theory has to do with a larger scale where we can see the meaning of great wholes of which we are parts but about which we cannot ascertain facts. Practice has to do with everyday life and our work in it, a scale where we can ascertain facts. Both scales are needed. (It is simplistic to speak as if there were only two scales. Actually there are many scales in each system.)

⁶The formatory nature of equalizing “physical self” with “man number one”, etc. lies in the fact that thinking is content here to pay attention to merely two external, formal similarities

between two modes of division, but does not consider essential differences. Similarities: 1) there is a tripartite division, and 2) this tripartite division concerns man's three basic kinds of consciousness functions – physical, emotional, and mental. To formatory thinking, these two formal similarities settle the matter. Formulating, reflective thinking goes many steps further, however, asking, for instance: Is this equalizing incorrect? Are there facts speaking against it? And it finds that such is indeed the case: physical selves should be at the stage of barbarism and thus cannot be interested in esoterics. Man (or woman) number one, however, may very well be a mental self – and it is not difficult to find in esoteric groups people number one who have prominent intellectual powers. Likewise there are people number three who are not mental selves, who do not display intellectual powers above the average, and in fact such people number three make up the majority.

⁷Formatory thinking is described principally as a mechanical preliminary simple sorting of things according to external, formal similarities.

⁸Another example of formatory thinking in esoteric studies: A man who had been studying Indian philosophy and then took an interest in hylozoics stated that the “three aspects” of vedānta – *sat*, *chit*, and *ānanda* – were the same as the three aspects of reality taught in hylozoics. But even if vedānta teaches three basic modes of existence (in the absolute or *brahman*), it does not follow from this that these three are the same as the matter, consciousness, and motion of hylozoics. Actually, only *chit* – which is consciousness – is an exact counterpart. *Sat* means “existence”, “being”, and *ānanda* means “bliss”. Evidently, vedānta lacks here the two concepts of “matter” and “motion”, and so it is impossible to say that the two systems teach the same “three aspects”. Anyone saying so has understood neither vedānta nor hylozoics.

4.12 Esoteric Study Enjoins Responsibility

¹During the last one hundred years and more we have received more esoteric knowledge than even the planetary hierarchy considered possible, and this concerning both world view and life view. Already there is more esoteric knowledge than mankind needs to rationally orient itself in existence, to have a comprehensible system, quite sufficient for an esoteric world view necessary for self-realization.

²The question is how fit for life this knowledge has made us, how much art of living, wisdom of life, ability to apply the knowledge we have acquired.

³The purpose is not that we shall try to procure knowledge of things of which we have absolutely no use in the worlds of man. We have received esoteric knowledge to be able to lead rational lives in the physical world, not to lose ourselves in speculations which are always (repeat: always) abortive. We have received the knowledge to develop our consciousness in an expedient manner, not to burden ourselves with useless learning. There is endless learning we do not need to live right. Consciousness development is the meaning of life for us to be able to help in the work in higher kingdoms at the processes of manifestation.

⁴It is part of discipleship that the individual selects what he needs for his activity and does not concern himself with theoretical learning that only becomes a burden and is basically incomprehensible. There are esoteric facts for all developmental stages – emotional, mental, causal, essential – publicized to spare those who are at these stages time-consuming research-work and to set the teachers free to do other tasks. All nowadays publicized knowledge thus is not for everybody. Surveying all this (corresponding to the different degrees of esoteric knowledge orders, adapted to the various stages of conception and practical realization), everybody must select what he needs from what he does not need.

⁵Many people are content that esoterics has liberated them from the current theological and philosophical views and afforded them an explanation of the phenomena of life. If subsequently they put the knowledge on the shelf and go on living their lives as usual, uncon-

cerned about these problems, then they have never seen what is meant by responsibility for others. Along with knowledge goes responsibility for the right use of knowledge, and this is particularly true of the esoteric knowledge. We have not received it to sleep better or to develop rapidly in an egoistic sense. According to the Law, much is demanded of anyone who has received much. Anyone who does not apply the knowledge as best he can makes a mistake. Evil arises in two ways: when you do the wrong thing and also when you know the right thing and can do it but nevertheless desist. As Pythagoras said once: "He who walks the path exists not for himself, but for others." If we will not use the knowledge right, then we have no right to it. If we will not develop our consciousness and understanding of reality and help others to the same, then we shall lose those opportunities in lives to come. There are many former initiates who do not renew their contact with the knowledge and many seekers who do not find it, even are unable to understand it.

4.13 Comprehension, Understanding, and Realization

¹To comprehend is to clearly grasp concepts. To comprehend the hylozoic teaching of the three aspects of existence, for instance, is to clearly grasp what is meant by matter, consciousness, and motion. To understand hylozoics is something quite different and much more. It is to have mastered the system so that, using it, you can explain what was previously inexplicable to you in a rational and unitary manner. It is to see that it cannot be otherwise, to be able to apply this insight in more and more contexts, to be able to draw conclusions which subsequently prove correct.

²Comprehension may work at one detail at a time, not paying much attention to other details. In contrast, understanding does not start from any detail, but from the whole, and apprehends the part or detail through its position in this whole. The more clearly you apprehend the relations between the whole and its parts, the more view-points from which you see them (the more scales on which you see them), the better you understand and the better you remember what you have learned. Anyone who understands has tried to realize it as well.

³You can comprehend esoterics using principle thinking (47:6). Understanding it, however, is something quite different and presupposes perspective thinking (47:5) and at least some contact with causal consciousness (47:3). Perspective thinking is a thinking of a higher quality, the first qualitative kind (as seen from below) that is able to apprehend down-scaled causal ideas. Quite a few people have developed some perspective thinking within a limited sphere of their own knowledge and experience. Esoteric study presupposes and, pursued right, entails the the improvement, expansion, and intensification of this faculty of perspective thinking.

⁴Illusions keep people in the emotional world; and fictions, in the mental world. Esoterics gives you access to the causal world. It is only in the causal world, the world of Platonic ideas, that the individual is able to think in accordance with reality, excepting physical learning in the physical world, based on definitive facts without hypotheses.

⁵The causal world, the world of Platonic ideas, is the "truly being". As a subjective consciousness content the idea "agrees" with reality. As an objective material causal reality it is the cause of the lower worlds.

⁶Understanding is a revealing energy that makes realization possible. In a deeper sense understanding means an increase of your participation in the cosmic total consciousness.