

I

A Brief Explanation of the Nine Paths

For convenience, the nine paths have been numbered as well as named. Though there does seem to be a natural progression from one path to the next, this is not to imply that one path is in any way higher than another. Yet, the movement along the phenomenon of the paths follows the route indicated by their ordering. This route can be looked on as a journey, with stopping points along the way. It would be like taking a long car ride to the home of a relative, and visiting several tourist attractions en route. The destination is the home of the loved one, but the various stopping points have value as well. Is stopping at Mt. Rushmore or Yellowstone better than the destination of your grandmother's home in Sacramento? Certainly all parts of the journey have value and each contributes to the entire trip.

Ultimately, the paths blend one into another, as will be explained in due course. The important thing to remember is that the paths lead to a natural unfolding of emotion; the use of emotion for the evolution of the recognition of our purpose; and an appreciation of the ultimate oneness of all creation.

The first triad of paths is in a sense the most challenging. They concern the discovery of emotion, the challenge of anger, and the gradual unfolding of other emotions. So, let's pay them their due and talk about them first. The Path of Shadows (or level 1) is a path of the early senses of emotion. Those on this path tend to move through the world in a foggy confusion, sensing dimly and uncertainly. They tend to react more instinctively than the other paths, and are most concerned with having immediate, basic, personal needs met. These individuals have limited expressive capacity and, though some of their number is taken up by the severely and profoundly mentally retarded, by no means is everyone in that group intellectually or developmentally disadvantaged.

The Path of the Channel (level 2) is the most populated path, and it represents one of the greatest challenges to humans, the control and constructive expression of anger. Those on this path can express anger easily and naturally, but the expression of other emotions is difficult or stunted. Personal concerns still overshadow those of others, and it is a struggle not to have anger infect relationships and interpersonal dealings. Vengeance is a strong motivator for those on this path. Moving to the genuine expression of a broader range of emotions is a very difficult task, and is a cause for celebration whenever it is accomplished. Those on this path bear one of the heaviest burdens and challenges of development.

The Path of Diversity (level 3) is the next most populous path, and it is achieved by the natural expression of a fuller spectrum of emotions. Those on this path can emote genuinely, but are captured in the spin of it all. There is a tendency to be labile in emotional expression, and emotion for its own sake is a great thrill for those on the Path of Diversity. This experience is important, but some control over the indiscriminate expression of emotion must be gained before the emotion of love can be appreciated to its fullest. Nevertheless, it is at this level that love can become consistently recognized, and this recognition leads to further evolution.

The next triad of paths concentrates on the development of love as a selfless giving, built upon a true love of all, including the Self. The Path of Kindness (level 4) has been described by Ace as the level of “kind beginningness.” These people find the good in everything, and are fascinated by it. On this path, true love-like feelings are experienced more reliably, and it is a happy level. There is a danger of stagnating at this level, as the happiness experienced can become selfish, and someone on this path may never learn the fuller joy of a love that gives to another. It is a level of good intentions, but unless one continues to evolve, tools for the realization of those intentions will not develop.

The Path of Joy (level 5) is a time of being in love with love. The joys that come with the discovery of truly giving to another begin to be appreciated deeply and fully. The trap on this path is the true possibility of becoming addicted to the sensations of falling in love, that biological rush of attraction and infatuation. Someone not negotiating the Path of Joy well will tend to move from relationship to relationship, never developing past the initial phase, due to that addiction. It should be noted that the word “relationship” refers to

more than those with people. It can be a relationship with ideas, causes, work, animals, etc. The exact form of the relationship may change with the target, but the general principles are the same.

The Path of Selflessness (level 6) can represent a pinnacle of sorts. On this path, one learns the meaning of “true love.” This is a time of selfless giving, with the realization that by doing so, one receives even more than one gives. The understanding and feeling that all are of one, ultimate essence, and that all can be loved for their part in that essence, is the deep secret of this path. Just as those on the Path of Joy fall in love with love and the beloved, those on the Path of Selflessness fall in love with the beloved and the All that is represented by the beloved. When this is achieved, a new stage of evolution is undertaken by the incarnation.

The third triad takes the incarnation on a journey inward, with a final blossoming outward toward all of creation. Not many incarnations are contained in this triad, and the tasks of these three levels are not as easily stated. The Path of Awakening (level 7) is a path of cosmic awakening, and a journeying inward. On this journey the incarnation must face all its old fears and faults, as the realization of the fact hits home that all that is, is within. Yet, despite this inward quest, the incarnation on the Path of Awakening must maintain contact with the outside, for learning the balance of inner and outer worlds is a necessary lesson as well.

Eventually, it becomes truly known and appreciated that there is interconnectedness in all creation. This leads to the Path of Recognition (level 8), where this interconnectedness is known to the incarnation in more than an intellectual way. It is realized in the depths of the being. Periods of “cosmic consciousness” can be experienced, and this time is largely one of transition between the realization of interconnectedness and the living of that realization, which is the province of the final path.

The Path of Bliss (level 9) is a path of living in pure bliss, where a full appreciation and experience of the interconnectedness of all creation becomes a way of life. Such individuals are the ultimate aim of an oversoul, and it works to create such an incarnation. Those who are experiencing the Path of Bliss are not perfect, although all the great avatars of the ages have been on this path. They all struggle with ordinary, everyday

concerns, for they are still humans. They even experience anger on occasion, though it is short-lived, focused, and not physically harmful in its expression.



The Development of Emotional Expression

The three paths to be considered here are the Path of Shadows, the Path of the Channel, and the Path of Diversity. The great challenge of these paths involves the recognition and eventual discrimination of emotional expression. This task must be very important, and indeed very difficult, as most people are busily engaged in it. Almost four-fifths of the human race is contained within the three paths involved in this crucial learning experience. It would seem then that the struggles of these paths are a central part of the human experience.

Level I: The Path of Shadows

One person in six is currently on the Path of Shadows. These people provide the base of the evolution of human consciousness. They operate on an unsophisticated level, and respond instinctively. Emotion is not recognized nor consciously apprehended, except in the most basic terms. As Ace explains it: *Those on the Path of Shadows are not even sure they have feelings, let alone be able to experience emotions in any meaningful way. They experience pain. They experience dissatisfaction. The emotions simply rumble beneath the surface, and they wander about this world dazed. What they do experience are mere whispers; tiny shadowings of emotion.* On this path, emotional energy bubbles underneath the surface of the psyche, waiting for something to develop. In many ways these people are the natural prey for all sorts of manipulation, especially by advertisers and the mainstream media. As they react more or less instinctively, they are pawns in the hands of basic drives. Abstraction and rational thought are not the first tools they lean on; those on the Path of Shadows are reactive, not proactive. They are the most likely to move along with the crowd.

The emotion which develops first, which finally breaks through to the surface of the psyche, is anger. This is not to say that those moving from the Path of Shadows become rageful or are out of control. It simply means that anger provides the impetus for the other emotions, and that anger is the first emotion those on this path can truly access and work with. Yet, these individuals are not to be despised, pitied, or ignored. They show the way for all of us, and those that move from this path are to be congratulated. Ace describes the process this way: *Little can be done actively to advance one on the Path of Shadows. It's just a natural process for anger to bubble forth after some time. It is a beautiful thing. It is the natural flowering of emotion. Participating in that process can even be seen as an honor.*

Another important consideration when looking at the dynamics of any of these nine paths is that which is not ordinarily seen, what Jungian psychologists call “the shadow.” This is not to be confused with the name of the path currently being considered. Most simply stated, the Jungian concept of the shadow is that of a repository for all that we deny or repress about ourselves. The shadow consists of qualities we might consider bad or undesirable, but also contains qualities we consider too far beyond us to be considered a part of us. In this way, both our noblest and our worst aspects are relegated to the shadow. When the energy of this part of ourselves becomes stymied or too bottled up, it erupts, giving rise to words or deeds that are not typical, but which exemplify the energy of our shadows. You might hear someone say, “I just wasn’t myself” when trying to explain an eruption of shadow energy.

The Shadows referred to by the name of this path are those of the impressions of emotions, not denied or repressed qualities within the personality. For a fuller explanation of the Jungian usage of the term, works such as Robert Johnson’s *Owning Your Own Shadow* should be consulted.

At any rate, each path has qualities which are typically found in the Jungian shadow of individuals on that path. The qualities to be mentioned in this work are general guidelines. However, each person is an individual, and may have other elements contained in the (Jungian) shadow. According to Ace, the shadow energy of those on the Path of Shadows is difficult to quantify, due to the slight stirrings of emotion felt on this

path. Nevertheless, Ace states that, typically, those on this path: *Hold deep their fear and anger. Strangely enough, the expression and true feeling of this [Jungian] shadow energy leads them onward. The anger and fear are less complicated than those of someone on the Path of the Channel, and are vaguely formulated. There is much bare instinct in those on the Path of Shadows, and their [Jungian] shadow is largely unnamed fears, which strike at their very sense of existence.*

Helping someone move along this path is not easy. Ace goes on to say: *Involving someone's energy must be done carefully with those on this path. They can be easily hurt by the engagement of energy, as they cannot transmute it well, and it merely sinks within. They can only be given gentle guidance, or be led along like sheep. Until emotional energy begins to grow out, that is all they can tolerate.* The use of gentle guidance is due to a lack of facility with the handling of emotional things. As was stated before, many of the intellectually disadvantaged fill this path, though it should not be assumed that all on the Path of Shadows have intellectual handicaps, nor the other way around. Rather, the defining feature of this path is the vague and incomplete ability to experience and express emotion.

As an aside, there does not seem to be a significant correlation between intelligence as it is usually understood and the path that one is on. My experience with this material seems to indicate that I.Q. is not a determiner of moral or spiritual development.

In about half of those on this path, the emotion of anger does eventually break through, and it begins to be appreciated, expressed, and experienced. This *natural flowering of emotion*, as Ace calls it, brings these people to the next path, the Path of the Channel.

Level 2: The Path of the Channel

This path is the most populated, with almost three-eighths of humanity engaged in its task. Ace is very direct when outlining this task: *They are the manifestation of*

humankind's most basic struggle: the mastery of anger. As a concentrated form of energy, anger can be very strong. As such, it is the first emotion that breaks through. Although this path is the most common path, it can also be the most vexing and destructive one. Yet, it is necessary. The struggle for the mastery of anger is paramount. Not only that, but anger cuts the channel to allow the expression of other emotions. Those on this path begin to feel the hints of other moods and emotions, yet anger is the one they truly understand. Other emotions begin to make impressions on the surface, eased along by the strong channel of anger that these people free.

The fact that, in Ace's estimation, almost two-thirds of those born on this path never leave it, underscores the great struggle involved. While on this path, anger is the emotion most easily and frequently felt. But as the emotion which "cuts the channel," anger serves a useful purpose. Due to anger's ability to break through the surface of the psyche, other emotions can eventually come to be expressed. Anger also provides a counterpoint to the tasks of other paths, especially with those whose tasks concern the expression of love, for, as Ace says: *Without anger, love is not as clear or unique.*

Ace states that: *Anger represents the struggle of power and survival.* As such, those on this path tend to be rather self-concerned and see the acquisition and use of power as essential to their survival. *Their experience of emotion is rather self-centered. They are always (and I mean always) hooked on considering how the world's goings-on affect them, and therefore emotions fall into the self-centered realm. That is not to say that they never glimpse more sophisticated levels, but it is extremely difficult for them to maintain any such glimpses.*

The shadow side of people on the Path of the Channel offers a very different glimpse, for: *Here lies tenderness, vulnerability -- all their soft spots that they wish no one to discover. Also, for some, here lie excessive rage and overtly violent tendencies. These people often dislike their own violent streak and attempt to keep it under wraps, but whenever it shows, it is undeniably justified in their*

minds. Given the tender side of these people, which lies buried in the shadow self, it would seem advantageous to appeal to that portion of their character when dealing with those on this path. But, when Ace was asked if one could go about doing that very thing, he replied: You can't, usually. Remember how alien and frightening shadow energy can be for most any human. Those on the Path of the Channel are ruled by anger, as I have said, but also you must realize that another facet of the "gem" of anger is fear. These incarnations are especially vulnerable to fear, as they try so very hard not to admit to themselves at any level that they are afraid. The experience of shadow tenderness is frightening to such an incarnation and signals a condition of vulnerability, and therefore a weak and unguarded position. They tend to be very quick to pull back from any such experiences when the slightest uneasiness is felt.

People on this path certainly can be difficult to get along with, but they can rise to positions of great authority, even heads of state. In fact, wars often occur when members of this path interfere with each others' pursuit of power. Notice how fear has played a great part in the statesmanship of a number of governments throughout history, even very recent history. This serves to keep those ruled by anger and fear to remain in power. But is all this violence necessary? Why can't we all just decide to get along with one another?

Ace responds to the question of violence as follows: *Violence is seen often as a part of humanity best left behind in evolution. Yet it will always be a part of the human situation. More to the point, it reflects that most basic human conflict, that of the struggle with anger and its expression. Violence has its place, at least for most of humanity, as a teaching tool. It teaches the destructiveness of anger "poorly expressed," and the resultant mirroring of so many in the Path of the Channel. If such violent acts serve to illuminate and lead to expressions of anger less graphic, it will have served its purpose. They choose to take part so that man will learn. Sadly, perhaps, many are*

slow learners in this course. So it seems that the sooner we learn, the less violence will be needed.

It is paramount that individuals on this path learn to achieve a range of emotional expression, from sadness to the more joyful emotions. It is only with this increase in emotional expressiveness and breadth that any progress can be made. This is not to say that by moving onward from this path, one has conquered anger completely, and no longer has to worry about it. Anger is a constant struggle for those in human form. However, beyond this path, anger is more and more easily handled, and when expressed, is directed and constructive. Ace is very clear on this point when he says: *The understanding of anger as a drive for humans is central. It can be so very strong that it affects many people on many levels. Moving from the Path of the Channel to the Path of Diversity does not give one complete freedom from the difficulty of anger. Mastery is gained, to be sure, but mastery primarily in the sense that anger does not rule all.*

But the biggest questions remain. How does someone recognize that he or she is on this path? And once this is recognized, how does someone on this path move on to other tasks by developing emotional diversity? To determine if you are currently on this path, Ace advises: *Are you easily angered, so that you are ruled by it and too often carried away by it? This is very typical of the Path of the Channel, and requires immediate attention. Start to recognize other emotions as valuable, and not just self-serving. Watch for their occurrence, and understand their triggers and implications for your life. Only when this can be reliably done can you move consciously to the Path of Diversity.* In order to help themselves, people on this path can: *Think about the last time you were angry. Think about the circumstances – what caused the anger, to your way of thinking. Think now about alternative ways of reacting to that situation. See how you possibly could have moved in a different direction. Feel the choice and power of that point. Play in your mind with the different outcomes. Realize*

then that, in so doing, you are experiencing emotions other than, and possibly quite different from, anger. You have then just taken a tiny step toward the Path of Diversity. One of the best things about such an exercise is that it can help shape the future. Imagining possible future situations and alternative responses can help give those alternative responses strength and increase their likelihood of occurring. *Planting the seeds for the fruitful use of alternatives in the future will assist development even more.*

Others associated with these individuals can help, much more so than with those on the Path of Shadows. Ace suggests: *Call attention to emotions encountered as affecting other people. Point out the true nature of interaction; that is, a give and take, not just a take, as many on this path are inclined to view their contact with others. Responsibility for their part in interactions is a crucial lesson for them. It's partly this realization that allows for the increased playing with emotion that tends to lead to the Path of Diversity. The specifics vary with the person in question. For some, the pointing out of responsibility can take the form of hard confrontation and serious personal consequences. Remember that choice is involved, and those on the Path of the Channel tend to be a hard-to-convince lot. A great many repetitions are frequently needed. It's not often sweetness and light.*

Do tell, Ace. This is one of the qualities about Ace admired by those that have come to know him. He does not take a fluffy, "all is beautiful" sense toward the Universe. He expresses the sense that to appreciate one thing, the opposite must also exist and be appreciated. You have already read, for example, of the need for anger to exist in order for love to be fully expressed. Nor does Ace deny the existence of evil, for as he says metaphorically: *Behind God lurks the Devil.* And in response to our query about whether evil is a force, like love, he replied: *A force can arise in the absence of that which should be. Energy is everywhere and is readily shaped. If love is not there to shape energy, its absence will give the energy shape. This*

corresponds to what is commonly called evil. Yet, even something like evil serves a purpose, as evil is a spur or a glue to add itself to the equation of development. In other words, even when the Universe seems “nasty,” it is helping us along. Realizing that fact can assist someone on the Path of the Channel to discover those all-important alternatives to anger, alternatives that will lead them to the next challenge.

Level 3: The Path of Diversity

This path counts roughly one-fourth of humanity among its members. According to Ace: *The Path of Diversity is about learning expression of emotions and learning to control them, lest they control you.* He describes the moving onto this path as follows: *As emotions begin to express themselves and erupt to the surface, the incarnation enters the Path of Diversity. On this path, many channels have been cut, many emotions are felt. These are both wild and controlled. Those on this path experience wide moods, shifts, changes. They know the heights of joy. They know the depths of despair. It is easy to become controlled by emotion on this path, and a doting on this or that feeling only interferes with development. Yet they must be felt, for they contribute to the evolution of the incarnation. Love begins to show itself to those on this path, but it is mingled so much with so many other emotions, from ecstasy to depression. However, as love is given more attention by the incarnation, it begins to move then onto the Path of Kindness.*

The Jungian shadow of this path is described by Ace as follows: *Most of them keep traditionalism in their shadows. They fancy themselves as either outside or above the ordinary, yet they secretly crave a stable base so they know where they've come from. Often, someone on the Path of Diversity will gravitate toward a traditional friend or spouse to provide that base. A very rational person also qualifies as such a base for them.*

Having moved onto the Path of Diversity, an individual would find that a fuller range of emotional expression is available, and this expression is gloried in. Life becomes something of a rollercoaster ride, with emotions being tried out just for the experience. This can become something of an addiction, and many born on this path do not progress past it. The largest challenge to these people is the sorting out of emotions, and the ability to center one's energy on the emotion of love, rather than on the experience of a variety of emotions for their own sakes. By doing so, those on this path move from a self-centered expression of emotion to one that is more truly giving. Also, in contrast to those on the Path of the Channel, whose task is to broaden the range of expression, those on the Path of Diversity are to refocus their energies again, this time on the expression of love and kindness, before they can progress to another path.

Ace summarizes the difficulties of the Path of Diversity in this way: *There's an addictive quality to this path. Those on this path aren't aware of how lovely love can feel, so they continue to skip from emotion to emotion, thrilling in the differences between feelings, as well as in the feelings themselves. Until they can sort out and master which feelings are nourishing and which are not, they're stuck on this path.* Despite this tendency to skip from feeling to feeling, those on this path do not pause to understand their process and tend to feel many emotions shallowly, while: *They can take themselves quite seriously, and see themselves as plumbing the depths of all that is human.*

This path is densely populated with artistic and creative individuals, as the wellspring of emotions found there feeds many passions and modes of expression. Those who can transcend the potential addiction of this path, however, can still maintain their creative instincts, and there are artists who have glimpsed bliss and attempted to incorporate its message into their creations.

All this emphasis on the expression of emotions and the variety of their display brings up a curious point. What about males in a culture such as ours, where it is still the norm for men to repress their feelings, to shy away from the active expression of most (especially tender or vulnerable) emotions? It seems that men do comprise their fair share of the members of this path, yet the thinking, unfeeling machines many men seem to be

believes their possible membership. Often, a man may use intellectual, rational tactics to keep himself from the experience of emotion. Wouldn't this keep him from being able to work this path effectively?

Ace clarified this paradox of "rational" men being on this path as follows:

Emotionally repressed cultures, such as western, industrialized ones (or most of them, anyway), have a difficult time expressing directly and use mental defenses to hold direct emotional expression at bay. They find it exciting (emotion, that is), but must toe the line regarding cultural expectations, so those males on the Path of Diversity, and a few females as well, stop the actual ride short of direct expression.

Curiously enough, some of these can move on to the Path of Kindness by vicariously experiencing the ride through friends or a mate. They can begin to tire of the lability that way, and focus on more kindly emotions. Some are not linked to another who can act it out for them, and these have a tough time moving on. This is why two incarnations on this path sometimes team up. One is the hyper-cognitive member and the other is the expressive one, using the rational other as a base. It seems, then, that in this way each helps the other in their journeys along the Path of Diversity.

There is another trap for the unwary on the Path of Diversity, and that is the pull of psychic phenomena. Ace feels that these abilities should be developed naturally, and that the surest path to psychic attainment is the spiritual development that parallels the paths set out in this book. Yet, he admits that: *As far as development goes, strong conscious effort can bring results to someone on the Path of Diversity, but they are most likely to be distracted by the phenomena and stunt their own growth.* This seems to be another of the addictive qualities of this path, as the thrill of developing "psychic powers" overrides the underlying meaning of those abilities, which is the oneness of all and the greatness of what we truly are. Those on this path must

remember that their task is to focus on the role of love in their lives, and the giving qualities of that love.

A way to recognize that one is currently on the Path of Diversity is to: *Look at yourself day to day. Do you find yourself enjoying the rapid flow from feeling to feeling so much that you provoke others to provide you a stimulus for a new emotion? Do you enjoy the up and down, the ride, as it were, rather than the destination or reason for the trip? Do your emotions lead you around so that you react out of them, instead of their being a reaction by you? To leave this path, you must learn to take counsel from emotion and realize that love is the feeling to cultivate. To do this, pay close attention to emotions. See where they could lead. Now see that you have a choice as to whether you take that path. Emotions are more like the headlights of the car, rather than a motor out of control. Remember you are always at the wheel whether you choose to steer or not. You would be wise to follow those paths that lead in loving directions.*

In response to this, we said that it may sometimes be difficult to discern the loving path. Ace responded: *That's true. Sometimes experience is necessary, as results can be telling. Actions and emotions form a long and complicated chain, which is sometimes difficult to unravel link by link.*

In the case of “rational” members of this path, Ace advises: *In looking only at yourself, you may be deceived. Look instead at those you are most in contact with, and those whose company you most enjoy. See if you thrill to their changes, their moving from emotion to emotion. Do you enjoy the show? Or does it stir something within you so that you want to have it continue? If so, you have found yourself out. To leave this path, you must learn from emotions, even those of others, and realize the truth of love's pre-eminence.*

Also, to move beyond this path, one must: *Be able to appreciate the facts that love is the emotion to cultivate, that only through love can ultimate spiritual development occur, and that those on the Path of Diversity indeed have specific tasks to undertake in order to move along.*

Take, for example, someone who recognized that emotions do lead him or her on a merry chase, yet they are hesitant to see the predominant path of their situation. Such a person can still understand that a leaning toward the expression of love and love-like feelings will ultimately bring the greatest development. If this understanding is truly achieved, this person will naturally move toward the Path of Kindness. To leave this path, a person must be rid of the addiction to the change in feelings.

Moving on from the Path of Diversity requires some emotional discipline. It requires a need to keep from being swept along by emotions, one's own as well as those of others, while being able to recognize them and their effects. This is not a call to deny emotions. It is rather a call to use what they tell us, and to focus our energies on the expression of kind and loving emotions. As that happens, a dawning occurs. It is a dawning into the realization of the power and wonder of love.