

How To Study The Nature of The Soul

THE METHOD OF STUDY

The Nature of The Soul has a threefold approach to study:

- the text
- the meditation work
- the discussion

Together they balance the overshadowing wisdom of the course, the inner experience of that wisdom, and its expression in the world of affairs.

Many students are now studying the course on their own or in study groups, and there is a growing need for information about these methods. The following suggestions and examples focus on *Individual Study*, *Study Groups*, and *The Meditations*.

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INDIVIDUAL STUDY

The Nature of The Soul is a course in self-initiated spiritual growth and development. It is designed to facilitate step-by-step unfoldment from individuality to group awareness and conscious service to the One Life. Each lesson in this course is a step in a transformative process. This process includes:

STUDYING THE MATERIAL

The information included in the course is presented in a rhythmic sequence. Each lesson builds a foundation for understanding and prepares the way for the next lesson. This progression from one lesson to the next creates a harmonic rhythm which aids the transformation process.

In order to establish and maintain this rhythm, we suggest that all students of the course do the following:

- ◆ Begin with the Introductory Lesson and study each lesson in turn. Skipping around or starting in the middle will break the rhythm and cause confusion.
- ◆ Spend at least one week (seven days) studying each lesson. Begin every new lesson on the same day of the week. You may devote more than one week to each lesson, but if you do, consider spending the same number of weeks with every lesson.
- ◆ While studying the course, concentrate your atten-

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tion on the course. Avoid practicing internal exercises from other disciplines, as they may not combine well with the exercises in *The Nature of The Soul*.

We do not mean to imply that this course is in any way superior to any other course or discipline, yet, in order to maintain the internal rhythm of this course, you must stay in the course. Once you have completed N.S. (*The Nature of The Soul*), we encourage you to include other schools and disciplines in your study and practice.

- ◆ Complete the assignments. The structure of the course is similar to that of a textbook and includes frequent assignments. These assignments can be divided into three types:
 - Subjective: These include internal activities such as the meditations.
 - Objective: These include external activities such as writing a paper.
 - Subjective and Objective: These combine internal and external activities in a single assignment (such as keeping a meditation log).

In each case, the assignment is there for the specific purpose of assisting you to expand your awareness or embody a new concept. Completing the assignments is part of the rhythm of the course.

- ◆ **Practicing the Meditation Techniques:** The internal disciplines included in *The Nature of The Soul*

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are presented in a natural progression from basic to advanced. The meditations are the heart of the course; the information in the lessons is designed to aid your practice and comprehension of the meditations.

1. Practice each of the meditation techniques exactly as described.
 2. Keep a meditation log. A daily written record helps you move the abstract realizations gained in meditation into your outer life and affairs. Each entry should include the day and date, the meditation technique, and any noticeable results. Include all realizations and internal experiences which occur during the meditation, and any related insights and experiences which occur during the day or in your dreams.
 3. Learn the meditation forms. Be patient with the process. Over time the results will become apparent. We encourage you to practice these techniques as an on-going process for your inner growth.
- ◆ **Embodying What You Learn:** *The Nature of The Soul* course is designed to help you find your place, and take up your work, in the One Life. It does this through:
1. **The Course of Instruction:** This instruction consists of 41 lessons and lasts at least ten months. During this period concentrate on learning the ideas, practicing the techniques, and making The

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Wisdom part of your daily life and affairs. Studying the lessons and practicing the techniques begin the process of self-transformation.

2. **The Embodiment Cycle:** The months of instruction are followed by a matching period of application. *The Nature of The Soul* course is completed by moving what you learn from the instruction into and beyond your immediate environment. This application or embodiment of The Wisdom includes:
 - **Subjective activity:** Most of your service will be subjective, and may include many of the techniques you learned in *The Nature of The Soul* and its sister courses. As you continue to practice The Wisdom after completing the instruction, you will create an opportunity to help transform your environment.
 - **Objective service:** Your subjective practice may result in opportunities for providing objective service to family, friends, co-workers or the environment.

Approaching the Material

Because students often approach a new course with preconceptions based on previous experiences, keeping an open mind and an open heart will allow your intuition to integrate those experiences with the new material presented in the course.

There are a variety of methods of studying *The Nature*

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of The Soul. A positive approach is one which helps the student initiate his or her own growth and development. A method which is very supportive of self-initiation is Individual Self-directed Study.

Initiating your own spiritual growth and development means choosing a path of study, practice, and application which is right for you.

The primary value of individual, self-directed study lies in:

- ◆ **A stronger focus of will:** Every time you decide to study a lesson, practice a technique, or do an assignment, you are exercising your will. As with any other kind of exercise, in order to receive the benefit you must do the work. No one can do it for you. That process is described in this recommendation from *The Path of Initiation, by Lucille Cedercrans, Vol. II, lesson 4:*

“Many students reading this lesson will wonder how to do this work of lifting the polarization without direct contact with a teacher. I shall answer that question in several ways. Firstly, let us understand that all aspiring to the Soul are in direct contact with a teacher, namely their own Soul; and by continued aspiration, they will soon come to recognize the contact.

Secondly, aspirants are enabled, through their right aspiration, to contact higher levels of awareness, and from these levels draw down those concepts of Truth which provide a sure

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foundation for their later understanding.

Thirdly, aspirants learn to recognize experience as a great teacher, and through their efforts to live the Truth which they have grasped, they develop in the school of experience a consciousness rich in understanding. They do this deliberately, in full awareness of the activity, and their everyday life becomes a thing of beauty, regardless of appearances.”

- ◆ **Self-initiated service:** As you respond to the inner needs of your environment your awareness of your place and function in the One Life expands. This in turn leads to conscious service to that Life as you take your place in It.

Teaching the Material

If you are considering teaching *The Nature of The Soul*, we earnestly suggest that you first experience the course. Experiencing the course will help you become aware of the difficulties attached to teaching. These include:

- ◆ **The sage on a stage:** The idea of being a spiritual teacher can be so attractive that seekers attempt to create the outer form without first achieving the inner content. This difficulty can be avoided by:
 - Studying the course materials: You cannot teach what you do not know. First experience it for yourself, then facilitate the course.

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- Practicing what you learn: You cannot teach what you cannot perform. Practice and perform the meditation techniques yourself, then teach others.
- ◆ **Being a “successful” teacher:** The teacher’s attention must be on the Wisdom. A teacher does not need a lot of students, nor does teaching have to occur in a conventional classroom.

STUDY GROUPS

We encourage each study group to consider the following suggestions. Some suggestions may seem appropriate for your group, while others may not. As your group gains experience and develops its intuition, it will refine its group process. Adapt these suggestions to your own circumstances as your alignment indicates.

THE LENGTH AND FREQUENCY OF EACH MEETING

Most groups meet once a week, while some meet more often and some less. The average length of a group meeting varies from group to group. Some meet for as little as 1½ hours (and take several meetings to cover a single lesson). Others meet for over 3 hours (and may try to cover each lesson in a single meeting). The length of the meetings, and how many meetings it takes to cover each lesson, are entirely up to each group.

Suggestion: Find a point of balance between hurrying through the lessons and lingering over them.

- Choose a time frame that enables you to take full advantage of the lesson material.
- Adapt the suggestions to your time frame.
- Meet at a regular time and place.

BEFORE EACH MEETING

Suggestion: Some have found it helpful to preview/re-

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view material prior to each group meeting.

DURING EACH MEETING

- ◆ **MEETING FACILITATORS:** The role of the meeting facilitators vary from group to group. Basically, the individuals are responsible for keeping the group focused. This responsibility could rotate from one meeting to the next so everyone has the opportunity to take a turn or to pass.
- ◆ **OPENING EXERCISE Suggestion:** Begin each meeting with a group meditation. Use the form of meditation which the class is presently studying. During the first few lessons, when you have not yet been given a meditation form, you could use the short meditation form found in *The Nature of The Soul*, on p. 78.
 - “1. Turn attention to the physical body and realize that you are not your body.
 2. Turn attention to the emotional nature and realize that you are not your emotions.
 3. Turn attention to the mind and realize that you are not your thoughts.
 4. Focus the attention in the ajna and meditate for three minutes on the following seed-thought:
‘Having pervaded this body, emotions and mind with a fragment of myself, I remain.’ ”

Further Suggestions:

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- The meeting facilitator could lead the meditation.
- The meditation could conclude with The Great Invocation found in the front of the book.
- Late comers enter quietly or wait outside if the meditation is in progress. A noisy entry can disturb a group already practicing the meditation.

THE READINGS

- ◆ **The First Reading** Suggestion: Begin each lesson by reading the entire lesson aloud, from beginning to end, without stopping for questions or comments. During this first reading, be receptive to the meaning behind the entire lesson. Options for this first reading include:

Example 1: The meeting facilitator could read the lesson aloud.

Example 2: The group members could take turns, with each person reading one paragraph aloud, continuing around the group until the lesson is complete.

Example 3: The entire group could read the entire lesson aloud, with everyone speaking the same words simultaneously.¹

This first reading is done at the beginning, and only at the beginning, of every lesson. As the group gains practice with the process of alignment, it can consciously align with and stand receptive (as a group) to the thought-form of the Wisdom which overshadows the

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course. This alignment will enhance the learning process.

- ◆ **The Second Reading Suggestion:** Following the first reading, do not stop to discuss the lesson that you just read!² Instead, pause for a few moments of contemplative silence before beginning a second reading which will focus on one paragraph at a time. After re-reading a paragraph, use your intuition to discuss it and relate it to your life and affairs. Repeat the process with each paragraph. There are several ways to organize this second reading, including:

Example 1: The meeting facilitator could read each paragraph aloud.

Example 2: The group members could take turns, with each reading a paragraph aloud as the group progresses through the lesson.

Example 3: The entire group could read each separate paragraph aloud, with everyone speaking the same words simultaneously.³

Contemplating The Concepts

Suggestion: After reading a paragraph the second time, pause for a few moments and contemplate the abstract concepts.⁴ Then discuss, explain or question those concepts.

Example 1: After allowing the group to gather its thoughts, the facilitator could ask if anyone has comments or questions.

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Example 2: The group could take turns commenting or asking questions about the paragraph, with each person being given the opportunity to speak or to “pass”.

Example 3: The person who read the paragraph aloud could break the silence by offering or inviting comments and questions.

Relating The Concepts To The Everyday World

Suggestion: After discussing the concepts, pause for a few moments to contemplate how the concepts relate to the everyday world. Then attempt to feel and describe that relationship.

Example 1: The facilitator could ask if anyone has a story or comment that relates the abstract concept to everyday life or the world.

Example 2: The group could take turns offering comments.

Example 3: The person who read the paragraph could initiate offering examples, comments, and/or questions.

Repeat the above steps with each paragraph in turn until you complete the lesson. Give yourself as much time (and as many meetings) as you need to complete each lesson.

CLOSING EXERCISE

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Suggestion: Close each meeting with a group meditation led by the facilitator or other member. This meditation could take the form of a new technique encountered in the current lesson or (if there is no new technique) one the group has been practicing.

AFTER EACH MEETING

- ◆ **Practice the techniques:** The meditation exercises are an *essential* part of the course. You cannot get the full benefit of the course unless you practice the techniques! We therefore *strongly recommend* that you practice the exercises when and as indicated.

THE MEDITATIONS

“Meditation is a technical process whereby Soul contact is realized and Soul infusion achieved.” p.44

Meditation trains the persona to align with the Soul, discover its purpose, and apply that purpose in inner and outer activity. The Soul becomes causative to the persona, and the persona becomes receptive to the Soul.

FOUNDATIONAL TECHNIQUES

The meditation techniques used in the course can be divided into two types, invocation and evocation.

- ◆ **Invocation** brings a divine energy down into manifestation, giving it shape and form in time and space. These techniques help bring an overshadowing potential into its first appearance (as when a person is born).
- ◆ **Evocation** brings an indwelling divine energy out into full appearance. These techniques help move the first appearance into full expression (as when an infant grows to maturity).

The Motion of Consciousness

Meditation is also the downward and outward motion which produces inward and upward growth. The techniques produce this motion through a three-step process, including an ascent, meditation proper, and a de-

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scent.

- ◆ During the first part of the meditation exercises, the consciousness:
 - Ascends through the persona instrument, relaxing the body, calming the emotions, and focusing the mind. This prepares the persona to act as an instrument of contact with Divinity.
 - Aligns with and becomes receptive to an aspect of Divinity, such as the Spiritual Soul. This prepares the persona to act as an instrument of transmission of Divine quality, characteristic or energy.

- ◆ During the second part of the exercises, the consciousness contacts an aspect of Divinity, and either:
 - Invokes a Divine quality downward into appearance, and/or
 - Evokes a Divine quality outward into full expression.

- ◆ During the third or descent portion of the exercises, the Divine quality, characteristic or ray is radiated forth into appearance. The radiatory process includes the entire persona instrument (mind, emotions, and body), each part of which receives some portion of the Divine energy.
 - Invocative radiation impresses a Divine quality (on either the substance or consciousness).
 - Evocative radiation draws a Divine potential out (of either substance or consciousness) into full expression.

The descent grounds both the Divine energy (giving it shape and form) and the meditator.

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All of these alignments, connections, and radiations are created by the directed focus of the consciousness. This directed focus is developed through the regular practice of the techniques in Lesson 3 (on pp. 45 - 48) and Lesson 13 (on pp. 168 - 171). These two techniques are the foundation for all the meditation work in *The Nature of the Soul*. They are the heart of the sequential process which develops the persona skills, and the alignment between the Soul, mind and brain, which make the Soul work possible.

Placement of the Consciousness

The meditation exercises work on the principle that "Energy follows consciousness." The self or identity is placed between, and relates, Divine potential to manifest condition. This relationship causes the overshadowing solution and the manifest condition to become one. The stronger the relationship, the quicker the transformation.

In the exercises, the consciousness places itself in a point midway between a manifest condition and an overshadowing potential, then extends its awareness up to the potential solution and down to the condition. This creates a relationship, in consciousness, between the solution and the problem, a relationship which the Divine energy of the solution must follow.

The point of placement is usually one of several centers (organs of energy) located in or near the head. At first, the point of placement is closer (in frequency) to the persona instrument than to the overshadowing Spiritual

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Soul. Later, as the student gains more experience, the center used is midway between the overshadowing Soul and the persona.

This progression from place to place is an essential feature of the meditation exercises. The earlier, more persona-oriented techniques prepare the instrument for the later work. They build the alignment between persona and Soul and from Soul to persona, which allows the downward and outward motion of Divine energy to take place. Thus, practicing the earlier techniques (especially the transmutation technique on *p. 108*) is an essential part of the course. One cannot truly practice the later techniques unless the necessary alignments have been built.

The Science of Impression

The early techniques are relatively simple, and focus on impressing a Divine energy on one's own personality. Later techniques assume the earlier work was done and the alignment built, and focus on impressing a Divine energy on the environment.

In either case, whether one is impressing one's personality or environment, one is still transmitting a potential. The meditator is a midwife to a potential solution. One helps the overshadowing potential to manifest, but does not choose, create, or dictate the form it may take.

The problem solving mechanism included in the techniques is process oriented. It helps the consciousness find whatever it needs, rather than presenting a ready-made solution. The techniques provide a process for

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translating the potential solutions of the Soul into practical activity in the world of affairs. This translation process must be learned, but it eventually becomes automatic and (like walking) requires little or no attention.

PERSONAL WORK

The problem solving process can be applied to our personality, surroundings, community, nation, and planet. We usually begin learning the process by applying it to our personality and immediate surroundings. At this point, the consciousness is focused on the individual and the dominant motive is individual growth and development. This is natural. As the consciousness expands, there are corresponding shifts in the motive behind the inner and outer work.

The efforts to improve the personality are also, in the end, a service to the One Life. The physical body learns to be relaxed, receptive, and responsive. The emotional body learns to be calm, aspirational, and forceful. The mind becomes focused, creating and organizing. The characteristics of the Soul are built into the persona, transforming it into a fit dwelling for the Spiritual Soul and instrument of service to the One Life.

Adjustment and Transmutation

The course uses a variety of adjustment and transmutation techniques to improve the personality. The adjustment exercises offer a new frequency, so that change *may* take place. In an adjustment one can align with a ray energy, invoke or evoke the ray, and radiate the

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ray. Thus, each of the ray seed-thoughts may be viewed as a persona adjustment, a method of developing a subjective feel for the ray energy, and a means of gaining experience in wielding the ray.

The transmutation techniques impress a new frequency, so that change *will* take place.

The most important of the personality exercises is the Transmutation technique in Lesson 8 on p. 108. This exercise trains students to identify as Soul and to be causative to the persona equipment. Regular, persistent practice of this technique eventually leads to the redemption of the individual persona. As practitioners evolve, this technique evolves with them, enabling them to move their transmutation work beyond their individual personas to their surrounding environment. This type of transmutation is the most important work individuals can do for themselves.

SERVICE WORK

Eventually, the motive of the practitioner moves from improving the personality to serving the One Life. The adjustment and transformation techniques are still used, but the way they are used changes. The purpose resides over, the point of focus moves above, and the outer activity moves beyond, the individual persona. At this point, opportunities to serve through the meditation work appear.

The mind, emotions, and body are still used. However, through the character-building adjustments and trans-

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mutations, and the alignment with the Soul, the personality has become an instrument through which the practitioner serves. In the end, it is through moving the identity out of the persona and into the Soul, and transforming the persona into an instrument of service, that the persona is understood and “perfected”.

As the focus moves from the persona to the One Life, the techniques which had been used to adjust or transmute the persona become tools of service. Thus, all the techniques in the course can be used for service.

The course’s invocative adjustment techniques include the:

2nd Ray technique on p. 94

4th Ray techniques on pp. 182 & 183

7th Ray technique on p. 267

The evocative adjustment techniques include the:

1st Ray technique on p. 57

Many of the techniques in the second half of the course are specifically designed for service. The most important of these service exercises are the *Ceremony of Life*, and the *See-La-Aum* exercise on pp. 433 - 434.

The service techniques are always done as Soul for Soul, not to or for the persona. The soul for whom an adjustment is done is given the opportunity to create its own solution, rather than a pre-determined solution favored by the meditator. Helping a soul to find its own way is, in the end, part of the service to the One Life.

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SUMMARY

As you practice the techniques, you will learn both how to perform them and how your equipment responds to the energies. This requires patience, tolerance, and perseverance, but the results are well worth the effort.

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