

READER'S QUESTIONS

Spiritual vs. Psychic Development

Question: I have seen people perform feats of psychic ability, such as bending spoons by thought control. Are psychic and spiritual development the same thing?

Answer: Psychic and positive spiritual development, although in a way related, designate two different processes which lead the individuals concerned essentially in two different directions. Psychism involves a sensitivity to the inner planes that is not necessarily one of understanding. Neither is it necessarily under the control of the will of the psychic individual. Positive spiritual development also indicates sensitivity, but of an affirmative sort. It represents an active, knowing, willful endeavor by the person to increase his abilities to function in and comprehend the higher worlds—as well as the physical world.

Spiritual development requires strengthening of the individual's soul power, which manifests as love, kindness, and an exacting moral sense in which ideals such as goodness and honesty are refined far beyond the average person's conception. It requires inner purity, a continuing endeavor to live strictly within the bounds of natural Law, and an intense, earnest devotion to God and to the principles of selfless service that shows itself in every facet of the person's being, thought, and activity. Only on the basis of such an affirmative—indeed, noble—code of conduct and life style can anyone expect eventually to penetrate fully the mysteries of the inner Worlds and become a creative participant in them.

Spiritual development, in other words, demands hard and unrelenting work on one's character. Psychism, on the other hand, is largely a negative state in which the individual, although perhaps

able to perform feats that excite the wonder and admiration of his fellow men, rarely operates entirely under his own volition. Psychics can come under the control of earthbound spirits who constitute themselves as “spirit guides” and are, in many cases, unscrupulous entities seeking to coerce human victims for their own nefarious purposes. Rarely, too, does psychism promote concern with one's overall inner development.

A psychic who, for instance, can bend spoons by thought control, does of course attract attention to himself and perhaps does perform a useful function by demonstrating to a still skeptical public the power of thought. Unless at the same time, however, he endeavors in a positive way to develop himself spiritually, along pure, selfless lines and with selfless service as his object, he is to some degree “missing the boat” as far as his own evolution is concerned.

Eventually the entire human race is destined to attain a spiritual development by which they will be conformed to the image of Christ. Those who now perform feats of psychic legerdemain solely for the worldly glory in which, consequently, they bask, probably will find it much more difficult in future lives to engage their interest and enlist their will power along positive lines of progress—which, eventually, they will have to do.

PRE-BIRTH PANORAMAS

Question: We are told that, before an Ego comes to re-birth on Earth, he is shown panoramas of several possible forthcoming lives and allowed to make his choice. This sounds much like a replay—as though we have been through these experiences before, played our parts incorrectly, and now will have to play the scene again.

Is this a correct appraisal?

Answer: In a limited sense, it is. Certainly each of the prospective lives, from among which the Ego is allowed to choose one, has its portion of debts of destiny and lessons to learn left over from former lives. In this sense, the panorama could be viewed in the nature of a replay. That is, because the Ego made specific mistakes or omissions in the past, he may expect to find himself in certain situations in a future life that will require either a repetition of former circumstances (although probably in different guise or on a different level) or, at least, renewed involvement with other Egos with whom he has maintained contact in the past.

We must bear in mind, however, that the pre-birth panoramas can appear in outline form only. General, overall situations are indicated to the Ego, but not the details. It will be the Ego's task to furnish these details in the life he chooses to live; that is, the attitude, conduct, practical measures, and degree of understanding, compassion, etc., that he will elect to manifest as he (hopefully) learns the lessons of his new life. There is no way in which a pre-birth panorama could show this, since the Ego determines the details for himself only after he encounters the "hard material realities" of earthly life.

While still in the heaven worlds, spiritually astute and unfettered by physical clogs, the Ego is much wiser than when on Earth. He readily understands the need to satisfy the Law of Cause and Effect as well and as quickly as possible in order to get on with his evolution, and he is likely to be quite willing to accept a "hard" life if it is pictured to him. Once born, however, enmeshed in material surroundings and somewhat removed from the cushioning of the spiritual worlds, he will find the going difficult. The degree of determination,

persistence, and spiritual understanding which he then commands will determine how well he fills in the details of his new Earth life.

PERFECTION OF GOD; IMPERFECTION OF MAN

Question: Since we are not perfect, but are a part of God, does it not follow that God Himself is not perfect, and that He is still in the making of Himself?

Answer: At first glance, it indeed may seem that God is imperfect since we, as components of His Being, are imperfect. Closer examination of the facts, however, will show that this is not so.

The primary reason for human imperfection is selfishness, which causes most of the difficulties we experience. The personality is selfish, however, not because God Himself is imperfect, therefore being unable to stop us, but because He allows us to be so. He gives us the choice of being selfish or unselfish, that we may learn from our own

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actions. When, in consequence, we do choose to think only of ourselves, God is able to turn this to good, both because other people learn from what we do and because we ourselves eventually will have to face and transmute the deeds done.

To be able to turn evil into good while at the same time allowing the development of free will, which encompasses both good and evil, shows, we believe, a great deal of perfection. God knows that even our wrongs eventually will lead us back to Him, because He is the Source of all in our solar system. We see, then, that Perfection is able to allow imperfection to manifest without compromising its own integrity. Blessed is he who is such a friend to humanity that he sees the good in every man, for his own Spirit shall be constantly enriched by the Christ Spirit. □