

A SUMMARY OF

***THE
SECRET
DOCTRINE***

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BY

KATHARINE HILLARD

**COMPILED AND EDITED BY
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ISBN: 9798283562957

Independently Published.

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A SUMMARY OF *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*

PART I EVOLUTION

Putting aside all technical and Sanskrit terms as far as possible, let us try to deal in this study not with complicated and puzzling details, but with the broadest and simplest aspects of what appears to us to be truth. Emerson says, “We know truth when we see it, from opinion, as we know when we are awake, that we *are* awake.”

In the very beginning of this study one is confronted with two great problems of which it is necessary to have some clear understanding before going on. What is meant by the terms “God” and “man”? Many definitions of both are fully given in the theosophical manuals, and above all in *The Key to Theosophy* and *The Secret Doctrine*, but their very fullness is sometimes an obstacle in the path of the beginner, and it has been thought advisable, therefore, to frame a skeleton as it were, of the chief teachings of *The Secret Doctrine*, to be filled out by the results of the student’s own study and reflection. For no study, however per severing, no mere heaping up of facts, will be of much avail, unless accompanied by the sifting processes of thought that shall separate the wheat from the chaff, and prepare the bread of life for the heavenly banquet. But no system of philosophical or religious thought can be formulated without some expression, however crude and inadequate, of our conception of the Absolute Unity in whom we live and move and have our being. In *The Key to Theosophy* there is a very beautiful extract from a kabalistic poem, which

expresses such a conception as well as so lofty an idea can be expressed.

“Thou art One, the root of all numbers, but not as an element of numeration, for Unity admits not of multiplication, change, or form. Thou art One, and in the secret of Thy Unity the wisest of men are lost, because they know it not. Thou art One, and Thy Unity is never diminished, never extended and cannot be changed. Thou art One, and no thought of ours can fix for Thee a limit or define Thee. Thou Art, but not as one existent, for the understanding and vision of mortals cannot attain to Thy existence, nor determine for Thee the where, the how, and the why, *etc., etc.*”

To this majestic conception of the Divine Unity, we may add the theosophical teaching that all Nature, objective and subjective, what is within us and what is without, *is, was, and ever will be* One Absolute Essence, from which all things proceed, and to which all things must return. Upon the absolute identity of all spirits with the One Spirit, depends the conception of Universal Brotherhood, the outcome and realization of this identity. And as all mankind is in reality of one Essence, infinite and eternal, whether we call it “God” or “Nature,” or prefer to give it no name other than “THAT,” it follows that nothing can affect one nation or one man without affecting all nations and all men, as a pebble thrown into a quiet lake sends ripples in every direction, till they die out upon its shore, or as the report of a cannon traverses the ether with vibrations that never end.

In the twelfth chapter of *Isis Unveiled*, Vol II., we find ten propositions stated as the fundamental principles of Eastern philosophy, and slightly condensed, they read as follows:

I. There is no miracle. Everything is the result of law.

II. Nature is triune; there is a visible, objective nature; an invisible, indwelling and energizing nature, the exact model of the other and its vital principle, and above these two, Spirit,

source of all forces, alone, eternal, and indestructible. The lower two constantly change; the higher third does not.

III. Man is also triune; he has his objective physical body; his vitalizing astral body or soul, the real man; and these two are brooded over and illumined by the third, the sovereign, the immortal Spirit. When the real man succeeds in merging himself with the latter, he becomes an immortal entity. (*The trinity of nature is the lock of magic; the trinity of man the key that fits it. Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II., p. 635.)

IV. Magic as a science, is the knowledge of these principles; as an art, its application in practice.

V. Arcane knowledge misapplied is sorcery; beneficently used, true magic or Wisdom.

VI. Mediumship is the opposite of adeptship, one is controlled, the other controls.

VII. All things that were, that are, or that will be, are recorded in the astral light, and are visible to the initiated adept.

VIII. Races of men differ in spiritual gifts.

IX. One phase of magic is the voluntary and conscious withdrawal of the astral body from the physical. Inert physical matter may be disintegrated, passed through walls, and recombined — in certain cases and under certain conditions — but not living animal organisms.

X. The cornerstone of Magic is an intimate, practical knowledge of magnetism and electricity, their qualities, correlations, and potencies, and a familiarity with their effects on animals and men, as well as a knowledge of the qualities of plants and minerals.

These “fundamental principles,” simple as they appear on the surface, comprise, if rightly understood, the most important teachings of occultism, while the truth demands a knowledge of “the natural sciences” such as is possessed by no one living man. Another view of the fundamental propositions of *The Secret Doctrine* will give us —

(A.) An Omnipotent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable Principle, which is beyond the range of human thought. It is Omnipotent, because it *is* Power; it is *eternal*, because it has neither beginning nor end; it is *boundless*, because it is infinite, and is best symbolised by a sphere whose center is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere; it is *immutable* because it is devoid of all attributes, and in it is neither variableness nor shadow of turning. It is “Be-ness,” rather than Being, and is beyond all human thought or speculation.

This “Be-ness” is symbolised in *The Secret Doctrine* under two aspects. On the one hand absolute, abstract Space, the one thing that no human mind can exclude from any conception, or conceive of by itself. To think of ourselves as somewhere, and to think of all other things more or less distant from ourselves, as somewhere else, in fact, is perhaps as near as we can get to an idea of Space, but it is far from an idea of *abstract* Space.

On the other hand, we have absolute, abstract Motion, representing unconditioned consciousness. And as consciousness is inconceivable to us apart from change, Motion best symbolizes change, its essential characteristic. V. K. Clifford, the mathematician and philosopher, was thinking of this essential characteristic of motion when he said — “In point of fact we do nothing all day but *change our minds*.” Like the shifting figures of a kaleidoscope, one combination of ideas is swiftly followed by another, and one can never get the same figure twice.

This abstract Motion is the ONE LIFE, eternal, invisible, but omnipresent, without beginning or end, yet periodical in its regular manifestations. We have, then, as the fundamental

proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*, this metaphysical ONE ABSOLUTE or BE-NESS. From this “Causeless Cause” the occultist derives the “First Cause,” or the Logos (the *Word* of St. John), for the “first” cannot be the Absolute because it is conditioned and finite, and is but a manifestation of the Absolute. But as soon as we pass from this phase of thought, which to us is absolute negation, duality begins, in the contrast of Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter, Subject and Object. These are the first of what the Eastern philosophers have called “the pairs of opposites;” but Spirit and Matter are not to be regarded as independent realities, but rather as two aspects of the Logos, constituting the basis of conditioned Being. Apart from Universal Substance, or that which under lies (*sub stans*) Matter in all its grades of differentiation, Universal Thought (the root of all individual consciousness) could not manifest itself as that individual consciousness without a vehicle of matter, because at a certain stage of development, a physical basis is necessary to focus a ray of the Universal Mind. And apart from Universal Thought, Universal Substance would remain an empty abstraction.

Duality therefore is the very essence, as it were, of the Existence of the manifested Universe. But just as the opposite poles of Spirit and Matter are but aspects of the One Unity in which they are synthesized, so there exists in the manifested universe the guiding power of all manifestation, the “Thought Divine,” transmitted and made manifest through the intelligent Forces which are the architects of the visible world. Thus from Spirit — or Universal Thought — comes our consciousness; from Universal Substance the several vehicles in which that consciousness is individualized and attains to *self*-consciousness; while the Divine Energy in its varied manifestations, is the mysterious link between Mind and Matter, the animating principle electrifying every atom into life.

(B.) The second fundamental axiom affirms the eternity of the whole Universe as a boundless plane, the periodical field of numberless universes. “The Pilgrim” — the title given to the

Monad or Unit of consciousness during its cycle of incarnations — is the only eternal principle in us, being an indivisible part of the Universal Spirit. Furthermore “the appearance and disappearance of Worlds, is like a regular tidal ebb of flux and reflux.” This is a manifestation of the absolute universality of the law of periodicity recorded in all departments of nature.

(C.) Thirdly, *The Secret Doctrine* insists upon the identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, itself an aspect of the Unknown Root, and (D.) the obligatory pilgrimage of every Soul through “the cycle of Necessity” or incarnation, in accordance with cyclic and Karmic law. In other words, no purely divine Soul can have an independent conscious existence before it has passed through, (first) every elemental form of the phenomenal world of that cycle of existence to which it belongs, and (second) has acquired its individuality, first by natural impulse and then by self-devised efforts modified by its Karma, thus ascending through all degrees of intelligence from that of the mineral to that of the holiest archangel. The pivotal doctrine of the esoteric philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in any man, except those won by his own Ego through personal effort during a long series of reincarnations. This is the greatest point of difference between the “orthodox” and the theosophical systems, the one dependent on the sacrifice of an innocent being for the sake of a humanity doomed from the beginning to sin and evil, the other holding that man alone can work out his own salvation, and that every step is conditioned by immutable Law. The orthodox view of the atonement is, of course, but the outer and exoteric dogma, the esoteric doctrine is the inner and spiritual teaching. But this is not the place to do more than suggest the difference between the two conceptions, and we will now pass on to the study of the *Stanzas* in the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*. *The Secret Doctrine* itself is based upon these *Stanzas*, taken from an archaic MS. known as *The Book of Dzryan* (phonetically *Djan*). It is written in Senzar, the secret

sacerdotal tongue known to all priests and initiates, and is the original work from which the oldest religious books of all nations were compiled.

The history of cosmic evolution is traced in these *Stanzas*, and is, so to speak, an abstract formula of that evolution — not an account of all its stages and transformations. It is a formula which can be applied to all evolution, from that of the earth upward in an ever-ascending scale. Having described the evolution of the earth and of man, and the history of the Races from the First down to our own (the Fifth) in the Fourth Round, the old book goes no further, but stops with the beginning of the Black Age [Kali Yuga], and the death of Krishna, just (in 1907) 5,008 [5,126 in 2025] years ago. It must be remembered that the first seven *Stanzas* treat only of the cosmogony of our own planetary system and what is visible around it after a period of dissolution and reabsorption into the Divine Life of the Universe in accordance with the law of periodicity before-mentioned. It seems needless to remind the student that each great Cycle of Existence is called a *Manvantara*, and is divided into seven *Rounds* during which the Monad goes through the sum total of experience possible upon this planet, circling down through matter, which becomes grosser with each *Round*, and then having to reascend through ever finer and purer grades to Spirit. Each Round is the home, so to speak, of seven Races of men, and these again are divided into Sub-races and Family Races. The seven *Stanzas* then of *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I., describe the seven great stages of evolution spoken of in the *Purâṇas* as “the Seven Creations,” and in the Bible as “the Seven Days of Creation.”

I. The first *Stanza* describes the ONE ALL before the first flutter of reawakened manifestation. And here we are warned that any description of such a state is impossible; it can only be symbolised, or suggested by the negatives of all those most abstract attributes which men *feel*, rather than conceive. “Alone, the One form of existence stretched boundless,

infinite, causeless, in dreamless sleep; and Life pulsed unconscious in universal Space.”

II. The second stage of evolution is to a Western mind so like the first, that the student’s intuition only can enable him to grasp the meaning of the allegorical terms used. In fact all these *Stanzas* appeal to the inner faculties, rather than to those of the ordinary physical brain.

III. *Stanza III* continues the description of the re-awakening of the Universe after a period of Cosmic Night, and depicts the coming forth of the Monads from their state of absorption within the ONE, and the emergence of the New Life, the manifested Logos, from the depths of the great Dark Waters.

IV. *Stanza IV* shows the differentiation of the “Germ” of the Universe into the septenary hierarchy of conscious Divine Powers, who are the active manifestation of the One Supreme Power. They are the intelligent Beings who adjust and control evolution, as they embody in themselves those manifestations of the ONE LAW which we know as “the laws of Nature.” This stage of evolution is spoken of in Hindu mythology as “the creation of the Gods.”

V. In *Stanza V* the process of world-formation is described; first, diffused Cosmic Matter, then “the fiery whirlwind,” the first stage in the formation of a nebula. That nebula condenses, and after passing through various transformations, forms a planet or a solar system, as the case may be. “The Deity becomes a Whirlwind”; that is, Eternal vibration in the Unmanifested, changes to vertical motion in the manifested. The Whirlwind is also identified with *Fohat*, “Wisdom becomes Fohat,” says the *Commentary on Stanza V*. Fohat the Spirit of Life, is the Divine Life and Love, the Logos, the potential Creative Power, the active Creative Power, cosmic Motion, cosmic Electricity, *etc.*, *etc.*, according to the

plane on which it acts, and the sense in which the term is used. As in the most ancient Greek cosmogony, Eros is the third person of the primeval Trinity (*Chaos, Gaea, and Eros*), and has nothing in common with Anteros or Cupid, so Fohat is one thing in the unmanifested Universe, and quite another in the physical world. In the unmanifested Universe, Fohat is simply the potential creative power, an abstract philosophical idea. In the manifested universe he is the occult, electric, vital power, which under the will of the Creative Logos gives to all forms that impulse which in time becomes Law. As Divine Love (*Eros*) the electric power of affinity (chemical and otherwise) is shown allegorically as trying to bring pure Spirit into union with the Soul, the two constituting in man the MONAD, and in Nature the first link between the ever-unconditioned and the manifested. Fohat is the "Spirit" of ELECTRICITY, which is the LIFE of the Universe.

VI. *Stanza VI* indicates the next step in the formation of such a world as ours, and brings the history of its evolution down to its Fourth great period (or *Round*), that in which we are now living. With the fourth verse of *Stanza VI*, ends that portion of the *Stanzas* relating to universal Cosmogony. From this verse on, the *Stanzas* are concerned only with our solar system in general, and the history of our globe in particular. The cosmic periods that separate these verses are of immense duration.

VII. *Stanza VII* continues the history of the earth and of the Creative Powers, and traces the descent of life down to the appearance of Man upon this planet. This ends Vol. I of *The Secret Doctrine*, while the development of "Man," from his first appearance on this earth in this Round, forms the subject of Vol. II.

The quotes inclosing "Man" in the last sentence, are very significant, and point to a condition or conditions of being quite different from anything we should call man. The *Commentary*

on this verse says that Mankind in its first prototypal shadowy form, is the offspring of the Elohim (creative spirits) of Life; in its physical aspect it is the direct progeny of the lowest Spirits of the Earth; for its moral, psychic and spiritual nature it is indebted to a group of divine Beings whose name and characteristics will be given hereafter.

But man's physical development took place at the expense of the spiritual inner man and nature. The three middle principles of earth and man became with every race more material, the Soul stepping back to make room for the physical intellect; the *essence* of elements becoming the material and compound elements now known.

It were an impossible task to give in a few pages even the merest outline of *The Secret Doctrine*, and all that can be done here is to set up a few guideposts, as it were, to point out the way to the student. The all-important teaching, the cornerstone of the temple, is the Unity of all things with the Divine, and when this has become a conviction, it dominates the whole structure, and we realize that we are indeed "a temple not built with hands, eternal in the heavens."

And now to turn our attention to a few of the most important details that describe the evolution of ourselves and our environment.

In the first place we are struck by the omnipresence of the number *seven*, which meets us at every turn, and which it is quite unnecessary to emphasize here. But after a long and careful comparison of these correspondences, it seemed that the principal reason for the importance of this number lay in its relation to *life*, and in one of the many hidden places of *The Secret Doctrine* was found an explanation of the mystery in the statement that in our world the rhythm of life is in *sevens*, because that is the rhythm of our Mother the Moon, who in dying imparted her life to her child the Earth, according to the great Karmic law. Other planets and stars and solar systems, have other rates of vibration: in them the rhythm of life throbs faster or slower as the case may be. The Sun is the heart of our solar system, and there is a regular circulation of the Life

Essence throughout that system, like that of the blood in the body, the Sun contracting as rhythmically at every return of that essence, as the human heart does, only instead of a few seconds, it takes the solar blood ten or eleven years to make its rounds. See the scientific theory of the recurrence of sunspots.

With *Stanza VI* we begin the study of the elements, seven in all, although only four are yet fully manifested, the fifth only in part, as we are barely within the second half of the Fourth Round, and the Fifth element can only manifest fully in the Fifth Round. With each Round, or cycle of existence, a new element develops, but in accordance with the general law, not suddenly, but gradually, and overlapping, as it were, those already known, and those belonging to the future. The element of the present or Fourth Round, is, of course, Earth, the lowest and most material point of our evolution, and as we pass that point and the balance turns towards Spirit, *Ether*, the element of the Fifth Round, manifests itself in various ways, and day by day brings some new quality into use.

But, differentiated as they were in the beginning, these elements were not the compound bodies known to the science of today. Occultism has always taught that the recognized chemical elements of today will sooner or later be found to be only modifications of a *single material element*, and also that in reality there is neither Spirit nor Matter, but simply numberless aspects of the ever-hidden One.

Neither the stars nor the sun can be said to be made up of those terrestrial elements with which science is familiar, though they, and a host more, still unknown, are all present in the outer robes of the sun. And our globe has its own special laboratory, on the faraway outskirts of its atmosphere, crossing which every atom and molecule differentiates from its primordial nature. The essence of cometary matter, for instance, is totally devoid of any of the characteristics with which science is acquainted, and even that matter, during its rapid passage through our atmosphere, undergoes certain changes in its nature.

Metaphysically and esoterically there is but ONE ELEMENT, and at the root of it is the Deity; and the so-called *seven* elements of which five have already manifested, are the garment, the *veil* of that Deity, direct from whose Essence comes MAN, whether physically, mentally, or spiritually considered. Fire, Air, Water, Earth, are but the visible garb, the symbols of the invisible Souls or Spirits, the Cosmic Gods. The hierarchies of these potencies or Forces, have been classified on a graduated scale of seven from the ponderable to the imponderable. They are septenary in their real cosmic gradation, from their chemical (or physical) to their purely spiritual composition.

Âkāśa, Divine Flame, Ether, Fire, Air, Water, Earth, are the cosmic, sidereal, psychic, spiritual, and mystical principles, *preeminently* occult on every plane of being.

After this enumeration of the elements. *Stanza VI* says that “Fohat builds seven small worlds revolving, one giving birth to the other. He builds them in the likeness of older worlds.” This doctrine of the seven small worlds, or the “Planetary Chain,” so-called, was at first taken in altogether too material a sense; and was understood to mean a string of globes, of which our earth was the lowest and most material, instead of seven states of matter and consciousness, through which our earth must pass, on its way to purification, so that the fourth Globe corresponds to the fourth Round as a condition of being. The Earth was described as on the fourth and lowest, because the most material, plane of matter, and as the organs of perception are always adjusted to the medium in which they function, it naturally follows that we can normally perceive only material things, unless we are gifted with those higher senses which are only to be the ordinary possession of a future Humanity. Therefore any planets or stars which are visible to us must be on the same plane of matter as our own.

Our Earth, as the visible representative of its invisible “chain of globes” (or states of matter and consciousness) has to live like the others, through seven Rounds or life-cycles. During the first three it forms and consolidates; during the

fourth it settles and hardens; during the last three, it gradually returns to its first ethereal form; it is spiritualized, so to speak. First the descent into matter, then the re-ascent to Spirit: this is the history of man, of planets, of solar systems.

When a “planetary chain” (that is, a planet composed of these seven fold conditions of matter and consciousness), is in its last “Round,” or cycle of life, before finally dying out it sends all its energy into a neutral center of latent force, and thereby calls into activity a new nucleus of undifferentiated matter. Thus the Moon poured forth all her higher principles into the Earth, finally transferring to the Earth’s most material and lowest condition, her life-forces and powers, while she herself became virtually a *dead* planet, in which rotation has almost ceased.

Among the many septennates we encounter, are the seven kingdoms of Nature; first, three degrees of elementals or nascent centers of forces, which range from complete unconsciousness up to semi-perception; then the mineral kingdom, the turning-point of evolution; then three stages on the ascending, objective physical side; *physical* meaning here differentiated for cosmic purposes, but quite subjective to us on our plane.

It is evident then, that we have in the seven kingdoms of nature, three separate schemes of evolution which are interwoven and interblended at every point, the Monadic, or Spiritual, the Intellectual, and the Physical. These three are the finite aspects or reflections, on the field of cosmic illusion, of the ONE REALITY.

The Monadic Evolution is concerned with the growth and development of the Monad into self-consciousness. This of course, refers to the individual Monads or Egos, in conjunction with —

The Intellectual Evolution, represented by the Solar Spirits (or Ancestors); the givers of intelligence and consciousness to man, and the

Physical Evolution represented by the astral shadows of the Lunar Spirits (or Ancestors), around which Nature has built the present physical body.

Each of these three systems has its own laws, and is ruled and guided by different sets of the higher Intelligences, and it is the union of these three streams in his nature, that makes man the complex being he now is. Man, or rather his Monad, has existed on the earth from the very beginning of this Round. But up to our own Fifth Race, the external shapes which covered those divine astral doubles, changed and consolidated with every sub-race; the physical structure of the fauna and flora of the earth changing with it, as they had to be adapted to the ever-shifting conditions of life on this globe during the geological periods of its formative cycle. And thus they will go on changing with every Root-race, and every *chief* Sub-race, down to the last one of the Seventh in this Round.

Every Round repeats on a higher scale the evolutionary work of the preceding Round. With the exception of some of the higher anthropoids, the Monadic inflow or inner evolution, is at an end until the next cycle of existence. In the infancy of the Third Race, while they were yet in a state of purity, the "Sons of Wisdom" who had incarnated in that race produced by *will-power* a progeny called "the Sons of Will and Yoga." It was not a Race, this progeny, but the living Tree of Divine Wisdom. There were other "Sons of Will and Yoga" produced by a second spiritual effort, but the first one remains to this day the One and the Supreme. It is he who holds spiritual sway over the *initiated* Adepts throughout the world. He is *the* Initiator, called "the Great Sacrifice," for sitting at the threshold of Light he looks into it from the circle of Darkness which he will not cross; nor will he quit his post till the last day of his life-cycle, because the lonely pilgrims on their way back to their *home* are never sure of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion called earth-life. The *Watchers* or the *Builders*, are the Guardian Spirits who reigned over man through the whole period of the Golden Age, and furnished the many and various nations with their divine Kings and Leaders. They had finished

their own cycle on the Earth and other worlds in the preceding Rounds, and the elect of our humanity will take their places in future life-cycles when they shall have risen to higher systems than ours.

The teaching is then, that in order to become a divine, fully-conscious god — even the highest — the primeval spiritual Intelligences must pass through the human stage. And this does not apply to mankind alone, but to all Intelligences that have reached their appropriate equilibrium between Matter and Spirit as we have, ever since the middle point of the fourth Root-race of the fourth Round was passed. Each Entity must win for itself the right to become divine through its own experience.

The refusal to admit, in the whole solar system, of the existence of any other intellectual beings on the human plane, is the greatest conceit of the age. All that science has a right to affirm is, that there are no invisible Intelligences living under *the same conditions* as men. It cannot deny the possibility of there being worlds within worlds under totally different conditions from our own, nor can it deny that there may be a certain limited communication between some of those worlds and ours. To the highest of these worlds, we are taught, belong the seven purely divine Spirits; to the six lower ones belong hierarchies that can occasionally be seen and heard by men.

The highest group of the hierarchy of Creative Powers, is composed of the “divine Flames,” the first and last of which, are collectively, the Logos. “The highest group is also spoken of as ‘the Fiery Lions,’ and the ‘Lions of Life,’ whose esotericism is securely hidden in the zodiacal sign of Leo” (*Life*). This is one of the dark sayings occasionally thrown out, upon which the student may sharpen his wits. At the Divine FLAME are lit the three descending groups. Having their potential being in the higher group, they now become distinct and separate entities.

The celestial Beings of the second Order are still formless, but more definitely substantial. They are the prototypes of the incarnating Monads, and through them passes the Ray,

furnished by them with its future vehicle, the divine Soul (*Buddhi*).

The third Order corresponds to Spirit, Soul, and Intellect (*Âtma, Buddhi, Manas*).

The fourth Order are substantial Entities. This is the highest group among the atomic forms, and the nursery of the human, conscious, spiritual Souls. They are called the “*Units of Life*,” and constitute, through the order below their own, the great mystery of human, conscious, and intellectual being. For the latter are the field wherein lies concealed the germ *that will fall into generation*. That germ will become the *spiritual potency* in the physical cell that guides the development of the embryo, and which is the cause of all heredity. This inner soul of the physical cell — this “spiritual plasm” that dominates the germinal plasm, is the key that someday must open the gates of the *terra incognita* of the biologist.

The fifth Order is a very mysterious one, and is supposed to contain in itself the dual attributes of both the spiritual and the physical aspects of the universe, the two poles, so to speak, of the Universal Intelligence, and of the dual nature of man, the spiritual and the physical.

The sixth and seventh Orders partake of the lower qualities of the Quaternary. They are conscious, ethereal Entities as invisible as ether. They are Nature-Spirits or Elementals, of countless kinds and varieties. They are all subject to Karma, and have to work it out in every cycle. The sixth Order, moreover, remains almost inseparable from man, who draws from it his mental and psychic principles, all his principles, in fact, but his spirit and his body. It is the Divine Ray alone that proceeds directly from “the One.” *Stanza VII* says: “Through the countless rays, the Life-ray, the One, proceeds like a thread through many beads. Life precedes Form, and Life survives the last atom of Form” (in the external body).

This verse expresses the conception of a life-thread running through many generations. That is to say, the spiritual potency in the physical cell, guides the development of the

embryo, and is the cause of all the hereditary faculties and qualities of man. It is the “eternal cell” of Weismann, *plus* “the spiritual potency.” “The functions of the Universal Life on this earth, are of a fivefold character. In the mineral atom it is connected with the lowest principle of the Spirits of the earth (the sixfold Spirits); in the vegetable particle with their second principle, *prāna* or individual life; in the animal with both these, *plus* the third and fourth, the astral body and the emotional nature; in man the germ must receive the fruition of all the five principles, the fifth being *Mind*, or the *Intellectual Soul*. Otherwise he will be born no higher than an animal, a congenital idiot.” Thus in man alone is the Unit of Life complete. As to his seventh principle, *Âtma*, or the Divine Ray, it is but one ray of the universal Sun. Each *rational* creature receives but the temporary loan of that which has to return to its source, while the physical body is shaped by the lowest terrestrial lives, through physical, chemical, and physiological evolution. “The Blessed Ones have nought to do with the purgations of matter.” (*Chaldean Book of Numbers*.)

The greatest problem of philosophy relates to the physical and substantial nature of life, which is denied by modern science. The believers alone in Karma and reincarnation, dimly perceive that the whole secret of Life is in the unbroken series of its manifestations, whether in or apart from the physical body.

On our nascent globe, the Monad or Unit of Life, is first of all shot down by the law of evolution into the lowest form of matter, the mineral. After a sevenfold gyration in the stone (or rather in that which will become metal and stone in the fourth Round) it creeps out of it into some low form of vegetable life, say the lichen. Passing thence through all the other grades of vegetable matter, into what is termed animal matter, it has now reached the point at which it has become the germ, so to speak, of the animal that will develop into physical man. All this, up to the fourth Round, is formless as matter, and senseless as mind. For the Monad, or Unit of Life *per se*, cannot even be called Spirit; it is a ray, a breath of the Logos,

which having no relations with conditions and relative finiteness, is unconscious on this plane.

Therefore, besides the material which will be needed for its future human form, the Monad requires (a) a spiritual model or prototype for that material to shape itself upon, and (b) an intelligent consciousness to guide its evolution and progress, neither of which is possessed by senseless though living matter, nor by the homogeneous Monad. It is only when from a potential androgyne, man has become separated into male and female, that he can be endowed with a conscious, rational, individual Soul, the Mind-soul, to receive which he has to eat of the fruit of Knowledge from the Tree of Good and Evil.

The rudimentary man of the first two and a half Races, was only the *first* — gradually developing into the most perfect — of mammals, therefore when the hour strikes, the Celestial (solar) Ancestors, Entities from previous worlds, step in on our plane, (as the Lunar Ancestors had stepped in before them for the formation of physical or animal man) and incarnate in the bodies prepared for them.

Each new Round develops one of the compound elements known to science. Thus the first Round, we are taught, developed but one Element, and a nature and humanity in what may be called “one dimensional Space.” The second Round brought forth and developed two elements, *Fire* and *Air*, and its humanity — if we can give that name to beings living under conditions unknown to us — was a two dimensional species, to use again a familiar phrase in a strictly figurative sense. The expression may be regarded, on one plane of thought, as equivalent to the second characteristic of matter, corresponding to the second perceptive faculty or sense of man. “From the second Round,” says the *Commentary*, “Earth, hitherto a fetus in the matrix of Space, began its real existence; it had developed individual sentient Life, its second principle” (in the septenary division). “The second corresponds to the sixth principle (the Spiritual Soul); the latter is life continuous; the former, life temporary.” The centers of consciousness of the Third Round, destined to develop into humanity as we know it,

arrived at a perception of the third element, *Water*. Those of the fourth Round have added *Earth* as a state of matter to their stock, as well as the other three elements in their present condition. None of the so-called Elements were in the same condition in the three preceding Rounds, as they are now. They could not have remained the same, for Nature is never stationary during the great Cycle (of Life), and every form of life, including Man, is always adapting its organism to the then reigning elements. It will only be in the next, or fifth Round, that the fifth element, *Ether*, will be as familiar to all men as Air is now. And only during that Round will those higher senses, the growth and development of which Ether subserves, be susceptible of complete expansion. A partial familiarity with the next characteristic of matter, *permeability*, which should develop concurrently with the sixth sense (let us call it *normal clairvoyance*), may be expected to develop at the proper period in the fifth Round. But with the new element added to our resources in the next Round, permeability will become so manifest a characteristic of matter that its densest forms will seem to man's perceptions no more obstructive than a thick fog.

Since this was published in 1888, the Roentgen ray photographs have shown us that such effects are possible even now. Elsewhere we are told that the conditions of life and the elements themselves in the Sixth and Seventh Rounds, are so entirely outside of our present state of consciousness, that it is impossible even to name them.

"Who forms Man, and who forms his body?" asks *Stanza VII.*, and the answer is — "the LIFE, and the LIVES." Here *man* stands for the spiritual, heavenly man, the real and immortal Ego. The *Commentary* says: "Fire alone is ONE, on the plane of the One Reality; on that of manifested, hence illusive being, its particles are fiery Lives, which live and have their being at the expense of every other life which they consume. Therefore they are named the DEVOURERS. . . . Every visible thing in this Universe was built by such LIVES, from conscious and divine primordial man, down to the unconscious agents that con struct

matter, and disintegrate and differentiate the germs of other lives in the elements.”

Thus Occultism disposes of the so-called Azoic (lifeless) Age of science, for it shows that there never was a time when there was no life upon the Earth. Wherever there is an atom of matter, a particle or a molecule, even in the most gaseous condition, there is life in it, however latent and unconscious. Whatsoever quits the neutral state, becomes active life.

We are taught that every physiological change, all diseases, and all the obstructive phenomena of life, are due to those unseen Creators and Destroyers, that are called in such a loose and general way *microbes*. It might be supposed that the microbes of science are identical with the “fiery lives,” but this is not true. The “fiery lives” are the seventh and highest division of the plane of matter, and correspond in the individual with the One Life of the universe, but only on that plane, the lowest in the cosmos. The microbes of science are the first and lowest sub division on the second plane — that of material life. The preservation and destruction of the physical body of man, are due to the alternate functions of the “fiery lives,” as “builders” and “destroyers.”

Thus proceed the cycles of septenary evolution in septennial Nature:

1. The spiritual or divine;
2. The psychic or semi-divine;
3. The intellectual;
4. The passional;
5. The instinctual;
6. The semi-corporeal;
7. The purely material or physical nature.

The lowest, of course, is the one dependent upon, and subservient to, our five physical senses, which are, in truth, seven.

The Universe manifests periodically, in order that through the Ever-Becoming, every cosmic atom passing from the formless and intangible down to matter in full generation, and then back again, re-ascending at each period nearer to the final goal, — that each atom *may reach through individual merits and efforts*, that plane where it re-becomes the one, unconditioned ALL.

The fundamental Law is that system upon which is hung the philosophy of all the rest. It is the omnipresent Reality, impersonal because it contains all and everything. *Its impersonality is a fundamental conception of the system.* It is latent in every atom of the Universe, and is the Universe itself.

The Universe is the periodical manifestation of this unknown Absolute Essence. It is best described as neither Spirit nor Matter, but both.

The Universe — with everything in it — is called ILLUSION, because all is temporary therein. Yet the Universe is real enough to the conscious beings in it, which are as unreal as it is itself.

Everything in the Universe, throughout all its Kingdoms, is conscious, that is endowed with a consciousness of its own kind, and on its own plane of perception. Because we cannot perceive any signs of consciousness in stones, for instance, we have no right to say that none exists. (Especially as we are told that the consciousness of each thing is of a special kind, and is active on its own plane of perception. As H.P.B. says elsewhere: “In relation to *its own plane* of consciousness and perception, the ant has as good an intellect as ours, and over and above instinct, shows very high reasoning powers.” *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, I, 13.)

The Universe is worked and guided from *within outwards*. We see that every *external* motion is produced and preceded by internal emotion, will, and thought. As no *outward* motion or change in man’s *external* body can take place, when normal, unless provoked by an inward impulse given through emotion, will or thought, so with the external or manifested Universe. The whole Kosmos is guided, controlled, and animated by an almost endless series of hierarchies of sentient Beings, each having a mission to perform. They vary infinitely in their respective degrees of intelligence, for each of these Beings either was, or is to be, a man, if not in the present, then in a past or future life-cycle. They are either *incipient* or *perfected* men, and differ morally from terrestrial human beings, only in being

devoid of the feeling of personality, and the *human* emotional nature.

It is on the acceptance of the theory of the Unity of all in Nature in its ultimate Essence, that mainly rests the belief in the existence of other conscious beings around us besides the spirits of the dead. It is on the right comprehension of the primeval evolution of Spirit-Matter and its real Essence that the student has to depend for the only sure clue which can guide his subsequent studies.

There is but one indivisible and absolute Omniscience and Intelligence in the Universe, but the first differentiation of its *reflection* in the manifested world is purely spiritual, and the beings generated in it can have no human consciousness till they have acquired it, personally and individually.

The whole order of Nature evinces a progressive march towards a *higher life*. The whole process of evolution, with its endless adaptations, is a proof of the design in the action of the seemingly blindest forces, and shows that what is called “unconscious Nature,” is in reality an aggregate of forces manipulated by semi-intelligent Beings, guided by high Planetary Spirits, whose collective aggregate forms the manifested *Word* of the unmanifested *Logos*, and constitutes at one and the same time, the MIND of the Universe, and its immutable Law.

PART II

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES

We have seen that the all-important point in the theosophical teaching, is the unity of all things with the Divine, and that only upon this foundation can the cornerstone of Universal Brotherhood be laid. For this idea of brotherhood does not mean an aggregate of more or less similar and sympathetic beings, it means the absolute *identity* of all the rays with the One Divine Ray, "the One manifested Life, the Breath of the Absoluteness." The differences that we see, the obstacles in the way of realizing this oneness of mankind, are all illusions, belonging to this material plane, and have nothing to do with the Real Man, the re-incarnating Ego, except in so far as matter affords him a stage as it were, on which to play his many parts, and through the trials and tribulations of the body and the soul to work his way up to the purified and perfected spirit.

There are two ways of studying the seven-fold nature of man, down wards from above, and upwards from below. We can take the descent of the soul into matter as our starting-point, and trace its gradual involution through ever-thickening veils of matter, till it becomes united with the physical body, or we can begin with the material, and follow the gradual ascent of the inner man, to spirit. With the brief sketch of evolution as taught by theosophy just given, it seemed necessary to begin again with the *highest* point in our study, and as the evolution of the Kosmos is governed by the same laws as rule the earth and man, the three schemes of evolution are inextricably interwoven and interblended at every point. With the gradual consolidation of the earth upon which man *as we know him* was to live, the consolidation of his physical body began, and the fourth Element, earth, made its appearance, with the senses fitted to function therein. There never was a time, we are told,

when life did not exist upon this earth, but the life of those early periods, was without any of the characteristics by which we know it now. "Life precedes Form," says the *Commentary*, "and Life survives the last atom of Form," that is, the external body.

The seven fundamental transformations of the matter of the heavenly spheres, are given as: I. The homogeneous. II. The aeriform and radiant (*the gaseous*). III. The curd like (*nebulous*). IV. The atomic, ethereal; (the beginning of *motion*, hence of *differentiation*). V. The germinal, the fiery (differentiated, but composed of the *germs* only of the elements in their earliest states). VI. The four-fold, vapory (the future earth); and VII. Cold, and dependent (on the Sun for light and life).

When evolution has run through the whole cycle of seven "globes" (or states of matter and consciousness), on our Earth, that is one Round, and every Round, on the *descending* scale, is a grosser and more material copy of the preceding Round. On the ascending scale evolution spiritualizes and etherealizes, so to speak, the general nature of each "globe," so that when the seventh stage in whatever Round is reached, the nature of everything in process of evolution, returns to its first spiritual condition, *plus* each time a higher degree of consciousness. In the first Round, the globe having been built by the primitive fire-lives, had no solidity nor other qualities, save a cold brightness, neither form nor color; it was only towards the end of the Round that it developed one element, FIRE, which from its simple *essence* became in our Round the Fire we know. The first human types did not resemble the men of today either in form or nature, but in the first Round were only dimensionless images from the astral regions. Hence the term *men* would be here a very misleading one, and is used only as an equivalent for "thinking entities."

From the second Round, Earth began its real existence; it developed the second element, AIR, and individual Life, its second principle. The second corresponds to the sixth principle

(the Spiritual Soul); the latter is life continuous; the former, life temporary.

The third Round developed the third element, WATER; while the fourth Round transformed the gaseous fluids and plastic form of our “globe” into the hard, crusted, grossly material EARTH. She will reach her true ultimate form only towards the end of the cycle, after the seventh Round. Our globe is so far only in its fourth state, the astral body of desires, of dark egotism, the progeny of the lower Mind. “It is not the human body that is the grossest of our principles, but verily the real animal center, the animal Soul, for our body is but its shell, through which it acts.”

It will only be in the fifth Round, as before said, that the fifth element, ETHER, will be as familiar to all men as air is now.

We have glanced at the different phases in the evolution of our earth and of the elements that make life possible in its different phases of existence, and we come now to the study of man as we know him, ourselves in short. This will be again a case of guideposts to a road, rather than the road itself, the subject is so complicated, and the space so small. We must try then to indicate the most important points, and when we find ourselves hopelessly lost, patiently wait for more light. It will certainly come.

I. In the first place, we know that man is composed of a physical body, gifted with five senses now, and the promise of two more here after as the conditions of matter and consciousness become spiritualized, and enable man to function on higher planes. That there are even now occasionally human beings who have reached a point of higher development than their fellows, shows that these faculties will one day be the property of all, for the tide of evolution never recedes, it always seeks a higher level.

II. Next comes the astral body, the model upon which the physical body is built, as our great skyscrapers go up, first the

mere outline of an office building, till bit by bit the whole structure is filled out and completed, according to the architect's plan. But the analogy is defective in that the astral body, like the physical, is molecular, and does not *outline* in any way the physical body, but interpenetrates every part of it. To withdraw the astral body from the physical, is not the simple thing that many students believe, but really means the withdrawal of every astral molecule from its place in the physical body. The white corpuscles of the blood are formed from astral matter in the spleen, and can slip through the walls of the blood vessels, or ooze out of a medium's side during a seance. They are the sanitary police of the body, devouring the bacterial germs. H.P.B. (in *Lucifer*, January 1889) calls the spleen "the physical vehicle of the Protean Double." As there are many kinds of astral bodies, with many names, it would be more exact to call the second principle "the *Linga Śarīra*," but it seems unnecessary to be so particular here, and better to use the English name whenever possible.

It is the astral body that forms the bridge between our physical sensations and our consciousness. Just as a telegraph operator receives a message, and forwards it to the person for whom it is intended, so a sensation received by our nerves is transmitted by them to the brain, and thence to the corresponding seat of sensation in the astral body, whence it is reflected to the lower mind, and comes into consciousness. Science has never yet bridged the gap between the physical brain and consciousness, and only when the existence of many gradations of matter between the physical and the mental are accepted, will the problem be solved.

It is upon the model of the astral body that the physical body is built, and when it dies, the astral dies and disintegrates with or less slowly. For this reason, among others, cremation is it, more so desirable, as it frees the particles of the physical and astral bodies at once, instead of subjecting them to a long process of decay.

III. The third principle is LIFE, although it cannot properly be numbered, as it pervades every atom of the universe. In the very beginning of her teaching H.P.B. warned her pupils not to think of these principles as watertight compartments, but rather to consider them as having each its seven gradations, and all as interpenetrating and mingling with each other. Life is like the ocean, and we are like the drops of water that compose it, there is no possibility of saying that where one drop leaves off and another one begins.

The Life-principle, on our plane, is but the effect and result of the *intelligent* action of the “Host,” or collective Principle, the manifesting Life and Light. The “nervous Ether” is the lowest principle of the primordial Essence, which is *Life*. The Sun is the storehouse of vital force, which is the *noumenon* of electricity. It is the action of cosmic electricity upon a compound or even a simple body, that produces life. When a body dies, it passes into the same polarity as its male energy, and repels, therefore, the active agent, which losing its hold upon the *whole*, fastens upon the parts or molecules, this action being called chemical.

The fourth principle, the animal Soul, completes the Quaternary, or fourfold man, and includes the passional, instinctual, and emotional nature. It is called sometimes the body of Desire. It is this principle that binds us to earth-life. “It is not the human body that is the grossest of all our principles,” says H.P.B., “but verily the *middle* principle, the real animal center; whereas our body is but its shell, the irresponsible factor or medium, through which the beast in us acts.”

The “breath of life” breathed into the nostrils of Adam, is life and the animal soul conjoined, it is these two together that make the “Vital Spark.” When united to the lower part of the Mind, it becomes Kâma-Manas, or the normal brain-intelligence, and joined to the Life-principle, it pervades every part of the body, as the vital force, or Vitality. During life, Kâma has no form or body, but after death it takes a form composed of astral matter, and becomes what is known as the Kâma-rûpa. It possesses consciousness of a very low order, and

is always attracted to the lowest type of mediums. Such a Body of Desire is a very dangerous associate, and is the entity often spoken of as a “spook.”

The persistence of the Kâma-rûpa after death, depends upon the character of the dying person. The more intellectual and spiritual his life has been, the less vitality will the Kâma-rûpa have, and it will quickly fade out into nothingness. But if during the man's life on earth, his animal nature was predominant, the Kâma-rûpa would last a long while after the death of the body. In case of sudden death or suicide, the person is doomed to fill out the measure of his days within the sphere of the earth.

The fourth principle then, which completes the fourfold man, the Quaternary, leaves him a perfect animal, with the potential higher qualities still undeveloped. *Stanza IV, Part II of The Secret Doctrine* gives us a wonderfully complete sketch of the evolution of the fourfold man up to the point where it was impossible to make further progress without Mind. “The Breath (that is, the human Monad) needed a form; the Fathers (the Lunar Ancestors) gave it. The Breath needed a gross body; the Earth moulded it. The Breath needed the Spirit of Life; the Solar Ancestors breathed it into its form. The Breath needed a mirror of its body (that is, an astral shadow); ‘we gave it our own,’ said the Creative Powers. The Breath needed a vehicle of desires (the emotional soul); ‘It has it,’ said the Drainer of Waters (the fire of passion and animal instinct). The Breath needs a mind to embrace the Universe. ‘We cannot give that,’ said the Fathers. ‘I never had it,’ said the Spirit of the Earth. ‘The form would be consumed were I to give it mine,’ said the Great (Solar) Fire. . . .

“(Nascent) Man remained an empty senseless phantom.”

This is the summing up of occult knowledge in the poetic language of the East. Modern psychology would say that not until the processes of evolution had perfected the physical brain, could it become a fitting instrument for the use of the mind, but after all, to the psychologist mind is only a function

of the brain. Very different is the conviction of the occultist. *The Voice of the Silence* says: "Have perseverance as one who doth evermore endure. Thy shadows (personalities) live and vanish; that which is in thee shall live forever, that which *Knows*, for it is the man that was, that is, and will be, for whom the hour shall never strike."

IV. The human Monad referred to in *Stanza IV*, Vol. II., as *the Breath*, is the reincarnating Ego, the Ray of the Divine Spirit, eternal and unchangeable, the string upon which are threaded the countless beads of the personalities, "that live and vanish." The Monad, Manas, the Man or the Thinker, is very clearly described in *The Key to Theosophy*. "Try to imagine a 'Spirit,' a celestial Being, divine in its essential nature, yet not pure enough to be one with the ALL, which union it can achieve only by passing *individually* and *personally*, that is, *spiritually* and *physically* through every experience that exists in the manifested Universe. It has, therefore, after having gained such experience in the lower Kingdoms, to pass through every experience on the human planes. This *individualized* 'Thought' is what we theosophists call the *real* human Ego, the thinking Entity imprisoned in a case of flesh and bones. Once imprisoned, or incarnate, the Mind is always dual, that is to say the *rays* of the eternal, divine Mind, considered as individuals, assume a two-fold attribute, their essential, heaven-aspiring mind (the higher Manas) and the human quality of thinking, or animal cogitation, rationalized, owing to the superior quality of the human brain, which is the lower Mind (or Manas)."

That is, to put it still more plainly, the mind when we are considering it as an individual Entity, is always dual, and composed of the heaven-aspiring intellect, which we call the higher mind, and the reasoning power which we have in common with the animals (but in a higher degree, owing to the superior development of the human brain), which we know as the lower mind.

This conception of the dual character of the mind, solves many problems in connection with the intelligence of animals,

and enables us to realize that an animal may be possessed of a physical body, an astral form, vitality, instinct, even a large share of intelligence, and yet be devoid of the higher mind, the reincarnating Ego. As to vegetable or mineral monads, the more correct expression would be “the Monadic Essence” manifesting in that form of matter called the mineral (or vegetable) kingdom. . . . The tendency towards separation into individual Monads is gradual, and in the higher animals, comes almost to the point. “Man is a perfected animal, the vehicle of a fully developed Monad, *self-conscious*, and deliberately following its own line of progress, whereas in the insect, and even in the higher animals, the higher Triad of principles is absolutely dormant.” (*Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, I. 13.) Precisely the same thing is said in *The Secret Doctrine*, and in Vol. II., p. 81, we have these emphatic words: “Between man and the animal — whose Monads are fundamentally identical — there is the impossible abyss of Mentality and Self-Consciousness.” But we must remember that these higher principles are not *non-existent* in the animal, they are dormant or latent, to be developed in due time. “The animal has an astral body that survives the physical a short time, but its (animal) Monad does not re-incarnate in the same, but in a higher species, and has no Devachan, of course. It has the seeds of all the human principles in itself, but they are *latent*.” (*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II., p. 196.)

The best analysis of the higher principles in man, put in the simplest way, is that given in *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 175, beginning with the higher Mind, in order to keep the sequence we have used hitherto.

V. THE INNER OR HIGHER EGO.

“The Inner or Higher Ego is *Manas*, the fifth principle, so-called, independently of Buddhi, (The Spiritual Soul). The Mind Principle is only the Spiritual Soul when merged *into one* with Buddhi. It is the permanent Individuality, or the Re-incarnating Ego.

VI. THE SPIRITUAL DIVINE EGO.

The Spiritual *Divine* Ego, is the Spiritual Soul or *Buddhi*, in close union with *Manas*, the Mind-principle, without which it is no Ego at all, but only the Atmic vehicle.

VII. THE HIGHER SELF.

The HIGHER SELF is Âtma, the inseparable Ray of the Universal and ONE SELF. It is the God *above* more than within us.”

It will be evident, then, that the highest in us is that Eternal Existence which we share with every particle of Life and Intelligence in the universe, and that in conjunction with the Spiritual Soul and the Mind, makes up the trinity in Man, and forms the permanent Individuality or the Reincarnating Ego. Strictly speaking, there are but five principles in man, the lowest, the physical body, being an illusion, and the highest being that Breath of the Divine which overshadows man, rather than forms a part of him. But for ordinary purposes, the sevenfold division is more convenient.

PART III

REINCARNATION AND KARMA

Reincarnation and Karma have been rightly called “the twin doctrines of theosophy,” because they are so inseparable, almost impossible to speak of Karma without bringing in reincarnation, or of reincarnation without mentioning Karma. Karma is Eternal Law and Absolute Justice, reincarnation makes the action of that law and justice possible. One of the universal problems of the world, the question that confronts all men when they begin to think, is first, how to reconcile Divine Justice and Mercy with the terrible sin and suffering in the world, and second, how to solve the problem of one man’s life of comfort and luxury, side by side with his brother’s existence of incessant toil and struggle. What can explain the misery of the thousands of little children that perish every year in the dark and noisome tenements of our great cities, while the parents that brought them into the world are living like dogs with no hope of a better future? Can we wonder at the murders and suicides that we hear of every day, when we realize that they take place among people who have no idea of Divine Justice and no trust in Divine Love?

And besides the accidents of birth and station, how many men of more than average goodness are struggling painfully through life weighed down by a burden of inherited tendencies that gradually sap the strength and paralyze the energy of the character, and little by little drag the balance down to the side of evil. Should the man be held responsible for the outcome of such tendencies when perhaps he has not been given the strength to struggle against his insidious foes?

It is a wise old French proverb that says: “to know all is to pardon all.” But only Divine Omniscience knows for how much of a man’s Karma that man is directly responsible, and how much belongs to that of his race, his nation, and the people

among whom his lot is cast, in all of which he is necessarily involved. Therefore no man should speak of another's trials as his punishment, or say of them, "that is his Karma," for the parti-colored threads of life are impossible to disentangle, and what seems to us righteous retribution, may be the last trial of a saint, or the first step upward of the future prophet.

Nor is it right to say, as some theosophists do, "the good Karma will take care of me," for Karma is not "good," any more than it is evil, nor does it "take care" of any one, being absolute and unerring Law. "The Blessed Ones have naught to do with the purgations of matter." They are concerned with higher things.

Another frequent mistake is to speak of "interfering with Karma," as if one finger of little man could stop the cogwheels of the Universe. It is supposed by many that to help a person in distress is to interfere with his Karma, because his distress is a part of it, and therefore should not be relieved. But is it not just as truly your Karma which has made you able to help him? One might say with Emerson's *Rhodora*, "the self-same Power that brought me there brought you."

Another element in the seeming injustice of fate (and here we take up the thread of reincarnation again) is the shortness of life's span. Even seventy years is not enough under the most favorable circumstances, to create a character, to weed out its evil tendencies, and strengthen its good ones, to develop its powers, and give a chance for the achievements of the poet, the painter, the musician. How few men have lived to see the fulfilment of their dreams of beauty or usefulness! Of how many glorious youths that died in the heyday of their promise "it might be said — 'Tis not a life, 'tis but a piece of childhood thrown away."

But to the believer in reincarnation all these problems are solved by "the twin doctrines," and instead of a capricious Deity, lifting one man to heaven, and thrusting another into hell at his own pleasure, Eternal Justice metes out to every man the harvest of his own sowing in balances that can never weigh wrong, and he is given all eternity in which to develop the soul,

and lead the inner man to perfection. Every good deed, every kind word or thought is stored up for him, and will help to make his next life better and nobler than this one. Not one life, but thousands of lives, if necessary, are his in which to learn the lessons of the higher life, and the today and tomorrow of every man depend upon his yesterdays, and the use he has made of them. What he has sown he shall most surely reap, and in the measure he meted it to others.

But it is not enough to make assertions, we should be able to give a reason for the faith that is in us. In the first place, what is the meaning of “reincarnation” which is sometimes confused with “metempsychosis,” a very different thing? The word *reincarnation* suggests at once the soul as a dweller in the flesh, and if once imprisoned in a fleshly tabernacle, why not many times? The word *metempsychosis* lays more stress upon the dweller, and was once applied to animals as well as to human beings. The latter, according to this doctrine, were doomed to reincarnation in an animal form as punishment for their sins, the dominant sin of the man finding its fitting habitation in the brute whose nature most nearly represented that sin. And the evil traits of men, their cruelty, their greed, their vices of every kind, went after their death, it was believed, to increase the sum of cruelty and greed in the universe, to make the tiger more cruel, the lion more fierce, the shark more rapacious. Pythagoras, according to Shakespeare, thought the soul of a man’s grandmother might inhabit a bird, but Malvolio “thought nobly of the soul, and in no way approved that opinion.” Nor was it long before the doctrine of reincarnation superseded that of metempsychosis, and men began to think so nobly of the soul that they could not believe it could go backwards into animal bodies.

The objections to reincarnation have been founded for the most part on a misconception of the real meaning of its teaching. In the first place it must be understood what it is that reincarnates. Man has already been described as a complex entity, of a sevenfold constitution, endowed with a physical body, an astral body, a portion of the all-pervading Life, and

that partially developed mind many of whose characteristics he shares with the higher animals. These four principles form what is generally known as the Quaternary, while the higher Mind and Âtma-Buddhi, or the Spirit-Soul, made one with the Mind (or Intellectual Soul) form the human Trinity, sometimes called the Triad. Beginning with the lowest principle, the physical body, everyone knows that it must decay at death and that the astral form decays step by step with it as soon as the life-principle departs, and that "the body of desire" (or the Kâma-rûpa) the sum of man's passional nature, the emotional Soul, has but a short and precarious existence after death, the length of its survival in the astral world depending, as already said, upon the more or less spiritual tendencies of the Ego. His Kâma-rûpa will dwell for a time on the astral plane clothed in a body made up of astral matter. If a man be of average goodness during his lifetime, all that is pure and unsoiled in his nature will return after his death to its source in the Universal Mind, and the astral matter that is to be the mould of his next body will be gradually purified and made ready for a better master than the last.

All men pass from the portals of death into a state analogous to the dream-state, in which the soul, wearied by the cares and trials of life, rests from its labors, and carries out its highest ideals into a fulfilment, which if purely subjective, is none the less real to that soul. (To understand this description of the state of the soul between incarnations it must be remembered that in Eastern philosophy the outer world of manifestation is regarded as "the great delusion," the rainbow-hued projection of the white light of the Oversoul in which all souls share. Thus as "the Kingdom of God is within," the soul enters a deeper reality as its consciousness is indrawn. EDITOR.) While a man dreams, the outer world is lost to him, it ceases to exist, and the scenes and characters of his dream are realities to the sleeping Ego, who has lost all cognizance of waking existence.

Life as a whole runs in a cycle exactly corresponding to its smaller divisions. A man wakes from the quiet sleep of night to the activities of a new day. He fills his day with toil or pleasure or study, and returns again to the sleep of night and the rest that will enable him to go back to work when the next

day begins, with renewed physical strength and quickened mental powers. During that period of sleep which we call unconsciousness, he may have received much spiritual help, that assisted the growth of the inner man, and aided him to develop his latent powers, but which he seldom recognizes for what it is. So in the longer cycles, he has his periods of activity, his longer or shorter times of absolute rest, and then a new life with higher powers. The rest that comes between two active periods, or reincarnations, is called *Devachan*, or “the Kingdom of the Gods,” and is, like our dream-life, wholly subjective. During this time, the Ego carries out all the long-cherished ideals of its last life, and for the time being, becomes the ideal reflection of the man it was when last on earth. As it is a subjective condition, there can be no consciousness of death in *Devachan*, and “nothing will be wanting to make the disembodied state one of perfect happiness. . . The Ego in *Devachan* lives its intermediate cycle between two incarnations, surrounded by everything it had aspired to in vain, and in the companionship of every one it had loved on earth. . . Spiritual, holy love is immortal, and love beyond the grave has a magic and divine potency which reacts on the living, . . . for love is a strong shield, and is not limited by space or time.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 150.)

Devachan, then, is the heaven that we make for ourselves, the reward of the aspiring soul, but what of its punishment? And here we have again the action of Karma, which is Absolute Justice. It is neither logical nor just, according to theosophy, to punish in the spirit the sins committed in the body, and for which the body is largely responsible. Therefore all sins that mar man’s record in this life are to be punished in the physical body of other incarnations, just as he is suffering now from the retribution due him not only from his last life-cycle, but from all his previous lives on earth, however numerous they may have been. During the active periods of existence, the Ego builds the temple of his soul, eternal in the heavens, and fills it with treasures that moth and rust cannot corrupt. Then comes the peaceful rest in which he grows spiritually, and gradually

prepares for a better life than the last. Meanwhile the “stern daughter of the voice of God,” inexorable Karma, has been making up his balance-sheet, and his new life will be conditioned by the past, and will be hampered as that has been, by all the sins and errors which have stained the fair pages of his record.

The Ego then receives after death only the reward of the *unmerited* sufferings endured during its past incarnations. “The whole punishment after death, even for the materialist, consists therefore in the absence of any reward, and the utter loss of the consciousness of one’s bliss and rest. . . Karmic *punishment* reaches the Ego only in its next incarnation.” H.P.B. herself told the writer that in the case of an atheist who had led a moral life and had devoted himself to working for humanity, the time between incarnations would be short, perhaps only a few months, because he had ignored the spiritual side of his nature, and laid up for himself none of those treasures in heaven which should have been his portion after death. This rapid resumption of life on earth would be the natural result of another Karmic law which regulates the time of reincarnation in normal cases. If the Ego, during its life on earth and its rest in Devachan has been storing up spiritual knowledge and experiences to which it is continually adding, it is not until all this spiritual provision has been exhausted that it is forced to yield to the thirst for earth-life, and to return to the physical plane.

One of the most frequent objections to the doctrine of reincarnation is the fact that we have no recollection of our past lives. But why should we? The organ of memory is the brain, and as long as the Ego resides in the physical body, all its records are imprinted on the brain. When the body dies, the memory also perishes, and with a new body we get a new brain, with all its tablets blank. Memory as a function of the physical brain is incapable of carrying its treasures over to another life, but as Swedenborg rightly said, there are two memories, the mental and the spiritual, and the spiritual memory is a function, not of the brain, but of the higher consciousness. As the Ego grows more and more spiritual, as that part of his nature

becomes more and more developed, he learns to think of his present life as the ordinary man thinks of an old coat, which has nothing to do with the man himself, and is presently to be thrown away like all worn-out garments. Some flash of recollection may come across the brain-memory occasionally, born of some dear association with the long forgotten past, but for real memories of past incarnations we must wait until the memory of the soul is ours. As a rule, people who remember, or think they remember, their past incarnations, always remember themselves as the central figure in the picture. Marie Antoinette and Mary, Queen of Scots, for instance, are very favorite subjects for incarnation (I have met several of them myself), but I never met anyone who claimed to have incarnated in the beggar at the door of either of these great ladies, or the scullion in their kitchen. And yet the beggar or the scullion might have attained a height of spiritual growth that neither queen had reached.

“The spiritual Ego of man moves in Eternity like a pendulum between the hours of birth and death,” says *The Key to Theosophy*. “At the solemn moment of death, every man, even when death is sudden, sees the whole of his past life marshalled before him in its minutest details. For one short instant the *personal* becomes one with the individual and all-knowing *Ego*. But this instant is enough to show him the whole chain of causes which have been at work during his life . . . and he feels and knows the justice of all the suffering that has overtaken him. . . As the man at the moment of death has a retrospective insight into the life he has led, so at the moment he is re-born on earth the Ego, awaking from the state of Devachan, has a prospective vision of the life which awaits him, and realizes all the causes which have led to it. He realizes them and sees futurity, because it is between Devachan and re-birth that the Ego regains his full manasic consciousness.”

Nothing has been said so far of the possible loss of the soul, a terrible, but a very infrequent, consequence of conscious persistence in evil, the deliberate choosing of the worse instead of the better, for its own sake. The trend of the universe is

towards perfection, and so long as a spark of good survives in the soul there is hope of its final redemption. Annihilation, moreover, is never instantaneous, and may require centuries for its accomplishment. With every incarnation the entity who has chosen the path of evil “sinks lower and lower until the evil force gradually wears itself out, and such a personality perishes, separated from the source of life. It finally disintegrates, to be worked up into other forms of living things, but as a separate existence it is lost.”

This brief introduction to the study of theosophy can only indicate its most important teachings, and leaves the student to supply the missing links, which are very numerous. Theosophy has been described as a science, a philosophy and a religion, but here its scientific side has hardly been mentioned, although it is so often found anticipating the most modern discoveries in physics, astronomy, etc.

Next to the teaching of the Divine Unity, which involves that of Universal Brotherhood, the law of Karma is certainly the most important, as laying such stress upon individual responsibility, and the unerring action of Law. “Man’s fate is what he himself makes it,” says *The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 236-237. “Once grasp the idea that universal causation is not merely present, but past, present, and future, and every action on our plane falls naturally and easily into its true place, and is seen in its true relation to ourselves and others.”

And if the student desires a summary of its religious teaching, let him take this passage from *Isis Unveiled*: “There being but One Truth, man requires but one church, the Temple of God within us; walled in by matter, but penetrable by any who can find the way; *the pure in heart see God.*” (*Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II., p. 635.)