



The Spiral Path...

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No Man is an Island

No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

John Donne, *Meditation XVII*

Ourselves and Others

As we journey through our daily lives, we have many distractions that usually center around ourselves or those close to us. We often feel those most – more, anyway, than the reverberations that come from those further away, or from those we do not know at all. I dare say this last category comprises billions of human lives, all struggling, as we all are, to make sense of it all.

Death, war, any injustice, and countless other forms of suffering surround all of those we know and do not know. News and the internet do not allow us to be insulated any longer from those we do not know. Judge, in his *Letters That Have Helped Me* writes about his own purposeful enlarging of consciousness. In Letter 4 he says:

I am not separate from anything. "I am that which is." That is, I am Brahma, and Brahma is everything. But being in an illusionary world, I am surrounded by certain appearances that seem to make me separate. So I will proceed to mentally state and accept that I am all these illusions. I am my friends, — and then I went to them in general and in particular. I am my enemies; then I felt them all. I am the poor and the wicked; I am the ignorant. Those moments of intellectual gloom are the moments when I am influenced by those ignorant ones who are myself. All this in my nation. But there are many nations, and to those I go in mind; I feel and I am them all, with what they hold of superstition or of wisdom or evil. All, all is myself. Unwisely, I was then about to stop, but the whole is Brahma...

Let us *TRY* to do the same, as raising one Self raises them all.

As we become ever brighter,
our Light touches others
and their Light begins to grow.

Eventually, the whole of Humanity
will express their inner Light
in a way we can be proud of.

We will become bright as the Sun one day,
and shelter those other Beings
who are following us on our journey.

Jasper Niemand



How Should We Treat Others?

F.T.S., *The Path*, February 1896

The subject relates to our conduct toward and treatment of our fellows, including in that term all people with whom we have any dealings. No particular mode of treatment is given by Theosophy. It simply lays down the law that governs us in all our acts, and declares the consequences of those acts. It is for us to follow the line of action which shall result first in harmony now and forever, and second, in the reduction of the general sum of hate and opposition in thought or act which now darkens the world.

The great law which Theosophy first speaks of is the law of karma, and this is the one which must be held in view in considering the question. Karma is called by some the "law of ethical causation," but it is also the law of action and reaction; and in all departments of nature the reaction is equal to the action, and sometimes the reaction from the unseen but permanent world seems to be much greater than the physical act or word would appear to warrant on the physical plane. This is because the hidden force on the unseen plane was just as strong and powerful as the reaction is seen by us to be. The ordinary view takes in but half of the facts in any such case and judges wholly by superficial observation.

If we look at the subject only from the point of view of the person who knows not of Theosophy and of the nature of man, nor of the forces Theosophy knows to be operating all the time, then the reply to the question will be just the same as the everyday man makes. That is, that he has certain rights he must and will and ought to protect; that he has property he will and may keep and use any way he pleases; and if a man injure him he ought to and will resent it; that if he is insulted by word or deed he will at once fly not only to administer punishment on the offender, but also try to reform, to admonish, and very often to give that offender up to the arm of the law; that if he knows of a criminal he

will denounce him to the police and see that he has meted out to him the punishment provided by the law of man. Thus in everything he will proceed as is the custom and as is thought to be the right way by those who live under the Mosaic retaliatory law.

But if we are to inquire into the subject as Theosophists, and as Theosophists who know certain laws and who insist on the absolute sway of karma, and as people who know what the real constitution of man is, then the whole matter takes on, or ought to take on, a wholly different aspect.

The untheosophical view is based on separation, the Theosophical upon unity absolute and actual. Of course if Theosophists talk of unity but as a dream or a mere metaphysical thing, then they will cease to be Theosophists, and be mere professors, as the Christian world is today, of a code not followed. If we are separate one from the other the world is right and resistance is a duty, and the failure to condemn those who offend is a distinct breach of propriety, of law, and of duty. But if we are all united as a physical and psychical fact, then the act of condemning, the fact of resistance, the insistence upon rights on all occasions — all of which means the entire lack of charity and mercy — will bring consequences as certain as the rising of the sun tomorrow.

What are those consequences, and why are they?

They are simply this, that the real man, the entity, the thinker, will react back on you just exactly in proportion to the way you act to him, and this reaction will be in another life, if not now, and even if now felt will still return in the next life.

The fact that the person whom you condemn, or oppose, or judge seems now in this life to deserve it for his acts in this life, does not alter the other fact that his nature will react against you when the time comes. The reaction is a law not subject to nor altered by any sentiment on your part. He may have, truly, offended you and even hurt you, and done that which in the eye of man is blameworthy, but all this does not have anything to do with the dynamic fact that if you arouse his enmity by your condemnation or judgment there will be a reaction on you, and consequently on the whole of society in any century when the reaction takes place. This is the law and the fact as given by the Adepts, as told by all sages, as reported by those who have seen the inner side of nature, as taught by our philosophy and easily provable by anyone who will take the trouble to examine carefully. Logic and small facts of one day or one life, or arguments on lines laid down by men of the world who do not know the real power and place of thought nor the real nature of man cannot sweep this away. After all argument and all logic it will remain. The logic used against it is always lacking in certain premises based on facts, and while seeming to be good logic, because the missing facts are unknown to the logician, it is false logic. Hence an appeal to logic that ignores facts which we know are certain is of no use in this inquiry. And the ordinary argument always uses a number of assumptions which are destroyed by the actual inner facts about thought, about karma, about the reaction by the inner man.

The Master “K.H.,” once writing to Mr. Sinnett in the *Occult World*, and speaking for his whole order and not for himself only, distinctly wrote that the man who goes to denounce a criminal or an offender works not with nature and harmony but against both, and that such act tends to destruction instead of construction. Whether the act be large or small, whether it be the denunciation of a criminal, or only your own insistence on rules or laws or rights, does not alter the matter or take it out of the rule laid down by that Adept. For the only difference between the acts mentioned is a difference of degree alone; the act is the same in kind as the violent denunciation of a criminal. Either this Adept was right or wrong. If wrong, why do we follow the philosophy laid down by him and his messenger, and concurred in by all the sages and

teachers of the past? If right, why this swimming in an adverse current, as he said himself, why this attempt to show that we can set aside karma and act as we please without consequences following us to the end of time? I know not. I prefer to follow the Adept, and especially so when I see that what he says is in line with facts in nature and is a certain conclusion from the system of philosophy I have found in Theosophy.

I have never found an insistence on my so-called rights at all necessary. They preserve themselves, and it must be true if the law of karma is the truth that no man offends against me unless I in the past have offended against him.

In respect to man, karma has no existence without two or more persons being considered. You act, another person is affected, karma follows. It follows on the thought of each and not on the act, for the other person is moved to thought by your act. Here are two sorts of karma, yours and his, and both are intermixed. There is the karma or effect on you of your own thought and act, the result on you of the other person’s thought; and there is the karma on or with the other person consisting of the direct result of your act and his thoughts engendered by your act and thought. This is all permanent. As affecting you there may be various effects. If you have condemned, for instance, we may mention some: (a) the increased tendency in yourself to indulge in condemnation, which will remain and increase from life to life; (b) this will at last in you change into violence and all that anger and condemnation may naturally lead to; (c) an opposition to you is set up in the other person, which will remain forever until one day both suffer for it, and this may be in a tendency in the other person in any subsequent life to do you harm and hurt you in the million ways possible in life, and often also unconsciously. Thus it may all widen out and affect the whole body of society. Hence no matter how justifiable it may seem to you to condemn or denounce or punish another, you set up cause for sorrow in the whole race that must work out some day. And you must feel it.

The opposite conduct, that is, entire charity, constant forgiveness, wipes out the opposition from others, expends the old enmity and at the same time makes no new similar causes. Any other sort of thought or conduct is sure to increase the sum of hate in the world, to make cause for sorrow, to continually keep up the crime and misery in the world. Each man can for himself decide which of the two ways is the right one to adopt.

Self-love and what people call self-respect may shrink from following the Adept’s view I give above, but the Theosophist who wishes to follow the law and reduce the general sum of hate will know how to act and to think, for he will follow the words of the Master of H.P.B. who said: “Do not be ever thinking of your self and forgetting that there are others; for you have no karma of your own, but the karma of each one is the karma of all.” And these words were sent by H.P.B. to the American Section and called by her words of wisdom, as they seem also to me to be, for they accord with law. They hurt *the personality* of the nineteenth century, but the personality is for a day, and soon it will be changed if Theosophists try to follow the law of charity as enforced by the inexorable law of karma. We should all constantly remember that if we believe in the Masters we should at least try to imitate them in the charity they show for our weakness and faults. In no other way can we hope to reach their high estate, for by beginning thus we set up a tendency which will one day perhaps bring us near to their development; by not beginning we put off the day forever.

The Self of Matter and the Self of Spirit can never meet.
One of the twain must disappear; there is no place for both.

H.P.B., *The Voice of the Silence*, p. 27

An Invocation to the Soul

Nhilde Davidson

At the center of everything is Divinity, and around this immutable core every entity builds a suitable form during each incarnation. Through the infinite ages this material vehicle clothing the manifested godspark is transmuted by the rhythms of life, thus enabling the center of Being to shine through in ever-increasing brilliance. Seen from this perspective all things have majesty, not withstanding any material aspects that a beholder may judge to be repulsive.

To lose sight of this beauty and unity, which binds us to each other and to every animate or (to us) inanimate thing, is to blind ourselves not only to the wonders that surround us but also to the intimate wonder of our true self. How can we fully acknowledge our divine center if we fail to accept, and treat accordingly, all things containing a similar portion of the same immutable substance? Our inner eye looks out at the world through a fortress with dark windows formed by our thoughts, aspirations, prejudices, and perceptions. It is this encasement of the immortal consciousness that has to be clarified of dross and made suitably translucent so that we can see the ethereal realms of the spirit ever more clearly.

It is as if we have a very bright light focused on the false self — that element of ourselves that desires worldly things such as fame, possessions, acclaim, control, and vengeance. When we look through the windows of the soul, the brighter the glare on the false self, the more we see only the reflection of this self and are unable to see much beyond the glass. This makes it difficult to perceive or understand the universal needs of our divine nature. If we dim the lights on our passions and desires, the reflection is less opaque and we can see more clearly the world that belongs to our true center, allowing us to act in ways that are in accord with the concerns of divinity, namely altruism and compassion.

There is a Buddhist saying: “To light a candle before the Buddha one must first extinguish the self.” This self refers to the small, petty self; the true self can never be extinguished for it is the carrier of the flame of immortality. The profound truth is that the candle we need to light is a polished soul that we have freed from the snares of illusion cast by worldly desires and the lesser self.

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From the Editor

Let us take a moment.

Let us take a moment and think of all those others in the world who do not practice or understand universal brotherhood. We are in a special place, knowing what we know. Not higher or lower, just unique. What was only taught in the Mystery Schools just a few thousand years ago, we now have access to at our fingertips. Though it is what we do with that knowledge and wisdom that counts.

Let us take a moment and send out kind thoughts for the benefit of *ALL* humanity. Those close to us, those far from us, those we know, and those we don't know. Despite any material or philosophical differences, they are all part of us.

Let us take a moment.

Best Regards,

Scott Osterhage

Lighting the Fires of Mind

Eloise Hart

What is it that gives us the power to change the world? It is our mind. Ever since its awakening human beings have been thinking, aspiring, exploring, and changing their lives. To scientists this awakening that happened so long ago remains an “unexplainable wonder.” Before it, we were innocent and irresponsible like preschool children. But when our minds were set aflame with the fires of thought we were able not only to know ourselves and what was “good” and what not, but also to begin consciously to direct our own evolution. Today this wondrous happening is repeated daily. Parents and teachers light fires when they stimulate imagination and start their youngsters asking questions. Although commonplace, isn't it always a wonder when an idea suddenly comes in and illumines a problem we've been pondering?

Commemorating the original awakening, myths and traditions of the world preserve its importance. The Greeks describe the mighty Prometheus who created men in the image of the gods, upright so they could contemplate the heavens. Regretting that he had not been able to supply them with mind, he tricked the gods and stole their fire, carrying it to mankind in a hollow reed. For this he was punished by Zeus, chained to a rock in the mountains, until Herakles (representing the awakened human soul) eventually set him free.

Tricksters, whether human or animal, have been frequently cast in this role. But why animals? Could it be because they so aptly personify the qualities necessary for intelligent thinking: curiosity, ingenuity, and persistence? American Indians tell of many resourceful spiders, coyotes, and ravens who stole the gods' fire-sticks, and they also tell of the sometimes clownish, sometimes wise kachinas. In India, Krishna played this part to perfection. As ingenious child-savior in the Puranas, and sage-advisor in the Bhagavad-Gita, he brings the “light” which generates constructive and creative thinking. In Norse myths it is Loki, while the Judeo-Christian God casts Lucifer (“lightbringer”) from heaven, and had him enter the Garden of Eden as a serpent to offer unawakened humanity — represented by Adam and Eve — the means by which they could become wise as gods. Stories like these are attempts to describe the event that opened our eyes and set our feet on the pathway of progress. It could not have happened earlier, when our brains and psychological natures were insufficiently developed.

“Lighting the fires of mind” is an intriguing expression. Lighting implies the inflaming of that which has the potency to be lit. Fire suggests upward movement, change, combustion, transformation, whether this occurs to heat our houses, cook our food, light our study, or change our lives — and we do change our lives when we change our thinking.

But how exactly does this transformation, this lighting of the fires, take place? Hopi Indian customs provide one explanation. Each year, their holy kachinas descend from the summit of the San Francisco Peaks north of Flagstaff, Arizona. Halfway down the mountain they meet tribesmen ascending to receive them. Meeting, divine essence blends with human, whereupon the Indians, now clothed and infilled with the radiance of the god that endowed them, return to their village and for the ensuing fortnight live and act as the gods would — bestowing gifts and instruction. When the kachinas depart, the light they brought continues to illumine the minds of all who received it.

Theosophy tells of great-hearted manasaputras or “sons of mind” who 18 million years ago came from their spiritual realms, incarnated among mankind, and instilled in the minds of those who were receptive thoughts that inflamed their mental faculties and, in degree, awakened their spiritual awareness. Doing this, they not only impregnated individual minds, but impressed the thought-atmosphere of the earth with the archetypal ideas basic to civilized life. These ideas embrace the laws of hygiene and medicine, of agriculture, architecture, celestial navigation, metallurgy, the skills of social and political structure, jurisprudence, philosophy, and

religion. From then on, these ideas have been part of our moral and intellectual being, providing us with an instinctive sense of what is just and true in all areas of our lives.

What an ingenious way this was to protect their sacred knowledge from the ravages of time that has so mercilessly destroyed all that has been recorded on parchment and stone. The tenuous fabric of our minds endures through lifetimes: storing truths there not only preserves them, but keeps them available to every man and woman.

Under the manasaputras' care and instruction the early races learned much about the wonders of the natural and stellar worlds; learned how to erect cities and lay the foundation of cultured and technological civilizations. Then, when they felt mankind could go on alone, these spiritual teachers withdrew their physical presence, remaining in the wings, as it were, ready to guide with an inspired idea.

But were we ready to move forward on our own? The trials and temptations were horrendous. Some, who remained true to the Great Ones' council, survived and progressed, while others, succumbing to the allurements of the psychic and material world, suffered and learned as a consequence. Fortunately, before the spiritual teachers departed, esoteric or Mystery schools had been established where earnest and aspiring individuals could receive spiritual training and experience. Protected from disturbance within the seemingly solid walls of their pyramids, temples, and underground chambers, candidates periodically underwent initiations that illumined their minds and transformed their lives. Such "schools" have always existed: sometimes publicly known, sometimes not, when their existence was threatened by religious and political persecution. From their ranks and influence wise and caring men and women of various vocations and qualifications have emerged periodically and sought to kindle human interest in truth, encourage independent thinking, and quicken intuition.

But what is the mind that was "lit" so long ago? Most of us would agree that our mind is superior to our brain — though we would acknowledge that the brain is a most efficient and complicated "computer." Not only does it receive and coordinate the nerve stimuli that come in from our thoughts, emotions, and senses, but also it organizes and displays them for our mind to consider, act upon, save or erase, according to its experience, accumulated knowledge, and insights.

The word mind derives from the Sanskrit *manas* (as does the word *man*). Hindus translate *manas* both as "mind" and "heart," which is perceptive: great thoughts generally combine the wisdom of mind and heart. Webster's dictionary defines mind as that which "feels, perceives, thinks, wills, and especially reasons." It is also defined as recollection or memory, which recalls the ancient idea that knowledge is within our minds and in the thought atmosphere of the earth. Robert Browning said that to know consists of remembering: of "opening out a way whence the imprisoned splendor may escape," rather than "effecting entry for a light supposed to be without." Obviously, the knowledge here referred to is not the miscellaneous tidbits we store in our brains, but that which is preserved over lifetimes in the higher, spiritual part of our minds.

Philosophically, our individual mind is part of universal mind, the "conscious factor of the universe." Buddhists speak of universal mind as mind essence or pure mind. In this context, lighting the fires of mind is the process by which spiritual thought becomes operative in human minds and enables individuals to think about and understand the underlying principles that govern life throughout the cosmos.

On a more personal level, most of us are aware of the fact that our mind is the center of our human awareness and that it is dual in operation. By it we focus on worldly concerns; or, when energized by the spiritual, we center our attention on thoughts that may put us in touch with archetypal ideas that were implanted in our consciousness lifetimes ago. Instinctively we know we can tap those ideas and that we have the power to shape our lives by selecting what and how we think, as the Buddhist Dhammapada reminds us:

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of an ox that draws the wagon.

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him. — 1-2, Irving Babbitt's rendition

The "pure thoughts" referred to here may be clothed in words of beauty and truth or left wordless. This was illustrated recently by Bernd Weisheit, a Slovenian correspondent, in his retelling an ancient story:

One evening, Buddha came to discourse but this time something had happened which had never happened before. He was carrying something, a lotus. He came and sat down, but he didn't start to speak. He kept silent. An hour passed and he hadn't uttered a single word, he only looked at the lotus. His disciples were restless. What had happened? He never had behaved in such a way before, but they had to keep silent, they couldn't ask him.

Then Mahakasyapa — Mahakasyapa was a strange fellow. Twenty years he had been with the Buddha, but he never had asked a single question. He always sat under a special tree silently, not speaking. Mahakasyapa laughed. He laughed loudly and everybody was shocked. What will the Buddha say? Buddha looked at him and said: "Come close." For the first time in 20 years Buddha had called him. He went close, Buddha gave him the flower and said: "What I could say in words I have said to the assembly, what I could not say in words I transfer to Mahakasyapa."

Buddha was trying to help his disciples empty their minds so that they could feel That which is beyond mind.

Few of us are capable of thought-less thinking. We need thoughts to organize our lives and communicate with others. But what are thoughts? Theosophical writings refer to them as elemental beings which, when attracted into our minds, become active, attract others of similar nature, growing and developing in proportion to the attention and energy we give them. They can, and often do, determine our actions and shape our character. As the Dhammapada tells us: pure thoughts bless and refine our natures and our lives; inharmonious ones disturb and disrupt our physical and mental health, cause confusion, and lead us astray. We all know how thoughts of fear and anger upset us, and how some thoughts can literally take over our lives. It is by this power that unscrupulous advertisers, or political and religious fanatics, stir people up and, on occasion, drive them to actions they would never have considered "in their right minds."

Can we prevent this? We certainly can. By understanding that we are souls and have the power to direct our lives. Brain, mind, and body are tools designed for our use and experience. Recognizing this, it behooves us to take control, to refuse entry into our mind of every unworthy thought, and also to rely on our own decisions and judgment. The thoughts we receive from others may inform and enrich our lives, but the revelations we gain from our own reflection and experience become part of our self. The "fire" of the Great Ones started us thinking: and by right thinking we can awaken the spiritual potential needed to establish a civilized world.

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Let the Silence within Speak...

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