

# **INTRODUCTORY GUIDE**

**To**

# **THEOSOPHY**

**THEOSOPHICAL MANUALS  
UNDER  
G. DE PURUCKER**

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**Introductory Guide to Theosophy:**  
Theosophical Manuals under Katherine Tingley

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Theosophical University Press 2001

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**THEOSOPHICAL MANUALS  
UNDER  
G. DE PURUCKER**

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

The following *chapters* of this book were originally each published as part of a 15 part series of small *manuals* in the 1930s and 1940s by Theosophical University Press, under G. de Purucker. Previously, Katherine Tingley had also published an 18 part series of Manuals though many had different titles, and the content varies from these.

It was felt that these writings still have some value, especially as a general introduction to the simple, yet complex, subject of THEOSOPHY. While there are a plethora of books out there on theosophy, this one for the first time brings all of these manuals into one book. If you also have the book: *Introductory Guide to Theosophy — Theosophical Manuals under Katherine Tingley*, you will notice some overlap; but for the beginner, or even one familiar with theosophy, the overlap of material can be helpful.

However, the manuals should not be considered a 'textbook' of theosophy. Theosophy, being wholly non-dogmatic, is impossible to state in unchanging hard-and-fast rules, bullet-points, or final declarations. It is rather stated in concepts that grow and change over time, especially in one's understanding. Therefore this publication should be considered merely an introduction and jumping-off point in one's studies, and not the end-all of any theosophical teaching.

Theosophy is as old as Humanity. It is in essence the TRUTH about the Universe and Humanity, and when delved into fully, can show the student the pathway to a higher life. Study, dialogue, concentrated thought, and finally inculcation of these principles is crucial to understanding the technical teachings of theosophy. From a purely esoteric standpoint, all we need do is 'live the life' to know the doctrine. "*Man, know thyself*," though an oft-repeated term, is so because of its complex simplicity. If we truly know who and what we are, by introspection, by living a compassionate life, and by knowing (living) altruism in all its aspects, we can also come to understand the essence of all things — the TRUTH.

Scott J. Osterhage  
Tucson, Arizona  
May 8, 2024

# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

These *manuals* are not completely verbatim with the original. Some words were updated and standardized for continuity, capitalizations changed, and footnotes were added in small text and brackets [ ] within the text. Any of this editor's notes, comments, or references are in braces { }. Some language used in the original would seem out of place or harsh today, and some of it disparaging or not useful. So, it was either changed or in a few places deleted.

All the changes made in *no way* affect the meaning of any of the text, especially the theosophical concepts, and in fact, may help it to be more readable and to flow better.

While some changes were made, the original use of a purely masculine voice and examples, was the convention of the time, remains. It would be a monumental task to revise all of them, and it was felt that the reader will understand the context of trying to have the book be both historical. If written today, it would be much more unitary in its presentation, and not use a specific gender or cliché-ish examples. Simply, *Man* and *Men* refer mainly to humans and humanity, and more specifically to the principle of *Manas*, or Mind. Theosophy and the Theosophical Society do not discriminate on the basis of gender, or any other *differences*.

The words race and racial appear often, and refer to "life-waves of humanity" and not to people with different color skin. One race is not superior to another — we are all just on the *path to enlightenment*.

While the main theosophical thoughts are still pertinent today, they must be read with the context of the time they were written in mind.

On the Theosophical Society website (theosociety.org) you may also find updated reference page numbers for some texts quoted in reprinted editions of these manuals.

For technical Sanskrit or general theosophical terms, you may refer to [theosociety.org/pasadena/etgloss/etg-hp.htm](http://theosociety.org/pasadena/etgloss/etg-hp.htm).

The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 by H. P. Blavatsky, H. S. Olcott, William Q. Judge, and others. In 1895 William Q. Judge changed the name to the Theosophical Society in America. When Katherine Tingley took over a couple years later, she changed the name to the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society; stressing *universal brotherhood*. Today it is again called the Theosophical Society, with International Headquarters in Pasadena, California.

# PREFACE

## TO THE SERIES OF MANUALS

Originally published 1907 and updated on [theosociety.org](http://theosociety.org).

These manuals are not written in a controversial spirit, nor as an addition to the stock of theories awaiting public approval. Their message is for those who desire to know — those who are seeking for something that will solve their doubts and remove their difficulties. For such, all that is needed is a clear exposition of the theosophical teachings; for they will judge of the truth of a teaching by its power to answer the questions they ask.

Theosophy strikes unfamiliar ground in modern civilization because it does not come under any particular one of the familiar headings of religion, science, philosophy, etc. into which our age has divided its speculative activities. It dates back to a period in the history of humanity when such distinctions did not exist, but there was one gnosis or knowledge embracing all. Religion and science, as we have them today, are but imperfect growths springing from the remnants of that great ancient system, the Wisdom-Religion, which included all that we now know as religion and science, and much more. Hence theosophy will not appeal to the same motives as religion and science. It will not offer any cheap and easy salvation or put a premium upon mental inactivity and Spiritual Selfishness. Neither can it accommodate itself to the rules laid down by various schools of modern thought as to what constitutes proof and what does not. But it can and does appeal to reason. The truth of doctrines such as theosophy maintains can only be estimated by their ability to solve problems and by their harmony with other truths which we know to be true. But in addition to this we have the testimony of the ages, which has been too long neglected by modern scholarship.

Since the days when the wave of materialism swept over the world, obliterating the traces of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion and replacing it by theological dogmatism, our religions have had nothing to offer us in the way of a philosophical explanation of the laws of being as revealed in man and in Nature. Instead we have only had bare statements and dogmatic assertions. Our higher nature is represented by such vague words as spirit and soul, which have little or no meaning for the majority. The laws of the Universe are briefly summed up under the term God, and all further

consideration of them shut off. Then came a reaction against the dogmatism of religion, and man pinned his faith to knowledge gained by study and reflection, limiting his researches however to the outer world as presented by the senses, and fearing to trench upon the ground which dogmatic theology had rendered the field of so much contention. The result of this has been that neither in religions nor sciences have we any teaching about our higher nature or the deeper mysteries of the Universe. This is a field which is left entirely unexplored, or is at best the subject of tentative and unguided conjectures. Theosophy undertakes to explain that which other systems leave unexplained, and is, on its own special ground, without a competitor. It can issue a challenge to theology, science, and other modern systems to surpass it in giving a rational explanation of the facts of life.

As the founder of the Theosophical Society, H. P. Blavatsky, predicted, there are persons who have sought to pervert the genuine teachings of theosophy and turn them into a source of profit to themselves. The true teachings do not lend themselves to such purposes; their ideals are of the purest and most unselfish. As these pseudo-theosophists have gained a certain amount of notoriety by using the names of the Theosophical Society and its Leaders, it is necessary to warn the public against their misrepresentations. Their teachings can easily be shown, by comparison, to be directly contrary to those of H. P. Blavatsky, whom they nevertheless profess to follow. Instead of having for their basis self-sacrifice, self-purification and the elevation of the human race, these teachings too often pander to ambition, vanity and curiosity. In many cases they are altogether ridiculous. The writers of these manuals have no personal grievance against any such people. Inspired by a profound love of the sublime teachings of theosophy, they have made it their life-work to bring the benefits which they have thereby received within the reach of as many people as possible.

Above all, it is sought to make these manuals such that they shall appeal to the heart and not merely to the head; that they shall be of practical service to the reader in the problems of daily life and not mere intellectual exercises. As H. P. Blavatsky so frequently urged, the message of theosophy is for suffering humanity; and the great teachers, whose sole purpose is to bring to humanity the light of truth and the saving grace of real brotherliness, can have no interest in catering for the mental curiosity of merely a few well-to-do individuals. Even soulless men, said H. P. Blavatsky, can be brilliantly intellectual; but for those who are in earnest in their desire to reach the higher life, intellectual fireworks alone will have little attraction. We intend, therefore, to keep the practical aspect of the teachings always to the front, and to show, as far as possible, that they are what they claim to be — the gospel of a new hope for humanity.



These booklets are not all the product of a single pen, but are written by different students at the International Headquarters of the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society at Point Loma, California. Each writer has contributed his own quota to the series. For further explanations on theosophy generally, the reader is referred to the booklist published below. {Not included in this edition.}

{For more recent versions of these Manuals, further explanations on theosophy generally, and a list of all books published and online by Theosophical University Press, the reader is referred the current THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY website: [theosociety.org](http://theosociety.org).}



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# What is Theosophy?

A General View for Inquirers

Charles J. Ryan

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## WHAT IS THEOSOPHY?

Examine yourselves; realize that there is divinity within you, call it by what name you please.... Examine your own inner movements of consciousness, and you will know that these things of glory are in you. They are the working in you of your inner god, your spiritual inner sun.

This is the message of the great Sages and Seers of all the ages.... of that living fire of consciousness within your breast which tells you of your oneness with all that is, and of your kinship with everything that is; for verily you are akin to the gods who are the rulers and counselors and governors of the Universe. — G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*

What, indeed, is Theosophy? This question, now being asked with increasing earnestness, cannot be answered in one sentence, but the Leaders of the Theosophical Movement have given a few pithy expressions of its various aspects which form a fitting introduction. Helena P. Blavatsky, the Founder of the Theosophical Society, said:

Theosophy is, then, the archaic *Wisdom-Religion*, the esoteric doctrine once known in every ancient country having claims to civilization.  
— *The Theosophist*, October 1879

Theosophy is the quintessence of duty. — *The Key to Theosophy*

William Q. Judge begins his *Ocean of Theosophy* with this:

Theosophy is that ocean of knowledge which spreads from shore to shore of the evolution of sentient beings; unfathomable in its deepest parts, it gives the greatest minds their fullest scope, yet, shallow enough at its shores, it will not overwhelm the understanding of a child.... Embracing both the scientific and the religious, Theosophy is a scientific religion and a religious science. — Chap. 1

According to Katherine Tingley:

Theosophy is the inner life in every religion. It is no new religion, but is as old as truth itself....

Theosophy will bring something to you that can never pass away: the consciousness of your Divine, your Inner Self; a conviction of your inherent power to conserve your energy along the highest spiritual lines. For man cannot find his true place in the great scheme of human life until he has ennobled and enriched his nature with the consciousness of his Divinity....

Think of theosophy not so much as a body of philosophic or other teaching, but as the highest law of conduct, which is the enacted expression of divine love or compassion.

— *Theosophy: The Path of the Mystic*

G. de Purucker, the fourth leader of the Theosophical Society, defines the theosophical philosophy in these words:

The Theosophical philosophy is not something which has been invented by anybody at any time: it is the formulation of the truths of Nature — not of outer Nature alone, which is but the effectual mirroring of hid causes; but more particularly of the vast causal realms behind the outer Nature which our senses know — behind the outer veil of Reality; for these inner and causal realms are the inner Heart of Things. These truths were originally formulated in systematic manner in far past time by Great Seers. This formulation of natural truth has come down to our own times checked and tested in every age by new generations of these Great Seers. This formulation today is called Theosophy.

— *The Theosophical Path*, January 1930, pp. 3-4

Theosophy is not a religion in the ordinary sense; and the Theosophical Society is not a Church in any sense. H. P. Blavatsky was inflexibly opposed to the idea that it should degrade into a sect and set up hard-and-fast dogmas or traffic with sectarian methods. The object of its Founders was to liberate man from bondage by presenting a philosophy of life that would show him how to find the Truth within himself. The literature presented by the Theosophical Society, though a statement in modern form of the Ancient Wisdom, is not offered as a creed, but is intended to provoke thought and study. It gives an explanation of the problems of life that every person can verify for himself, if he so will. Belief in, and the wish to promote, the Oneness of Man are the only prerequisites for good standing in the Theosophical Society.

Theosophy touches life at all points and illuminates every problem, but, naturally, different people find certain aspects more attractive than others — especially at the beginning. To the most intuitive, who immediately perceive the practical importance of its teachings for the happiness and welfare of humanity, this is the greatest incentive to its study; others appreciate its profound speculative features; some are attracted by its revelation of the inner meaning and basic unity of the great world-religions; and there are many who prefer the scientific aspect, which includes the rational explanation of occult phenomena. To meet these conditions we must consider as many aspects of our subject as space permits.

## **THEOSOPHY A UNITY OF RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND PHILOSOPHY**

From the foregoing citations the reader will rightly conclude that theosophy is very inclusive. Dr. de Purucker says:

Now, the operations of the human consciousness are threefold, if you analyze them carefully; and these threefold operations men have designated by the words Religion, Philosophy, and Science...

They are not fundamentally three different things, but are like the three sides of a triangular pyramid, or like three views or ways of looking at Truth. Religion sees one side; science sees another side; philosophy sees a third side; and their unified vision proclaims the recondite facts of Being. We cannot separate them, it is unnatural to do so, and it is for that reason that the Theosophist flatly refuses to do so. — *Man in Evolution*, ch. 1

The mistake of the modern age is to separate the field of knowledge into divisions. We notice this particularly in science, wherein specialization is becoming an embarrassment. In demonstrating that Religion, Philosophy, and Science are and must be a unity, theosophy does not strain any point to combine factors that are really not harmonious; it simply presents well-known facts from a new aspect.

Another artificial and fatal division that vanishes in the light of theosophy is that between the speculations of philosophy and the practical conduct of life. A fundamental principle in theosophy, one that cannot be too strongly emphasized, is that its teachings cannot be properly understood without a sincere effort to make them a power in our everyday lives; theosophy is not for Sundays alone. As H. P. Blavatsky said, "Theosophist is who Theosophy does," and as Dr. de Purucker says, "Love is the cement of the Universe," without which it would fall to pieces (in other words, "God is Love"). So how can we expect to understand the laws of Nature if we outrage them by our selfish thoughts and acts? Belief and conduct cannot be separated in the True.

## UNIVERSAL LAWS IN NATURE

The beginner in theosophy has a right to know the foundations of the Theosophical structure, although only the briefest outline can be given here.

There is One Infinite Life, without beginning or end; no such thing as 'dead matter' exists in Nature. Every atom is a spark of the One Life. The Divine Unity behind all manifestation, commonly called 'Spirit' and 'Matter,' which some call 'God,' others, 'That' (Sanskrit *Sat* or *Tat*), is so infinitely beyond comprehension that we can only stand in mute awe and refuse to insult its majesty by attempting to describe it. The most reverent conception for us is that which comes from Eastern teachings: 'Absolute Compassion.' Early mystical Christianity says:

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. — John i. 18



The initiate Paul, repeats:

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.... — 1 Timothy vi. 16

God is Love. — 1 John iv. 16

Those statements are purely Theosophical, and they are not atheistic. From the Unknowable its manifestation in the dualities of Spirit and Matter descends in cycles of *Manvantara* (activity) and *Pralaya* (repose), ranging from Cosmic, Solar, and World periods to such familiar alternations as sleeping and waking. The evolution of the human soul by physical incarnation, alternating with rest in spiritual conditions, has its place in this universal law of cycles.

In the East this process is called the Great Breath. During the Outbreathing the gods awake; Hierarchies of innumerable degrees of spiritual and other beings become active. With the Inbreathing the process is reversed; the manifested Universe returns to the 'Father,' enriched by experience.

Man on Earth is a *life-atom* of the Divine, immersed in matter, a pilgrim seeking his way back to the source. At a certain stage of experience an inner awakening takes place, and it is then possible for him to step knowingly upon what is called the Path. As Love is the law of life, the only way to find the path to the god within is by obeying the Law of Compassion, of {Universal} Oneness. So we find every true spiritual teacher throughout the ages bringing the same message, which Dr. de Purucker has phrased in the following way:

LOVE IS THE CEMENT OF THE UNIVERSE. LEARN TO FORGIVE. LEARN TO LOVE. EACH ONE OF YOU IS AN INCARNATE GOD. BE IT!

The aim of the Theosophical Society is to spread this teaching of Universal Oneness by revealing the facts on which it rests, and thus showing it to be the inevitable way to peace and happiness. H. P. Blavatsky, the one who was chosen to establish the modern Theosophical Movement, gives the key to the whole situation in a few words:

Our duty is to keep alive in man his spiritual intuitions.

There exist on Earth, though unknown to the world at large, a few rare souls, the efflorescence of the age, who have purified themselves from all traces of personal selfishness and have become living incarnations of love and wisdom. Such are the Masters of Wisdom, Compassion, and Peace who established the Theosophical Movement and who uphold and protect it today.

These Masters of Life have *realized* the truth of the most fundamental teaching of the Wisdom-Religion, Theosophy, the *Oneness of man with the Universe*. They have found the Divinity within, the Inner God. They know the meaning of what the *Upanishads* say in so many ways: "THAT thou art."

## THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The Theosophical Society was founded by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, a Russian of high social rank. Her purpose was to restore Theosophy to the West and thereby to build a firm foundation for the Oneness of Humanity. In her day Western civilization was in real danger from the increase of materialism, partly arising from the wonderful discoveries of physical science which seemed to discredit all spiritual interpretations of life; and H. P. Blavatsky was sent by the great Lodge of Guardians to counteract this by spreading Theosophy. Not only science, but popular religion was materialistic: on the one hand 'blind force,' and on the other rigid dogmatic formalism. A short time before the foundation of the Theosophical Society, Lord Lytton wrote:

Look where we will around us in every direction the sources of pure spiritual life appear to be altogether stagnant, or else trickling feebly in shrunken and turbid streams.... wherever the grandest issues of Humanity are at stake, man's spiritual attitude towards them is one either of hopeless fatigue or fierce anarchical impatience. And this is the more deplorable because it is accompanied by a feverish materialistic activity. Yes, this age of ours is materialistic; and perhaps the saddest and dreariest thing in the ever-increasing materialism of the age is the ghostly squeaking and gibbering of helpless lamentation made over it by the theologists, who croak about their old dry wells wherein no spiritual life is left. Meanwhile society seems to be everywhere organizing animalism. — *Fortnightly Review*, 1871

H. P. Blavatsky was specially fitted for her mission by brilliant intelligence, dauntless courage, and overmastering desire to lift some of the burden of sorrow from the world. Her qualifications included trained occult faculties, which enabled her to demonstrate the Theosophical teaching that man has far greater powers than he suspects locked up in his inner nature. After many wanderings in both hemispheres, she met certain members of the Tibetan Lodge of Initiates who prepared her for her coming work. She well knew that it involved the sacrifice of all that most people hold dear, and that the bitter hostility of the forces of prejudice and reaction would be aroused, yet she did not hesitate. However, in spite of having to endure both the crudest and most refined forms of persecution, and of being constantly misunderstood and misrepresented, she succeeded in spreading Theosophy far and wide and in creating a large and active

Society of earnest students and workers. Her teachings have already powerfully affected modern thought, and within the last twenty years, science, philosophy, and religion have been moving towards Theosophy with rapidly increasing speed. In fact clergymen are preaching it from the pulpit, sometimes even using the name Theosophy.

H. P. Blavatsky always repudiated the claim of having invented Theosophy. She had no personal ambition. Again and again she gave the credit for her teachings to her Superiors, the Guardians of the Sacred Knowledge. Her duty was to present it in a form acceptable to the West. The facts of her career and the study of her writings make any other explanation ridiculous.

As her work was chiefly intended to give Western civilization a new spiritual impulse, she was directed to begin in America, to which country she was sent by her Teachers, the Masters of Wisdom, in 1873.

On November 17, 1875, the Theosophical Society was established by her with the assistance of Col. H. S. Olcott, W. Q. Judge, and others, at New York. The remainder of her life was spent in spreading Theosophy by personal teaching, writing books, editing magazines, and establishing Lodges in many countries. She died in London in 1891. In the sixteen years of her public activity the Society gained thousands of members, national and local centers were organized throughout the world, and a large literature was produced.

In 1888 Madame Blavatsky brought out her greatest work, *The Secret Doctrine*, which has had such a powerful effect on modern thought, and founded the Eastern or Esoteric School for the instruction of the more devoted students, and as the energizing heart of the Movement.

After her death in 1891, William Q. Judge, her trusted American representative, who had been personally trained by her, was called on to keep the Movement true to the lines she had laid down; and when he passed away in 1896, Katherine Tingley took his place. She reorganized the Constitution of the Society and in 1900 established the administrative center at Point Loma, California.

Upon her death in 1929, G. de Purucker, who had occupied responsible positions at Point Loma for nearly thirty years, became Leader of the Theosophical Society. Dr. de Purucker expanded the scope of Theosophical University, making it a valuable adjunct to the work of the Society. By lectures, classes, and through his numerous writings such as *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, he clarified and made intelligible to the lay mind the profound philosophy given by H. P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*. Shortly before his death in 1942 he removed the International Headquarters of the Society to Covina, California.

Under Arthur L. Conger the original line of teaching and training in the Society continued, with particular emphasis upon making the Theosophical literature widely known, so that the beneficent teachings of

the Theosophical philosophy may be applied directly to human problems. {He moved the International Headquarters to its present location near Pasadena, California, where it continued under James A. Long, then Grace F. Knoche, and now the present Leader, Randell C. Grubb. See [theosociety.org](http://theosociety.org) for more information.}

## UNIVERSAL ONENESS AND THE DIVINITY OF HUMANS

As the main objects of the Theosophical Movement are the spreading of knowledge of the above, we must consider them first.

Theosophy does not teach that Oneness depends upon external conditions — social, political or even intellectual. Its root lies in the order of Nature, in the organic unity of the human race, physically, and above all, spiritually. Universal Oneness is not something to be constructed; humanity *is* really a great family, and it is only our blindness that prevents us from recognizing this and acting accordingly. Humanity is an organism; *men* are its constituent cells, and what injures one hurts all. Theosophy shows that the recognition of this in the life of each individual — *with all that it implies* — is the only basis on which a true civilization can be built.

The Oneness of Humanity, therefore, is not a sentimental theory, framed to ameliorate stern realities; it is a fact in Nature, and Nature will ultimately compel us to accept it, even if it takes ages of suffering to bring it about. Theosophy calls to all people of goodwill to discover for themselves that the fundamental law of the Universe is Love and Harmony, and that he who breaks it is swimming against the stream.

Our Inner Self knows this, and tries to enlighten the outer personality that we mistakenly think is our Real Self. We can hasten our evolution by opening our hearts; our destiny is in our own hands, and from Theosophy we can learn how to make it a conscious working with the Divine Intelligence in the Universe.

Intimately connected with the doctrine of human oneness is that of the Divinity of Humanity. This, also, is no vague or pious sentiment, but a very real thing, taught by the greatest spiritual minds throughout the ages — those with the penetrating intuition that *knows*. Reason also confirms it, as we shall see in considering the Theosophical teaching of the complexity of the human constitution.

While science is inclined to admit the physical unity and common origin of all men, the belief that we are merely more intelligent animals, perishing after one life on Earth, still obsesses the scientific mentality, especially that of the psychologist. How can a high ideal of oneness be built on such a basis! No doubt many *theoretical* materialists feel an impelling urge to sacrifice themselves for others, and their noble acts are

a living proof of the influence of the higher Spiritual Self, however they may deny it.

Denial of the inner god is not confined to professed materialists; certain brands of Western theology still teach that man are inherently vile: “born in sin.” But Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is within you” (*Luke* xvii. 21), and Paul proclaimed the “tidings of great joy”: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelt in you?” (*1 Cor.*, iii. 16). If the Spirit dwelleth in every man, oneness must be the fact that Theosophy declares it to be, and ‘separateness’ the ‘great heresy.’

The inner divinity is not a thing that can be ‘saved’ or artificially fabricated; it must be realized, made a living power. “When the lamp is cleaned and the wick trimmed, then only can the light shine.” We have to do this ourselves.

A true Theosophist once said, “Every one that loveth is born of God,” and “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us” (*1 John*, iv. 7, 12). Our Theosophical teachers have all repeated the old, old doctrine as the fundamental on which to build — the doctrine that the real human Ego is not the poor weak creature he too often thinks he is, and exhibits to others, but a wondrous spiritual Being in the innermost recesses of his nature, a divine mystery, and that it is within his power to ‘find himself.’ A Theosophist once said that to be one is “to have an unbounded belief in the greatness of man,” to which we would add,— “and to have found the beginning of the way to turn this belief into knowledge.”

## THE SEVEN HUMAN PRINCIPLES

When H. P. Blavatsky gave out the teachings about our human nature, and delineated the ‘seven human principles,’ she did not mean that these were six entities living in one house, the body. Some students have been tempted to look upon the ‘seven principles’ from a rather mechanical standpoint, as if they were like the coats of an onion. H. P. Blavatsky selected the term as the best available, though she recognized that it was not quite satisfactory. It roughly expresses the concept of the compound nature of the human ‘stream of consciousness,’ and, in default of better, we must continue to use it.

Few persons in the West have any conception of the real nature of their own constitution. Mr. A. and Mrs. B. regard themselves as — well, as beings who began to exist for the first time at birth and who will probably become extinct at death. They have a body with vital activities and more or less freedom of will besides their emotional and intellectual faculties. Some believe they ‘have’ a soul and hope that their consciousness may bridge the gulf of death; but few have any certainty. Psychologists almost unanimously repudiate anything higher in human beings than the brain-mind, which they study as a temporary product of the

*organism* Man, a specially intelligent animal. Some more intuitive thinkers regard man as a duality, consisting of ‘body’ and ‘soul, mind, or spirit,’ the last terms being used in a very loose manner. The New Testament refers to three distinct aspects — body, soul, and spirit — a broad condensation of the Ancient Teaching of the sevenfold human nature, again brought forward by Theosophy.

While it is possible to subdivide the aspects of human consciousness in several ways, and the septenary classification is not a hard and fast rule, it is the easiest for the beginner and it has the advantage of being in harmony with the sevenfold laws under which Nature works in so many directions. We see the number seven in the primary colors of the visible spectrum familiar to all in the rainbow; in the periodic law of atomic weights, known as Mendeleyeff’s Law; in the periods of gestation and disease; in the septenary octaves of sound; and in many other phenomena. As Plato says, “God geometrizes.” The universal employment of this number in religious symbology has great significance, and the deeper side of the septenary working of Nature receives much attention in more advanced Theosophical studies.

The septenary human constitution of man was taught in ancient Egypt, India, and elsewhere as a known fact. Some presentations of the teaching condensed these aspects of man’s constitution into three main divisions with minor subdivisions, though the fundamental idea was the same. [For there has always been positive knowledge about the real nature of man, and certain teachers who knew how to prove it scientifically have not been lacking. The sages of antiquity were not groping in darkness: they knew the facts from ages of experimentation.]

The ‘principles’ may best be regarded, perhaps, as various stages or points of contact between the permanent Center in man and the ‘planes’ or grades of substance and consciousness in the Universe, which stretch from the most ethereal or spiritual downward to gross matter. The permanent Center, the Monad (from the Greek for ‘unit,’) clothes itself, so to speak, in vestures or vehicles of similar nature to that of the planes into which it enters, until it reaches the physical body on the Earth-plane, and a new personality is born.

This personality is so closely identified with the limited brain-consciousness that the illimitable fields of higher perception are shut off, only to be rarely glimpsed by the very few in their moments of spiritual inspiration.

Among the more difficult problems in Theosophy is that of the actual relationship of the god-spark with its offspring, the ‘principles,’ and that of the imbodiment of the god-spark in the personality of an ordinary human being. We can study them and gain much profit thereby, but the full solution can be achieved only by those lofty souls who have, through

initiation into the Greater Mysteries, penetrated behind the veil of seeming.

It would be misleading to regard the ‘seven principles’ as separate entities in the ordinary sense, or as seven ‘souls.’ They are interblended around the Monadic Individuality, gathered or collected in human shape in such a way as to constitute the complete man, although in only the rarest cases is the combination perfectly balanced. Such men we call Mahâtmas or Elder Brothers of the race.

No better illustration of the perfect man can be given than the seven rays of the spectrum, which blend into the pure white light when harmoniously combined.

In view of the difficulties, the reader will easily understand that no elementary presentation of the ‘seven principles’ can be entirely satisfactory; the arrangement given below is rather an approximation than a final statement. In trying to simplify such an abstract and subtle subject there is serious danger of materializing it. *With this warning in mind* we may consider the following table, which has been used for many years by Theosophical writers: the upper three divisions represent the more spiritual and enduring principles, the lower four the more fleeting.

Spirit	or Âtman
Spiritual Soul	or <i>Buddhi</i>
Human Soul	or <i>Manas</i>
Animal Soul	or <i>Kâma</i>
Vitality	or <i>Prâna</i>
Astral or Model Body	or <i>Linga-śarîra</i>
Physical Body	or <i>Sthûla-śarîra</i>

The words on the right are taken from the Sanskrit and are commonly used in Theosophical literature in preference to the English words, which are not entirely satisfactory equivalents.

## THE PHYSICAL BODY

Little need be said about the physical body, except that it is not composed of *dead* {lifeless} matter — nothing is.

The concept of ‘dead matter’ — dead in the sense of being inert unless activated from an outside force — is no longer a teaching of science: every atom is a focus of intense activity, and some eminent scientists even tell us that every point in ‘space’ (ether?) is throbbing with life — a quite Theosophical doctrine.

‘Matter’ may be regarded as the universal life-essence considered in its passive or receptive aspect, and ‘energy’ as the same in full activity.

The human body is composed of a harmonious association of parts, all built of innumerable minute cells, each endowed with life and its own consciousness. Every cell is made of smaller life-elements, according to Theosophy far more minute than our physical senses could detect even though aided by instruments more powerful than any microscope. The seemingly inert physical body is, then, a vast congeries of living beings of many orders and groupings, and is constructed on the principle of ascending Hierarchies, which principle runs through the Universe. An ancient philosophic aphorism says, "As above, so below," and even our lowest principle, the physical body, reflects the Universe.

### THE ASTRAL OR MODEL-BODY

The Astral or Model-Body is not visible to ordinary eyesight, but under special conditions, or by certain sensitives, it may be seen. Broadly speaking, it is a shadowy duplicate of the physical body, composed of a rather finer grade of substance. More correctly, it is the physical that is the duplicate of the astral, for the latter is the model or pattern into which the ever-changing material atoms come for a time, then pass out. Ethereal as it seems, it is exceedingly strong and cohesive and lasts throughout the entire incarnation. Without the backing of this semi-permanent astral model, the body could not maintain its shape or its individual peculiarities such as birthmarks, moles, etc. Ignorance of the existence of the astral body is one reason why psychologists find insuperable problems in their studies.

Knowledge of the astral double clears up the problem of the connection between mind and body; it is the link; it is a transformer, to use an expressive term in electricity, that can 'step down' the higher to the lower vibrations. It is exceedingly plastic and sensitive, and responds instantly to thoughts and emotions. It transmits them to the physical body, upon which they produce visible effects. Everyone knows how extreme joy or rage can even kill, and the *stigmata* or marks of Christ's wounds developed on the persons of certain devotees are the results of impressions on the astral made by intense mental concentration. Experiments in hypnotism afford other examples. Cases are also recorded where injury to the astral when loosed from its protecting physical sheath, has left visible marks on the physical body. Inversely, the body can act on the mind through the astral link.

The astral body is formed before birth, and its character is strictly determined by causes created by the Ego in past incarnations. Its plastic and sensitive constitution enables it to respond to the mental and emotional seeds coming to life in the new incarnation; in this way we are provided with a body in harmony with our deserts.



The term ‘astral body’ is often loosely used to cover several divisions of the semi-physical inner body, and it includes psycho-magnetic centers through which vital forces play. H. P. Blavatsky says very little about these details, but plainly indicates that attention to such matters is not advisable for those, like ourselves, who are striving in the earlier stages of spiritual development. Concentration upon the inner structure and working of the temporary astral or ‘ethereal’ bodies is of no real service to Theosophical workers for humanity and, indeed, it is not free from serious dangers. No doubt there is a place for such studies in the case of advanced disciples who are truly *impersonal and free from the desire to satisfy a hankering for the occult, and who have been accepted for training by a high teacher.*

The true student of Theosophy is challenged, first of all, to purify his mind and desires and to work on spiritual lines by trying to show the path to a higher life to those who are in darkness. To dazzle them with psychic wonders only confuses them and increases the feeling of egoism.

After the death of the physical body the astral constituents gradually resolve into their elements, while the emotional-mental principles remain more or less conscious until the final separation called the ‘second death.’

### PRÂNA, OR THE LIFE PRINCIPLE

*Prâna* is a Sanskrit word meaning ‘breath,’ the first necessity of physical life; but it has other related meanings. In the Theosophical classification of the principles it means the vital force functioning through the astral, and in this respect it is a particular application of *Jîva*, the ocean of life that permeates everything. The word ‘element’ is more appropriate when speaking of *Prâna*, as it is not exactly a specialized vehicle of the Monad like the *Linga-śarîra*. The physical and astral bodies are, of course, not made of inert or dead matter. Each life-atom is filled with its own energy, but, when acting through the formative principles, *Jîva*, or the universal Life-force is specialized, so to speak, during the physical lifetime, returning to the great reservoir after death.

The physical body can be compared to a fabric, in the formation of which the astral is the warp and the *Prâna* the shuttle that carries the thread; the interaction of the two weaves the fabric.

*Prâna*, in one of its aspects, may be looked upon as constructive vitality, the driving force. Dr. de Purucker refers to it as the ‘electrical veil’ or ‘electrical field’ manifesting in the individual as vitality.

### KÂMA AND THE KÂMA-RÛPA

*Kâma* means ‘desire,’ and *Kâma-rûpa* is the ‘body of desire.’ *Kâma* is the balance principle in man, the fourth element counting from above or from below (see diagrammatic table). We share it with the animals, but in

man the passional instincts are enhanced and intensified by the power of the imagination. The lower human nature, uncontrolled by the higher, is instinctual, self-centered, and inveterately attached to material, sensuous life. This desire for life, *tanhâ*, comes from Kâma; it brings us back to birth again and again; it is not a mere impulse of the ‘fleshly body,’ which is only a passive instrument. When controlled by the higher nature, however, and put to noble uses, desire is a great engine for good. Without some kind of desire we should simply vegetate.

Modern psychologists confound the animal-soul in man with the higher principles, largely as a result of their identification of intelligent man with the perishable material brain and its nerve currents, and of ignorance of the real, immortal Man, behind the misleading appearances.

The Desire-element is universal, active on all planes. The worlds, visible and invisible, were brought forth “through the arising of desire in the Unknown First Cause” — desire, of course, of the most sublimated spiritual quality. In its highest human aspect it is aspiration and unselfish devotion; in its lowest, when centered on self, it degrades man below the beasts because he is then prostituting his reason to unworthy ends. It is the crucifixion of the Christos on the cross of matter. That which in the beasts is simple and natural because of the absence of the developed self-conscious Mind, is debasement in man.

## MANAS

Manas or mind, the essentially human element, commonly called the Fifth Principle, forms the link between the Intermediate triad and the overshadowing spiritual Ray and its Parent Monad.

While not a hard and fast arrangement, this triple division is convenient and suggestive because it harmonizes with the most familiar fact in our inner experience. Everyone knows that we have an intermediate self-conscious personality which is constantly being pulled in opposite directions by higher or lower forces *within ourselves*. This conflict is the outstanding fact in life; it needs no argument. Painful though it may be, it is the only method by which we can find our way to wisdom and the Path of Liberation.

The future human evolution of man depends upon his ability to release the intermediate self-conscious Ego from the limitations of personality and to lift it into unity with the inner divinity by self-discipline and the irresistible power of impersonal love. So Manas is the link between the god and the animal in man. Intrinsically colorless as regards good and evil, it has the power of choice, which is exercised by the use of the will. Drawn in opposite directions by higher and lower desires — impersonal or personal — it becomes dual, and the term Higher Ego, as employed in Theosophy, may be taken as a general expression for Manas when

illuminated by the spiritual soul, Buddhi. The lower self is that part of Manas which is under the control of the more animal impulses. The former is a state of wisdom, love, harmony, and intuition — impersonality, in short; the latter, one of calculating egoism, cold brain-mind reasoning, and devotion to sense-desire.

The problem of the Higher and Lower Manas is perhaps the most difficult for the beginner in Theosophy, yet it is most important, for it brings us face to face with ourselves in a very real way. In one sense Manas is the battleground on which our future is decided; it may take many incarnations, but for those who ardently aspire to perfection the time is greatly shortened. For more light on this great problem of the dual Manas, the student must consult advanced Theosophical literature.

Manas is but faintly expressed in the animal kingdom, which does not possess self-consciousness, foresight, and deliberate reasoning choice, although a few of the higher animals show traces of advancement, particularly those in close contact with man. It is not wise, however, to force their intelligence prematurely because of the risk of injury to their natural process of evolution. There is a sharp distinction between the animal and human kingdoms; man is not just a more highly evolved animal in the Darwinian sense; the animal mind has not developed into the human self-conscious mind. Man has a light of his own which illuminated or entered him at a certain definite period of the evolution of his lower vehicles. Self-conscious Manas is the distinguishing feature of man, and it is not an outgrowth from the beast by Natural Selection or in any other way. The real man, the higher Manas, may be said to overshadow, or even stand apart from, his lower principles. As the Manas becomes spiritualized and united with the Sixth Principle, Buddhi, man becomes more than man — a self-conscious god. Manas may be regarded as a creative principle, a part of the Cosmic Creative Mind.

## ÂTMAN AND BUDDHI

Little can be said of these high themes, for few are prepared to understand the subtleties without long study and meditation. The divine Âtman or the Monad, and the Buddhi or Spiritual Soul, are the only abiding human principles, and properly speaking they overshadow us and do not manifest as part of the ordinary personality. Only in the perfected Adept is the Buddhist principle fully manifested. We read in *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*:

The supreme energy resides in the *Buddhi*; latent — when wedded to Âtman alone — active and irresistible when galvanized by the *essence* of “Manas” and when none of the dross of the latter commingles with that pure essence to weigh it down by its finite nature. — p. 341

The great teacher, Buddha, calls the Sixth Principle (Buddhi) the Fire that burns in the Eternal Light. It is the unshackled Spirit that sees things of the divine world without a veil.

Speaking of Âtman, the ‘One Reality,’ H. P. Blavatsky writes:

...*Âtman*, is no individual property of any man, but is the Divine essence which has no body, no form,... It only overshadows the mortal; that which enters into him and pervades the whole body being only its omnipresent rays, or light, radiated through *Buddhi*, its vehicle and direct emanation. — *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 101

To make it more conceivable to the human intellect, when first attempting the study of Occultism, and to solve the A B C of the mystery of man, Occultism calls this *seventh* principle [Âtman] the synthesis of the sixth, and gives it for vehicle the *Spiritual* Soul, Buddhi. Now the latter conceals a mystery which is never given to anyone, with the exception of irrevocably pledged *chelas* [disciples of an Initiate] or those, at any rate, who can be safely trusted. — *The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 119-20

Âtman is far beyond our mental possibility of comprehension, and the Buddhic principle can only be very dimly imagined. We can try to picture the latter as a glorious radiance of spiritual illumination gradually penetrating the purified Manas. Buddhi without Manas is not self-conscious for us and cannot act on mental planes, but when the two have become united man becomes more than man. As the spiritual state thus attained infinitely transcends the limitations of personality as we regard it, it is clear that purification of the mind from every trace of egoism by long continued effort through many incarnations is essential.

Again we see why the real teachers tell us the same old story: “Love the brethren,” and find the god within yourself. It is the only way to the heart of the Universe, and that is why membership in the Theosophical Society is based on the belief in universal oneness and not on creed or dogma.

The principles or elements in man’s complex nature are sometimes grouped in three interlocking divisions: Upper, Intermediate, and Lower or mortal. See table below.

UPPER TRIAD	{	<i>Âtman</i> .....	'Spirit,' the Inner God, the Divine Monad.
		<i>Buddhi</i> .....	'Ray,' proceeding from Âtman.
INTERMEDIATE	{	<i>Manas</i> .....	'Human Soul,' with its higher and lower aspects.
		<i>Kâma</i> .....	Principle of Desire.
LOWER	{	<i>Linga-śarîra</i>	'Astral' or Design Body.
		<i>Prâna</i> .....	Vitality.
		<i>Sthûla-śarîra</i>	Physical Body.

The Linga-śarîra, the link between the Lower and the Intermediate triads, may be regarded as the soul of the Lower or the body of the Intermediate.

## REINCARNATION; OR REIMBODIMENT IN FLESH

Reincarnation is a very ancient and worldwide doctrine. It is a particular instance of the general Law of Reimbodiment which applies not only to human beings but even to planets, suns, and universes.

When the Theosophical Society was founded Reincarnation was a new and strange idea to the Western world, although almost universally known in the East. It was ridiculed in the popular press and confused with the crude notion of transmigration into animals, which Theosophy rejects. "Once a man always a man," until a still higher state is attained, is the Theosophical teaching. The work of H. P. Blavatsky has so enormously modified Western thought that reincarnation has been adopted by innumerable persons who recognize that it is the only rational explanation of the enigmas of life, especially of the inequalities of birth and opportunity. Reincarnation is now treated seriously in literature and by all advanced thinkers; it is a familiar theme in fiction and drama. The English Poet Laureate, Masfield, like so many famous poets, is a reincarnationist. H. P. Blavatsky brought a new outlook on life, a new key to the divine nature of man, a rational explanation of evolution, when she introduced Reincarnation to the West.

Reincarnation is briefly defined as the doctrine that man lives many times on Earth as a human being, the conditions of each incarnation being the natural result of the causes set in motion in former lives. Between incarnations the higher nature enjoys a blissful interval of rest and

happiness in a subjective state. When his evolution has progressed as far as possible on this globe, man will advance to higher spheres.

This condensed definition would be misleading without a clear idea of what is meant by ‘man.’ It has been explained already that man is a compound, permanent in the higher elements, mortal in the lower. The higher spiritual part, when incarnated, creates, as it were, a false or temporary personality, endowed with the feeling of “I am I,” having a vivid sense of separateness from others of its kind, and of identity with the body. In this ‘personality’ it lives, forgetting its higher state, like a man suffering from amnesia or what science calls ‘dual personality’ in which two utterly different intelligences alternately occupy the same body. (See Dr. Morton Prince’s classic on the subject, in which examples are given showing that while one personality knew all that the second was doing, the latter was quite ignorant of the life and actions of the former.) In the normal person, flashes of the higher immortal consciousness pierce the veil in accordance with his advancement.

It is not strictly true to say that one’s present personality, one’s everyday consciousness of self, lived before or will live again. Nature is too wise, too merciful, to allow us to drag this personality around with us forever, with its limitations, its weaknesses, and above all, with its unhappy memories. Fortunately we are ever changing, growing, learning. The word ‘personality’ (from *persona*, a mask) well describes the temporary instrument put forth by the Higher Self to gain experience in this world. But the personality is not necessarily annihilated. As it strives and suffers and purifies itself, it receives more and more light from Above, it becomes nearer the image of the ‘Father’; and even though the personality of any one life is far from pure, its nobler qualities and memories are never lost, but are withdrawn at death into the bosom of the Real Man. All that perishes is that which is not worth preserving.

There are many who cannot accept the theory that man as he appears — the commonplace personality — is immortal, and yet who feel dissatisfied with the notion that such a marvelous being, with such powers of mind and heart, can perish without leaving a trace. Many earnest believers in the immortality of the soul also are troubled because of the lack of so-called scientific proof that their intuition is right and that the soul does survive. To both classes the concept of Reincarnation, when fully understood, comes as a blessed relief, a complete solution of their problems.

Those who accept the idea of a future life of the soul are logically compelled to ask themselves what it was doing before birth. All admit that the body perishes, but if there is an immortal part, how can immortality (or infinity — the same conception) extend only in one direction? How can it have a beginning? This problem has never been logically answered except on the basis of pre-existence, and that carries with it the suggestion

that if the soul has actually once descended into physical life from a more ethereal state, why should it not have done so before, in obedience to the universal law of periodicity or cyclic progression?

Human life is a continuum, to use a scientific term now popular, and the breaks between incarnations when the soul returns to less material conditions are only a larger expression of what is familiar to us in the alternations of sleeping and waking. Reincarnation in bodily form is only a 'special case' of the universal Cosmic principle of periodic or cyclic law which runs through everything. H. P. Blavatsky places Cyclic Law among the three Fundamentals of the Ancient Wisdom: as she says in *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 17:

This second assertion of the Secret Doctrine is the absolute universality of that law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow, which physical science has observed and recorded in all departments of nature.

And in the third fundamental proposition we read of —

...the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul — a spark of the former [the Universal Over-Soul] — through the Cycle of Incarnation... The pivotal doctrine of the Esoteric philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in man, save those won by his own Ego through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations.

We are all familiar with the cycles of day and night; of waking and sleeping; the changes of the seasons and their effects; the rise and fall of nations; the fluctuations of trade; the lunar changes, the great astronomical cycles; and with many others in human, animal, and vegetable life. Man, as a soul, is no exception to the great law, and his progress through incarnations on Earth, alternating with periods of repose in spiritual planes, is only a part of greater and grander cycles.

When the body is worn out, its particles dispersed for a while, and the higher purified part of the late personality withdrawn into the True Self, the latter has by no means closed its connection with Earth. It is responsible for the past, it has left many unfinished tasks, and it has not yet realized a fraction of its divine possibilities as an imbodyed spirit. Humanity as a race — with a very few exceptions — is still in its childhood and will remain so until its real divinity is revealed in its fullness. The human personality as we know it today — the mask of the real Man — is only a poor semblance of the glorious being to come. Reincarnation is the only possible method of such an evolution.

But after "life's fitful fever," rest and recuperation are needed, and the Reincarnating Ego, purified by the shedding of the lower elements in *Kâma-loka*, the Region of Desire, and free from all that can hold it to the Earth's attraction, passes through the 'second death' into the rest and bliss

of *Devachan*, leaving the passions, the mistakes, and the sorrowful memories to perish with the body. It remains in this state of high spiritual consciousness for approximately one hundred times the length of the last incarnation, more or less, according to the character of the individual; and then a fresh incarnation is entered on, in harmony with cyclic law. As Katherine Tingley often said, we are given “another chance” to redeem the past, until we learn our lesson of spiritual attainment.

The medieval notion of escaping from life’s responsibilities to an *eternal* heaven of bliss is petty and selfish in comparison with the doctrine of Reincarnation. Reincarnation provides for the needed rest and happiness, but it does far more, by giving the opportunity of working again for the welfare of the great human family to which we belong. It leads to the brotherhood of humanity. When a certain high stage of spiritual development is reached, no further incarnation is needed on Earth; the inexpressible bliss of Nirvâna is in sight; the soul becomes free and incarnation a matter of choice. Nothing nobler can be imagined than the voluntary sacrifice of Nirvâna for the purpose of returning to help humanity on its weary way; and this is the ideal of perfect love offered by the sublime teachings of the Ancient Wisdom. The Great Ones make this sacrifice.

## THE LAW OF KARMA

Reincarnation, the natural method by which the soul learns its lessons, logically implies that we experience the results of our actions in former lives. “Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?” said Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, when he was teaching the law of Karma.

Karma is essentially the law of adjustment of causes to effects, the restoration of broken harmony, “even after many days.” We cannot deny the law of cause and effect in the material world, but Theosophy carries it farther than that for it shows that this law goes to the root of all being. It is just as unerring in regard to a deed of love or mercy, or hate and cruelty, as in the falling of a stone. It would be horrible to live in a world where Nature could not be trusted to be consistent, where water sometimes ran uphill or the stars faltered in their courses! But, mercifully, the ‘divine custom’ of Karma is equally consistent in the adjustment of life in every aspect.

A most important aspect of Karma is that a period of apparently ‘bad’ Karma — suffering and trial — may not be really a misfortune, but a magnificent opportunity for an individual to develop noble capacities. “Gold is tried in the fire.” W. Q. Judge says ‘good’ karma is that which the soul requires for its evolution, even though it be distasteful. It is said that the Inner Self chooses the rough path at times to quicken its progress. Even



the outer personality does this when it sees the need. The will of man can always start new causes, and some of these may cancel previous ones, as one factor cancels another in a problem in mathematics.

Physical suffering may be unavoidable, but according to the way in which it is taken, so will be the effect on the character, good or bad. Then again, many devoted souls deliberately enter upon self-sacrificing work for others that will inevitably lead to exterior suffering; yet this pain is not produced by evil intent, but contrariwise. This subject leads to profound problems which are dealt with in larger Theosophical works.

The highest exponents of Theosophy have always warned the student that the doctrine of Karma is one of the most difficult subjects that can occupy the reasoning mind, and only those who have advanced far on the Path and have developed high powers of perception can properly follow its ramifications and complexities.

There are, however, leading features that we can easily understand and which prove its superiority to any other attempt to explain the inequalities of life. We can consider only a few points here, chiefly those relating to Reincarnation.

We all know that a person is practically certain to break a limb if he falls from a cliff, but what is not clear is why some persons will ‘miraculously’ escape without injury. We all know perfectly authentic accounts of such escapes which the wildest fiction magazine would hesitate to publish. On the other hand, many persons have suffered from extraordinary ‘accidents’ occurring under conditions in which no danger at all seemed to threaten.

It is strange indeed that people who accept the Christian teaching, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal., vi. 7), can speak of ‘accidents’ and fail to carry the Biblical doctrine of cause and effect to its logical conclusion — the pre-existence of the soul and reincarnation.

Science is very positive that physical causes produce equivalent physical effects, and common observation proves that sowing wild oats in youth produces a crop of trouble in old age — *if the sower lives long enough*. But if not? Does he then escape without consequences?

Theosophy shows that compensation is meted out in another incarnation if necessary. Nothing can be more simple, more just. The harvest is reaped where the seeds were sown. By the suppression in the Western world of the teachings of Reincarnation and Karma, the natural intuition that has led humanity to believe that causes started during life must work out somewhere, here or hereafter, has been perverted to crude dogmas of *eternal* bliss and *eternal* damnation. These notions have at last been found so disproportionate to any reasonable idea of compensation that even the churches are dropping them. Hell is no longer popular, and Heaven is exceedingly vague. Yet there *is* compensation, and the key to

the problem lies open to view in the very Book, “esoterically so wise,” whose teachings have so long been misunderstood by its professed followers. Reincarnation and Karma are not only mentioned in veiled terms in the Bible, but are *explicitly* taught. This is discussed later.

The apparent injustice of the allotment of opportunity in coming into this world has been the despair of the one-life thinkers who have dared to face the problem. Not only are we born into a certain family and nation and race, into good or bad surroundings, born healthy or sickly or disabled, but we start with a definite moral and intellectual character not easy to modify, even with great effort.

Some favored persons receive every possible assistance in leading a noble life; others are born in misery and crime, and get nothing but kicks. The popular and thoroughly unscientific view is that it is all a matter of Chance or Luck, which simply means that the problem is given up as hopeless. And it *is* hopeless on the one-life theory; it is worse, it is blasphemous, for it implies that the world is not governed by Law, but is a crazy patchwork of ‘effects’ with no adequate causes.

How the picture changes when we learn of Reincarnation and Karma; how beneficent and orderly life becomes! We have been looking heretofore on the wrong side of the tapestry and seeing nothing but irregular patches and loose ends. When we realize that our fate is in our own hands, that we are not only paying for or profiting by the acts of the past but that we are making our own future under the unerring divine law of Karma and that we can rely upon absolute justice — which is truest mercy — being done, our whole attitude to life changes. Instead of seeing law and order in the physical world only, we find that Nature is a unity and that the same principle acts throughout all planes, mental, psychic, and spiritual. It is as potent in the smallest events in our lives as in the falling of a stone or the action of the chemical elements. We repeat again that human life is a continuum and the link between incarnations is Karma, the law of the equivalence between action and reaction. In Sanskrit the word means ‘action.’

Another point about Karma and Reincarnation is the way they clear up problems in Heredity, such as the appearance of great geniuses or of reprobates, from normal parentage. Scientists have offered no satisfactory explanation of these and other mysteries of Heredity, as they freely admit; and no wonder, for they cannot be explained without introducing the factors of Karma and Reincarnation. The provision of a certain kind of personality by heredity is the natural method by which the Real Self gets the most suitable mental and physical apparatus for its next Earth-life. It is naturally attracted to the conditions in which its karma can be most effectively worked out; but they do not necessarily cover the whole ground. Not all the crops sown in any one life can be reaped in the next; some have to wait till the appropriate time. But Heredity, as ordinarily

understood, is not the *governing* principle of our lives, for as H. P. Blavatsky says:

the law of Karma, racial or individual, overrides the subordinate tendencies of “Heredity,” its servant. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 178

The real governing principle is *the man oneself* who determines his own future by every act and thought. Do not regard Karma as an outside Fate or something which we must put up with against our will. Our Karma is what we have made for ourselves, what we have inbuilt into our own characters.

Above all, do not look upon Karma as either *punishment* for sins or *reward* for virtues, doled out by some over-ruling ‘Providence.’ It is the *consequence* that inevitably follows an action as “the wheel follows the ox,” according to the Eastern simile. Whatever ‘Forgiveness’ of sins may mean, it does not imply the blotting out of their consequences. In *The Secret Doctrine* H. P. Blavatsky says:

For the only decree of Karma — an eternal and immutable decree — is absolute Harmony in the world of matter as it is in the world of Spirit. It is not, therefore, Karma that rewards or punishes, but it is we, who reward or punish ourselves according to whether we work with, through and along with nature, abiding by the laws on which that Harmony depends, or — break them. — Vol. I, p. 643

The subject of Karma in Nature and Man is as fascinating as it is profound, and the student will find many difficulties discussed and clarified in more advanced Theosophical literature.

## HUMANS AFTER DEATH

Death is not the ‘King of Terrors,’ but a kindly Liberator, a blessed release for the spirit; painless in itself, and the door to rest and unspeakable bliss. “Death is Birth” in a very real sense. It is a perfectly natural process, necessary to the evolution of man through its cycle of Earth-lives; it is as necessary as sleep, which it closely resembles in more ways than one. Death of the physical body cannot be transcended until humanity reaches a higher degree of development, when conditions and we ourselves will have changed.

Death, however, is not a final release; it is not what Eastern philosophy speaks of as crossing to, or reaching, the ‘Other Shore.’ That is a poetical term for attainment of the knowledge of the inner god, the result of striving through many deaths and births. It is the state of high adeptship.

Those to whom the inner planes of Nature are like an open book, who, through spiritual development and initiation, have pierced the veil in full consciousness, have given us an outline of the stages of progress and liberation after death which is logical, scientific, and harmonious with our highest ideals.

Briefly put, the outstanding elements are these: the worn-out physical body having been laid aside, the semi-physical Linga-sarîra {astral body} rapidly disintegrates, and a process of preparation follows in which the Human Ego is gradually liberated from the lower, worldly, and common desires. The Lower Manas {lower mind} is passed, so to speak, through a process of sublimation like that of metal which is purified by heat from dross, leaving the Kâma principle with the lower memories of the late personality to fade out as an active force. Sometimes that principle is so strong and coherent that it can remain a long time as a delusive or pseudo-personality, called the Kâma-rûpa {desire body}, but the true Human Ego passes onward, leaving the semblance or residue of the former personality destitute of its *spiritual* qualities, though it may temporarily retain a measure of consciousness and even memory.

The real Human Ego or Monad, released from the lower passional elements, or, technically speaking, having passed through the 'second death,' enters Devachanic state where it enjoys unbounded felicity in a 'heaven-world,' the subjective creation of its highest spiritual thoughts and aspirations "in the bosom of the Divine Monad."

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come....  
— *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. I

The purified Human Ego has in its own Devachanic cycle a full awakening into spiritual consciousness, a culmination, and a decline into the lethargy that precedes the next incarnation on Earth. The karmic seeds begin to sprout as the cycle completes its round, and then a new-born babe sees the light of common day.

At the moment of death, before the unconsciousness preceding the preparation for Devachan, the Ego sees a complete panorama of the events of the past life unroll before its inner sight. Every event is seen in its proper relationship, all acts and thoughts are self-judged, and even the smallest are shown to have been subject to the impersonal law of justice — Karma. Before rebirth, also, a similar picture unrolls, that of the conditions the Human Ego will meet in the coming incarnation, what it has made for itself by its own past acts and thoughts. Everything is made plain, and thus in the coming incarnation, when the outer personality, which is ignorant of the past karmic causes, curses fate and protests bitterly against the ill 'luck' that dogs his footsteps, the Inner Self has no complaint, for it knows it is the harvest of the old seeds. When we find the key to knowledge and learn

to look within we shall all know it, and have peace amid outer tribulation. Those who do not repine at the buffetings of life have already an intuitive knowledge of this, though they may not be able to analyze their feelings.

Exceptional cases and modifying circumstances in *postmortem* states cannot be discussed here, but we cannot omit to mention a very important process that takes place after the death of the body and during Devachanic state of the Human Ego, but which does not consciously affect it, for this pertains exclusively to the Higher Monad, the Essential Self, from which the Human Ego or Monad issued forth when it took up its last incarnation and to which it returns for rest and spiritual refreshment.

This process, a very wonderful one, consists in the peregrination of the Spiritual Monad from planet to planet of the ‘Seven Sacred Planets’ so-called, as it follows the pathways known as the *Outer Round*. In this Outer Round the Higher Monad gains experiences of life and matter which are different from those it has had on our Earth, but which are necessary to its own progress. Though the Human Monad or Ego rests within bosom of the Higher Monad, it does not partake of these experiences, which are not available to it until it has reached a far higher stage. The Human Monad remains in its Devachanic bliss while the Spiritual Parent sojourns for a while on each of the ‘Sacred Planets.’ Naturally, very little can be said on this sublime subject, and it must in no way be confused with the *Inner Round*, the pilgrimage through the ‘Seven Globes’ (not ‘Planets’) of the Terrestrial Chain.

Theosophy, in accord with the teaching of the great seers and sages of the ages, discountenances efforts to raise the shades of the departed, and protests strongly against the production of ‘materializations’ or temporary simulacra of the dead body. Theosophy does not deny the reality of many phenomena of the séance room. In fact, H. P. Blavatsky began her public work with the Spiritualists because she knew they were more broadminded about psychic phenomena than the scientists or theologians of that day, and she hoped that they would welcome the light that Eastern philosophy throws upon the whole subject.

According to the Ancient Wisdom, the spiritual Ego never by any possibility ‘materializes,’ and with the exception of a few suicides and victims of accident, the ordinary run of communications can be traced to the Kâma-rûpa or pseudo-personality that still yearns for contact with the Earth-plane, though it is but a shell from which the Higher Triad has withdrawn, like a butterfly from its abandoned chrysalis. Another confusion, and a very frequent one, arises from the pranks of Nature-spirits, elementals, who can vivify the fading spectral shades and simulate the deceased personality, as they often mockingly boast.

It must be clearly understood that the astral world, particularly in its more accessible regions, is filled with subtle delusions, in which the untrained explorer, however intelligent, is quickly lost in a maze of error.

The door once opened is hard to shut, as many have learned to their cost by ignorantly dabbling in the so-called ‘occult arts’ or by attempting to develop the lower psychic powers, erroneously called spiritual.

The complex nature of the ‘Stream of Consciousness’ that constitutes a human being is hardly suspected in the Western world, still less the ‘geography’ of the invisible planes.

The sensible thing for us is to leave the astral plane *to those whose duty compels them to investigate its delusions*; to those who have passed through the necessary training in self-control and self-knowledge, who are not seeking for the satisfaction of mere intellectual curiosity, and who are protected by the strong armor of impersonal love. For us, our school of experience is here and now, in the events of daily life.

This, of course, does not imply that a philosophical study should not be made of the collected knowledge and teachings on the subject of psychism and the laws underlying the phenomena. W. Q. Judge says:

Our philosophy explains the facts already at hand, and shows distinctly how the virtues and excellences of character must be developed and realized before we are at all ready for practically touching the psychic forces. At the same time, by giving a sufficient analysis of man’s composite nature it tends to prevent and do away with all superstition in respect to the many psychic phenomena that daily have place....

— *The Theosophical Forum*, August 1894

The temporary comfort given to the bereaved by alleged communications given at the expense of the mediums is more than offset by evils that are explained in Theosophy. If we truly love our departed friends we shall not try to drag them back to this Earth plane, from which they have ascended to the unspeakable peace of Devachan. Even the Kâmarûpa, the shell, should not be revived and given a semblance of life and intelligence. It is an outrage on Nature’s kindly process of disintegration. Let us leave our friends to their natural path onward and inward, with full faith that if we truly love them we cannot fail to meet again, for love attracts its own. In the East, the calling up of the shades is regarded as unseemly or worse, and the dangers inherent in mediumship are only too well known.

But we are not altogether separated from the friends we loved in life, even now. There is a possibility of a very real communion between our Spiritual Ego and theirs. This occurs in sleep when we are released from the limitations of the lower personality, and our better self, the Higher Manas, withdraws to high spiritual states. Very rarely can even a trace of such communion be recollected on waking, though a sense of having passed through some splendid experience may remain. Such experiences, however, are far removed from the commonplaces of the ordinary séance room or the astral explorations of psychical research.

The Great Teachers tell us that to know Life we must know Death, and that the 'Adventure of Life' in its entirety includes the intervals between incarnations, for death of the temporary vehicle is only a door to new experiences for the true Ego. But the adventures of the Spiritual Ego can be followed only by those who have advanced to high spiritual consciousness, who have passed beyond the veil through initiation. Others can touch only the outer fringe of knowledge.

The Adept and the medium are at opposite poles. The former cannot be dominated by unknown forces or entities; one's training brings forth the positive, godlike qualities. He is a Master of Life, not a passive agent ignorant of the laws of even the semi-material astral regions.

## THEOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

When H. P. Blavatsky brought Theosophy to the West she severely criticized the materialistic limitations of the leading scientists, and offered a more philosophic scheme of Nature. Her teachings seemed to them so unusual and unconventional that they were generally ignored; science was busy liberating Western thought from ecclesiastical fetters, and anything that savored of spiritual ideals was not favored by it. Today we see a change. A large number, perhaps a majority, of her fundamental teachings in physics are either fully accepted by leading thinkers or are matters of serious discussion and research. This transformation was foreseen by her, as she stated that the Secret Doctrine of the ages sketched by her in the book of that name would begin to be recognized in the twentieth century. And although the century is only half over, and although science has not yet become spiritualized, extraordinary developments leading away from mechanistic interpretations have already taken place.

It is to be regretted, however, that while science is getting free from crass materialism it still maintains that man is merely a higher, perishable animal, so far as it has ascertained. The survival of man after death — the spirit, soul, the passional elements or what not — Reincarnation, even the existence of a soul, are not subjects of serious discussion at scientific congresses. They are set aside with ghosts and religious superstitions of savages as curious specimens of folklore, if mentioned at all. This has all to be changed before real progress can be made.

A fundamental principle in Theosophy is that mind is not a fleeting production of matter 'like the noise of a machine,' or something that has casually 'happened' as the result of an unusual combination of elements. It is a universal principle in the Cosmos, and the human mind is one aspect of it.

To show how Theosophical principles have succeeded in penetrating modern scientific thought, numerous quotations could be given from the leading scientists of today. Even Sir James Jeans, who still clings to the

mechanistic interpretation of many phenomena, dares to say that the Universe looks more like a great Thought than a great machine, and that Mind is not an “accidental intruder into the realm of matter” as the materialists conceive, but rather the ruler and controller of the material world. In fact, he believes that matter is not only created by mind but is really a manifestation of it. Man himself, he says, is not an *accidental intruder* into a universe of purely chemical and mechanical forces, after all! When he says that “God” seems to be like a “great Mathematician,” he is approaching the teaching of the Initiate Plato, who taught that “God geometrizes.” Sir James Jeans also speaks of the great stream of universal Life of which we are an integral part.

Sir Oliver Lodge reiterates some of the teachings of Theosophy almost in the words of our teachers, when he says that we live in the midst of a spiritual world which dominates the material. This spiritual and omnipresent reality has properties which exhaust our admiration, so much so that they would be terrifying but that we may be sure that those tremendous forces are controlled by “a beneficent power whose name is Love.” If the student of Theosophy turns to H. P. Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the Silence* {p. 69-70} he will find:

Canst thou destroy divine COMPASSION? Compassion is no attribute. It is the LAW of LAWS — eternal Harmony, Alaya’s SELF;... the law of love eternal.

Professor Whitehead speaks of the Universe being designed by a “poet,” and others go so far as to declare that “the power upon which man depends for his very existence is supreme in thought, poetry, and love.”

Dr. E. B. Frost, Director of the Yerkes Observatory, declares that there is a definite cosmic mind behind the Universe. He says:

...all the seemingly aimless movements of astral bodies, and happenings that we now think of as phenomena, will be recognized as being perfectly coordinated into a system whose vastness is astounding to contemplate.

The new attitude of the most advanced scientists avoids the notion of a limited ‘Personal God,’ and closely approaches the Theosophical position. The coordinated system looked for by Dr. Frost is already known to the Masters, and as much of it as we can at present comprehend is being given out through the Theosophical Movement.

In *Man in Evolution*, Dr. G. de Purucker has carefully discussed the approach of modern physics to Theosophy. Here we can touch on only a few outstanding points.

In astronomy, chemistry, physics, and even biology, science is approaching the Ancient Wisdom. The former distinction between Energy



and Mass (Force and Matter, if you prefer) has disappeared; ‘dense matter’ has become a congeries of ‘electric charges,’ unknown quantities; the ‘hard indivisible Atom’ is now a world of intensely active forces in eternal motion — a most important Theosophical concept. Einstein, in trying to coordinate all the natural forces, is simply working out mathematically the Eastern principle of *Fohat*, so prominent in *The Secret Doctrine*.

The law of Cycles, another fundamental in Theosophy, is being found to extend far more widely than was suspected by scientists, and to constitute an essential part of Evolution. A modern suggestion — an expanding and contracting Universe — irresistibly suggests the Ancient Wisdom of the East with its ‘Outbreathing and Inbreathing of Brahmâ.’

Another extremely interesting development of science is the principle of ‘indeterminacy, which implies that the known physical laws of cause and effect are not sufficient to explain everything, but that there are possibilities we have not fathomed. That is a step toward the recognition of the law of Karma, a higher aspect of Causation than the convenient but incomplete physical explanation of natural law. The unsatisfactory explanation of individual differences of character by heredity, and of good or ill ‘fortune’ by environment (logically explained by Karma and Reincarnation), may easily be abandoned by scientists when ‘indeterminacy’ has been studied more deeply.

Although Darwin’s Evolution offered nothing deeper than physical transformation without intelligent aim or direction, his work was valuable in breaking up dogmatic superstitions and popularizing the idea of Evolution as opposed to Special Creation. But it was one-sided. It overlooked the interior, invisible, but very real essence pushing its way outward and onward, molding material forms toward higher states, each expression of life being better fitted to display the powers of the Monad or Spirit as they unfolded or *e-volved* from the inexhaustible store within. The forms are like a ladder up which the real climber ascends; the rungs are not the climber. Man is not a “monkey shaved” as the wit remarks, but an atom of the Divine Life, moving onward to full self-conscious godhood.

Man has passed through many states of matter less dense than the physical, and these ethereal states called for bodies of similar nature. Traces of these are hidden in the complex of ‘principles’ already discussed. The transformations of the embryo in the prenatal state reflect some of these in brief.

In common with man, our globe has not always been in its present condition of matter; it was once more ethereal, and is in process of becoming so again. This does not mean a mere transformation of gaseous into liquid or solid states, but a cyclic transformation of the very nature of matter in ways not yet known to science, though the so-called ‘ectoplasm’ of the psychic researchers may give them a hint when they reason more deeply. The descent into present conditions, and the ascent therefrom, are

intimately connected with the evolution of man, and Dr. Jeans's remark that man is not altogether "an intruder" is a real advance toward the truth as taught by the ancient philosophers, such as the Eastern Sage, Patañjali:

The Universe, including the visible and the invisible,... exists for the sake of the soul's experience and emancipation. — *Yoga Aphorisms*

## **EVOLUTION THROUGH GLOBES, ROUNDS, AND RACES**

Hardly more than a reference to the earlier stages of human and terrestrial evolution can be made in our limited space, but a very brief outline is necessary to understand what follows.

The Earth is one of a Chain of seven 'Globes' which all constitute one organism, as we may call it. The other six are not visible to our gross senses, but they interpenetrate our material Globe. The vast stream of human Monads circulates seven times around the seven Globes, after which the Chain will perish. We are now in the Fourth Round of the great pilgrimage of Monads around the seven Globes, and our familiar Earth is the Fourth Globe of the Chain. We are also in the Fifth Evolution or Fifth Great Race of experience on this Globe. After passing through two more transformations or great Races we shall move to the next Globe, a far more spiritual condition of being.

In the first three Rounds man was hardly more than a shadowy suggestion of what he has become, and a discussion of that subject is beyond the scope of the present Manual. We must pass to the Fourth Round with its seven great, or Root Races, in which evolution takes more easily comprehended forms.

Each Root Race, with its numerous sub-races and minor branches, is practically a humanity in itself, with its own specializations and environment. It is separated from its successor by great geological changes, and only a comparatively few survivors remain to provide the seed for the next Root Race.

Even in the Fourth Round the host of human Monads came at the beginning into very nebulous or ethereal forms, not at all like the physical bodies of our time. As the Monads had not evolved the Manas, or mentality, and as the sexes were not separated in the first Race of this Fourth Round, it was little more than the shadow of later humanity.

The First Race gradually developed on its own lines, and then gave way to the Second Race, of a more substantial nature; and this to the Third which became quite material toward its close, when the present method of reproduction was fixed and when civilization dawned.

The Third Race was succeeded by the Fourth, a highly intelligent though materialistic humanity. It chiefly inhabited extensive lands now covered by the Atlantic Ocean. Intellectual progress made a great advance,

but spiritual development was slow. About half-way through the Fourth, our present Race, the Fifth, was born, but it increased very slowly until the Atlantean civilization had been practically destroyed by widespread geological cataclysms. Modern science is now beginning to trace a fraction of the past history of the Fifth Race, which is the only one known, for nearly every vestige of the former Races and their 'worlds,' as their environment may be called, has been wiped out.

In the far distant future we too shall disappear and yield place to the Sixth Race, a much higher humanity, and that to the Seventh, in which men will walk the Earth almost as gods. We are, moreover, on the upward arc now, for the lowest point was reached about the middle of the Atlantean period.

Although nearly every material trace of the archaic Races has disappeared, traditions have been preserved of their existence and character. These are found in the various sacred books of the East, the Bible included, which, if taken literally, are incomprehensible, but which, by those who have the key to their true historical meaning, are found to contain real and valuable information. H. P. Blavatsky devoted many chapters of *The Secret Doctrine* to the interpretation of these historical allegories.

While Theosophy emphatically teaches Evolution, and on the grandest scale, in the Cosmos and in man, it rejects every theory (such as the ape-ancestry one) that is purely mechanistic and that deals only with the perishable body while ignoring the real Evolver, the Monad or Spirit in man. Evolution does not proceed in an ascending straight line. The Monad descended from 'ethereal' states and gradually entered into denser conditions, ultimately utilizing physical forms in harmony with the lowest part of the cycle. With the ascending return to more ethereal states, man's bodily vestures will also be transformed. The Monad, Buddhi, and also the Manas, are no 'by-products' of a brain of flesh; still less are they 'natural' evolutions from the lower animals. The anthropoid apes have, indeed, some human blood as well as animal in their veins, but they are not our ancestors. The origin of the anthropoids is partially traceable to early and degraded human sources; they are the product of miscegenation.

Considering the complexity of the problem of the origin of man's body and the confusion caused by the existence of the anthropoids, it is no wonder that science has not solved it. This subject is fully treated by H. P. Blavatsky, but the point to be emphasized here is that while Evolution is fundamental in Theosophy it is not regarded as a mere transformation of bodily form through increasing complexities of organization brought about by mechanical laws. As the Ego behind the outer shell gains experience, new latent capacities unfold and a change in the physical vehicle naturally follows. The body, instead of being an end in itself, is an instrument through which the unfolding powers express themselves.

Human evolution reflects the larger cosmic evolution in its cyclic method of progress.

Something must be said here about the help given to evolving humanity by spiritual Intelligences from higher planes, and of more advanced degree, who incarnate in or overshadow developing man. By a universal occult law the Higher sacrifices itself, so to speak, to help the Lower to bring out its latent potentialities, and this applies to other kingdoms as well as the human. In humanity this took place when the mind became illuminated toward the end of the Third Race of the present Fourth Round. The ancient traditions record this very important evolutionary factor — not suspected yet by science — without which the real development of man cannot be understood. The famous biologist, Dr. Russel Wallace, intuitively suggested that the mind definitely incarnated in man at a certain early stage, but science rejected the idea, preferring its mechanistic theories of Natural Selection and Survival of the Fittest, which however are being seriously discredited nowadays as the vital factors in evolution.

## PSYCHOLOGY AND THEOSOPHY

Psychology is defined as the ‘science of the soul’ or the ‘study of human consciousness,’ but it is a very uncertain science and its professors are divided into many conflicting schools. Some psychologists repudiate the soul altogether, and regard human consciousness as a temporary phenomenon existing during life, just as the noise of a machine continues while it is running. Others are less materialistic, and suspect some kind of being not entirely dependent on the brain-machine. The discovery of something vaguely called ‘the subliminal consciousness,’ an intelligence that only rarely and under special conditions comes to the surface, has done a little to break the ranks of materialistic psychology, but it has brought its own evils, particularly by giving excuse for the excesses of a certain school which regards the underlying subconscious intelligence as being dominated by sexual impulses. Although there are signs of an improvement in some quarters, modern psychology grubs around far too much in the grimy cellars of the mind; it seems to dread the upper and airy chambers of the soul, illuminated by the sunlight.

Theosophy repudiates with scorn the notion that man is inherently vile at bottom — the modern psychological version of the exploded belief that every child is “born in sin” and doomed to perdition. It declares the old, old teaching, repeated by the Initiate Paul, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (I Cor., iii. 16). The Higher Self is the ‘subliminal’ consciousness we should concentrate on, and the helpful psychology is that which brings Divinity

into our shadowed lives. In another passage Paul expresses the same Gnostic or Theosophical principle:

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ [the Christos Spirit or Buddhic Splendor] be formed in you. — Gal., iv, 19

Much is said today about ‘self-expression,’ which generally means the free play of the common emotional impulses. The results are all around us. *Self-expression* has a sublime meaning to the Theosophist; it is the permeation of the whole personal nature by the divine radiance of the Higher Self, and it makes man more than the ordinary, workaday personality. Our psychologists try to interpret the facts of consciousness from outside observation, and the human nature they explore is what is called in Theosophy the lower personality, and even of that a large part is ignored. What do they know about the astral and kâmic states? Theosophy begins within; it shows you how to explore the recesses of your own personality courageously, for the key to knowledge lies in self-discipline. Theosophy is intensely practical, and by following its teaching the disciple can find his own way to the Heart of the Universe.

The intellectual aspect of Theosophy is of immense importance if studied with impersonal spiritual development and the benefit of others — universal oneness — always in sight, but it is only one of the factors in the Great Work — the finding of the inner god, the ‘immortal region’ within. For instance, it is very useful indeed to learn Nature’s method of evolution through Reincarnation, and the value of knowing about Karma can hardly be overestimated, but first of all we are seeking *Regeneration*, and this means getting free from the sense of separation from the more divine self. We must learn how to avoid the accentuation of the separate lower self, in order to find the meaning and the joy of impersonality.

This is the real study of psychology. The revelations of self-knowledge bring the power of helping others. When the lower desires have been transmuted, when a man has become so impersonal as really to love his neighbor as himself, freely to forgive injuries, to act from the highest standpoint on all occasions, he will find that he can understand the troubles of others, and his intuition will grow so strong that he will know exactly what to do under all circumstances. This is no vain promise; it is a known definite result of the sincere effort to live the life taught by Jesus and the Buddha. They were thoroughly practical in their advice. Dr. de Purucker refers to this in saying:

It is this desire for impersonal service which purifies the heart, clarifies the mind, and impersonalizes the knots of the lower selfhood, so that they open and thereby become capable of receiving wisdom.

— *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, p. 153

H. P. Blavatsky says:

Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child.

— *The Voice of the Silence* {p. 31}

The true psychology that we all need is a process of self-discipline, and its practitioners are not necessarily qualified by university degrees, useful as these may be for other purposes.

While it may seem strange to some that the most precious knowledge man can attain should be obtainable only by impersonal living with the benefit of the Race {humanity} always in view, it is perfectly reasonable because all knowledge is within the province of the inner god, whose law of being is Love. It is the way the great Masters of Wisdom and Compassion have reached their goal; their purified personalities no longer obstruct the inner light. As the Eastern saying puts it: “The lamp and the wick are clean.”

Who, then, are these sages and seers in reality?

## THE MASTERS OF WISDOM, COMPASSION, AND PEACE

A few points should be given here in addition to what has already been said on this most important subject, for the ideal to which all true aspirants to a holy life should look cannot be too strongly emphasized. From what has gone before it is not difficult to understand that certain men must have advanced far nearer than others to the realization of their inner godlike nature — a realization to which the whole human race is gradually moving in its evolution. Among the more advanced a very few have far outstripped even the best and most intelligent men who move in ordinary society. These are the efflorescence of their age. They are known as Saviors, World-Teachers, Sages, and more particularly to Theosophists as Mahâtmas, Initiates, or Masters of Wisdom. History records such spiritually evolved Supermen under the names of Gautama the Buddha, Jesus called the Christ, Pythagoras, Krishna, Lao-Tzu, and many others. They belonged to an Association or Brotherhood that has existed from time immemorial, and which is still as active as ever. At intervals this Brotherhood sends forth a Messenger to reawaken the knowledge of the Ancient Wisdom about Man and Nature.

H. P. Blavatsky was one of these Messengers, prepared by study and discipline to tell the Western world a little about that sublime Order and the necessary qualifications to enter it. In her book *The Voice of the Silence* she describes the steep and thorny road leading to that peace and wisdom where a great reward is found — the power to help and serve humanity. The secret of success in Light {versus Dark} occultism is “To live to benefit humanity the first step. To practice the six glorious virtues is the

second.... So shalt thou be in full accord with all that lives; bear love to men as though they were thy brother-pupils, disciples of one teacher, the sons of one sweet mother.”

The Adepts who established the Theosophical Society take little part in the administration of its external affairs, and in no sense do they exercise control over the Fellows of the Society, but they are always in close touch with the Messenger who represents them in the outer world.

The claim that such an association of Guardians of the Race exists, unknown except to a few, is obviously a bold one; yet it is true, and why should it be surprising when we realize what Evolution really implies? Why should we ordinary men be the highest that Nature has been able to produce? She has had millions of years to do better, and even among known peoples and individuals there are enormous differences. The high Adept is the rare efflorescence of a Race, a forced development; but a type that will be as normal in future as the average decent man is today.

The East has always known of Adepts, but in the West only the *original* Rosicrucians, the seventeenth-century Platonists, and a few mystical philosophers at various times, hinted at their existence until H. P. Blavatsky came and proclaimed them openly as her Teachers and Inspirers.

The Adepts are the trustees and guardians of the sacred knowledge and in order to preserve it intact they cannot mix freely with the world, but must live in seclusion. Their work being largely on inner planes of thought and action, there would be no advantage, but many disadvantages, in publicity; they would be hindered at every point. They have no desire to prove their existence to a skeptical public.

But the path to wisdom opens to those who love humanity and sacrifice their personal desires, and who seek it for the pure motive of helping their brothers; they know the password; they know how to give the true knock. The Great Teachers are always seeking for those in whom they see a ray of the Christ-Light or Buddhic Splendor, and such will meet Them in due course; how soon depends entirely on themselves. The *receiving of Light* depends on the sincerity of the desire to pass its benefits on to others, and that is why nothing but love of one's neighbor as oneself — Oneness — is the key to Theosophy, and the first object of a Theosophical Society.

Some well-meaning persons say that we do not require outside helpers or teachers, because enlightenment comes from within. The Light is indeed within, but have we found it? Why should we refuse a Guide to the Path which we desire to tread?

According to Theosophy, the real teacher (*Guru* in Sanskrit) is not a learned professor who pours vast masses of information into the mind — a well-written book can do that; but he is a *readjuster*, or literally a guide who points the way. We ourselves must tread it, we must do our own work.

But even in the ordinary affairs of life the inexperienced need help before they can stand alone; how much more in an enterprise that will tax one's determination, courage, and moral strength to the utmost? It is right to repudiate any system that promises an easy way, a 'Royal Road,' but that is no reason to refuse the advice of those who have "traveled on before," who have passed onward through that "strait gate" and along the "narrow way" "which leadeth unto life." They know the pitfalls in the path, and the right time to give help. H. P. Blavatsky herself said she never would have been able fully to awaken the invisible *I am* within herself without the direction of a Master. She makes this very clear in a letter published in *The Path*, Vol. X, p. 367:

Yet I am enough of an occultist to know that before we find the Master within our own hearts and seventh principle — we need an outside Master.

And further:

...my Master (the living one)... is a Saviour, he who leads you to finding the Master within yourself.

Is it possible to get in touch with the Masters of Wisdom? Yes, if the conditions are present. The first condition — insuperable to so many — is the motive. Is it curiosity, however laudable from an ordinary standpoint, or the sincere desire to lift yourself and the world spiritually, regardless of any selfish longings for *personal* gratification? Is the desire to help others greater than the desire to receive help?

If so, the Masters will meet you halfway, because they are always looking for recruits in the army of impersonal, devoted workers for human welfare. Become like them and they will naturally recognize you. As Dr. de Purucker says:

I repeat the words of all the great Seers and Sages of the ages: Knock, and if you give the right knock, it will be opened unto you. Ask, and if you ask aright, in self-forgetfulness and in sheer hunger for light, for truth, ye shall receive.

...self-forgetfulness is the knocking, the mystic knocking, at the door of the initiation-chamber of the temple. — *Questions We All Ask*

An important reference to this occurs in a letter from one of the Masters who established the Theosophical Society:

...thought runs swifter than the electric fluid, and your thought *will find me* if projected by a pure impulse, as mine will find... your mind.... Like the light in the somber valley seen by the mountaineer from his peaks, every bright thought in your mind, my Brother, will sparkle and attract the attention of your distant friend and correspondent. If thus we discover our



natural Allies in the *Shadow-world* — your world and ours outside the precincts — and it is our law to approach every such an one if even there be but the feeblest glimmer of the true “Tathâgata” light within him — then how far easier for you to attract us.

— *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, pp. 267-8

## THEOSOPHY AND MYTHOLOGY

The study of mythology is important to Theosophists, but our position differs from that of the regular schools in some respects. The latter assume that humanity, although a million or more years old, was quite barbarous until a few thousand years ago, and that even when high civilizations existed no discrimination was used and the most ridiculous stories were accepted without question. The belief in magic, in the myths of gods and heroes, in fairies or disembodied spirits of any kind, all were ‘folk-lore,’ curious and amusing from our pinnacle of scientific attainment. Stories of the creation of the Universe and man, the Deluge, of divine and semi-divine rulers and teachers, of Golden Ages, and the like, were of course invented by poets and dreamers to satisfy the questionings of the childhood of the Race. Any rational basis for sun-, moon-, or star-worship is to be sought only in the effort to increase fertility. The gods are personifications of natural phenomena such as lightning, rain, or the dawn; fear is the basis of religion, and so forth.

To all this we disagree in principle, while admitting that there is a small proportion of fact in the ‘folk-lore’ theory. Certain folktales and myths are purely imaginative and most of the ‘magic’ is jugglery — but by no means all. If the folklorists knew something of Theosophy they would learn that the more important cosmogonies, mythologies, and semi-historical legends of antiquity were the work of well-instructed teachers, Initiates, who were allowed to present certain aspects of natural law in allegorical form. The fuller meaning of the allegories could be imparted only to those who were “duly and truly qualified.”

In addition to a certain confusion deliberately created to conceal the deeper knowledge for which the ‘pro-fane’ or unprepared were not ready, utterly misleading corruptions crept in during the centuries. No wonder the modern scholar, with materialistic or theological bias, has little appreciation of the hidden meaning of the disfigured relics of the Ancient Wisdom, and is wandering on side-tracks that lead nowhere. Even the folklore, the mythology, and the ceremonials of savage tribes, miserable remains of higher civilizations, can teach very little without the key brought by Theosophy.

By using this key, H. P. Blavatsky, in her great works, demonstrated that the story of the evolution of the Cosmos, the world, and man, was contained in jumbled fashion within the mythologies, epics, and pseudo-

historical legends of early peoples. The great religions as we have them are primarily concerned with the relation between 'God' and man, in order to provide a system of worship and a code of morals; but in the allegories and historical traditions on which they rest the main teachings of Theosophy are more or less plainly revealed — teachings such as Reincarnation, the 'Seven Principles,' the Hierarchies of gods and other beings, and even the evolution of humanity through the Rounds and Races.

In the Mysteries back of the exoteric religions the higher Theosophical teachings were given to the deserving according to their spiritual standing. The widely-distributed legends of Man-Gods or divine heroes, such as the Buddha, Jesus, Krishna (under many personifications), Osiris-Horus, Hercules, Mithra, and many others, have a far deeper signification than the narratives indicate, although they are probably all founded on the lives of real personages. From one aspect the stories represent the training, trials, and ultimate glorious illumination of the successful candidate for the Greater Mysteries, so far as this could be told without revealing what was unlawful.

The subject of the real basis of the mythologies is fully considered in Theosophical literature, especially in *The Secret Doctrine*.

## THEOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Someone has quaintly said, "Man is an incurably religious animal"; and in spite of occasional outbreaks of materialism, it is true enough. The feeling of reverence for something greater than the personal self is founded on the real presence of a divine Central Self, of which the personality is only a weak and distorted reflection. Theosophy is the universal 'religion' that expresses this; it is the parent of the various great religions known to the world — aspects of truth that have had their rise, decline, and fall. It is known to students of Theosophy as the Wisdom-Religion, the Secret Doctrine, the Esoteric Philosophy, *Âtma-Vidyâ*, etc. It does not admit or worship an anthropomorphic God with limitations of personality — an autocratic ruler of the Universe from which he is independent or separate. Its conception of the Eternal is far more sublime than can be contained in even the loftiest idea of personality.

Among other early authorities of the Christian Church, St. Augustine recognized the antiquity and truth of the primitive Wisdom-Religion, Theosophy. He says:

That, in our times, is the Christian religion, which to know and follow is the most sure and certain health. But this name is not that of the thing itself; for the thing which is now called the Christian religion really was known to the ancients, nor was wanting at any time from the beginning of the human race until the time when Christ came in the flesh, from whence the true religion, which had previously existed, began to be called Christian.

— *Retractationes*, i. xiii

That is the pure Theosophical teaching. Certain fundamental teachings common to Christianity, Buddhism, Hindûism, Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, Taoism, the Egyptian, Greek and Roman religions, etc., reveal the presence of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion, and, of course, it was more explicitly taught in the Schools of the Mysteries of Antiquity. The cruel persecutions that have disgraced certain historical periods could not have happened if the devotees had recognized the kernel of truth within the outer shell of the various warring creeds.

We must not, then, fall into the error of regarding Theosophy as an artificial system compounded from carefully selected portions of the world-faiths. Theosophy is the original basis, formulated from the experiences of giant intelligences, initiated seers who have penetrated deep beneath the outward veil of illusion that hides the realities from our gaze, who have traveled into the mystical arcana of the invisible worlds. Unfortunately, through the weakness and selfishness of human nature, the revelations of the sages gradually became obscured by dogmas and gross superstitions. Intolerant sectarianism dominated in most countries, especially in the Western world, until lately, when the spread of scientific research and learning exposed the fallacy of many time-honored creeds, but unhappily without replacing them by a satisfactory substitute. The need for a new presentation of the Ancient Philosophy was never greater than today.

The teachings of Theosophy would find little response if they were not imbedded in the inner spiritual man; but as they are really only a formulation of what exists therein, it is not surprising that they appear familiar to many on a first hearing.

Theosophy, as already said, has always had its Guardians and Preservers, and from time to time Messengers have been sent out from the permanent Center of Wisdom to revive its teachings in various parts of the world.

In this way the great religions arose, pure and strong at first. They were not formed by growth from inferior superstitions but were definite revelations. As they increase in age they degrade, and a new Messenger from the original source has to re-state the neglected ethical teachings and as much as conditions will permit of the nature of humanity and the Universe. At times the efforts of the Great Teachers were directed toward founding schools of philosophy, such as those of Pythagoras or Plato, Confucius or Lao-Tzu, or the Indian systems. The inspiring influence of these is a matter of admitted history.

In regard to Theosophy and Religions we may consider the Christian faith as an illustration of the work of the Messengers. As St. Augustine rightly said, Christianity was not a new revelation, but a rebirth of the old Wisdom-Religion that had always existed; Truth cannot contradict itself. The Divine Afflatus, or Spirit of Illumination, came down through Jesus

the Christ to proclaim anew and quicken in the West the understanding of the old, old story. While he was a Son of God in a special sense — an Avatâra, to use a Sanskrit term [It means the descent of a divine being, not into human flesh, but, as it were, towards incarnation in human flesh. It means the overshadowing, or more correctly speaking the over-illuminating, of some great and noble man by a divinity, by a god... Jesus was an Avatâra, a manifestation through the form of a human being, of a god, of a divinity, — one of the spiritual beings controlling our part of the stellar Universe. — G. de Purucker: *The Story of Jesus*, pp. 40-1] — he emphatically taught that all men are Sons of God, — even more, “ye are gods,” — and that “greater works shall ye do.” Humanity sorely needed, and still needs to be reminded of its inner divinity, obscured by “the flesh.”

The divinity of man is the primary Theosophical teaching of all the Messengers of the Great Spiritual Lodge; evolution cannot advance to its sublime destiny till that is learned. Jesus showed the Way of Attainment, the only Path. He taught no creed, he established no form of worship. He repeated the Golden Rule of the ages: Love, Oneness, Forgiveness, Self-forgetfulness.

But, alas, it was not long before his teaching was obscured and a formal religion instituted, with compulsory articles of faith, ceremonial rituals, and a politico-clerical organization. The Roman Emperors adopted it and made it an engine of statecraft. The vital impulse of its original teachings preserved it through the centuries, but its spiritual power was terribly weakened by dead-letter controversies and the dissensions of dogmatic sects, as well as by the horrible persecutions and religious wars that have disgraced its history so often. The spiritual influence of the few real Western Mystics, illumined by a large measure of self-knowledge, such as Dionysius the Areopagite, Eckhart, Boehme, Henry More, etc., runs like a silver thread on the dark background. Their simple teachings of soul wisdom, though suspect and unpopular, redeem the whole era from being entirely barren.

With other religions it was largely the same. Starting with the simple truths brought by some inspired Messenger, they degraded into formalism and superstition, even if not always into persecution and bloodshed. The essential object — to awaken man to the knowledge of his own inner divinity — was pushed aside, when not entirely ignored.

## THEOSOPHY IN THE BIBLE

As the Hebrew Scriptures are more familiar and accessible to Westerners than the other sacred books of the East, we shall close by pointing out a few of the Theosophical teachings therein, generally ignored — perhaps unconsciously — by theologians, but which provide an example of the existence of Theosophy in all the world-scriptures.

The Divinity of Man in his real inner nature is plainly taught in the New Testament, and yet this magnificent concept, the greatest possible

appeal to noble living and happiness for all humanity, has been thrust into the background, and the lower nature, the mere personality has been treated as the real man. Western humanity has been taught that it was 'born in sin' and required an external redeemer. Theosophy is bringing back the majestic teaching of real Christianity — "Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High" (Psalms, lxxxii. 6), quoted approvingly by Jesus when defending himself against the Jews (John, x, 34).

Many passages in the Bible teach the doctrine of Karma. In Galatians, vi. 7, Paul expressly says "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." As for Reincarnation, denied or ignored by the Churches, it was the general belief of antiquity as it is today in the East, and so we need not be surprised to find it referred to as a recognized doctrine, as in Revelation, iii. 12, and else-where.

Certain parts of the Bible present the evolution of Nature and man under allegories that are transparent enough to the student of mythologies who has the assistance of Theosophy. For instance, take the two well-known stories of Creation in Genesis which are so contradictory that modern criticism, even in the churches, disregards them as serious contributions to knowledge. They are supposed to be poetical effusions, guesses at truth by simple souls; and bound together, without regard to any plan or connection, by the compiler.

But if we apply the Theosophical key, we find a very different explanation. The two stories are not contradictory nor are they childish folklore. Each represents a different period of evolution. The Adam of the first narrative is not the Adam of the second. The earlier account gives a highly condensed version of the first three Rounds, and part of the Fourth until the intellect, Manas, began to function in its Third Race, and the separation of the sexes took place. The mental torpor of the early Races, previous to the awakening of the mind, is symbolized by the deep sleep of Adam mentioned in the second chapter of Genesis; and the separation of the sexes by the creation of Eve from his rib. The Garden of Eden, the Trees of Life and Knowledge, the Temptation by the Serpent, etc., are simply allegorical statements of the facts of evolution. They are found in various guises in other ancient teachings, but Theosophy has the key.

Before concluding it is desirable to repeat that Theosophy is not made up of bits of ancient religions and philosophies blended artfully with modern evolutionary ideas — a fabricated concoction. Theosophy is the formulation of the wisdom of great seers and sages who penetrated ages ago behind the veil of Nature, spiritual, psychical, and physical. Partial revelations have been made from time to time and in various ways, but the full understanding has been always reserved for the few, as was demanded by the nature of the case.

The Secret Doctrine is the accumulated Wisdom of the Ages... it is the uninterrupted record covering thousands of generations of Seers whose respective experiences were made to test and to verify the traditions passed orally by one early race to another, of the teachings of higher and exalted beings, who watched over the childhood of Humanity.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, I, 272

In preparation for the new cycle now dawning, H. P. Blavatsky was commissioned to speak of this more openly, to bring the knowledge of the existence of Masters to the West, and to reveal keys to knowledge that had never been given out before. For those who have the spiritual welfare of humanity at heart those keys are indispensable.

## 2

# Reincarnation

A Lost Chord in Modern Thought

Leoline L. Wright

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## REIMBODIMENT A HABIT OF NATURE

A characteristic viewpoint of Theosophy is that man is a deathless, spiritual Ego using mind and body as a garment, or as its vehicle of expression and experience in the external world. The present general tendency to regard ourselves as the product simply of physical evolution has been one of the greatest handicaps in modern life. For it has had the effect of discounting the reality of man's spiritual nature and has intensified the horror of death. How can anyone be truly happy or willingly unselfish if he believes that death ends all!? And so long as the majority are convinced that the life of the senses is the only reality we shall be unable to establish scientifically the fact of *postmortem* existence. Can a man who has passed all his life in a blind dungeon prove that there is a sun? And he certainly will not be able to go further and explain how and why his very existence in the dungeon is dependent in a thousand ways upon the Sun's invisible but all-sustaining life.

We must come out of the imprisoning dungeons of materialistic religion and science into the sunlight of spiritual truth. Then we can grow into the power to demonstrate for ourselves "like a problem in Euclid" that the real, inner Self — the essential core of each of us — has always existed, is immortal at the present moment, and can no more be destroyed than the Boundless Universe of which it is an inseparable part.

Then, too, some satisfactory explanation must exist as to the prevailing injustices of life. There is hardly anyone who does not feel that life has more or less cheated him. Are not most of us born with desires and capacities that we shall never in this life have the opportunity to develop? And there are many indeed who are born with innate tendencies to evil which they are given no chance to outgrow. The glaring inequalities of modern life are in themselves enough to embitter the human heart and wither its moral initiative.

What is needed first of all is to demonstrate to man his significance in the evolutionary plan. We need a larger view of the purpose and destiny of the human race. Theosophy relates man to the Universe and shows that his individual consciousness is a ray of the Universal Cosmic Consciousness. It starts out by emphasizing that man is essentially a *center of consciousness* — not just a body to which a so-called soul is suddenly added at birth or death. Nor are we accidental products of blind, mechanical forces. Each individual is part of a living, organic Universe. That Universe itself is a product of evolution and carries forward within its own unfolding plan all that is — atoms, men, nebulae, worlds, solar systems, galaxies — in a grand sweep of development in which the humblest earthworm as certainly as the most godlike genius has a definite place and part.



The history of generations of oak trees lies in the tiny acorn. From the heart of the acorn there slowly unfolds in response to Nature's influences a mighty tree which is an expression of an immense past of evolutionary oak tree experience. So with the human being, the "Man-plant of the Ages." In that divine unit of consciousness which is the inner source of our individual life is stored the essence of an immense past stretching backward across immemorial ages. And our appearance as man on this Earth is but one act in the magnificent drama of our evolution.

Nor is the human race itself a recent development of Nature. Man came from former cycles of evolution and started a new body here on Earth, which is our present training school. Further, there has not been a constant 'creation' of new souls all down the ages. The number of evolving humans on this Earth, though immense beyond our power to picture, is yet fixed and constant. This means that, in line with the economy of Nature, human beings as evolving Egos have been reborn on Earth again and again. All of us who make up our present civilization have been here many times before. We were the people who formed the great civilizations of the past, and we have also been imbodyed in the many magnificent prehistoric races which Theosophy tells us something about.

Theosophy, therefore, begins with pre-existence as a necessary part of eternity. For a thing which has a beginning must necessarily come to an end. Nature makes that plain enough. What we call eternity or 'immortality' must stretch endlessly back into the past as well as endlessly forward into the future. The innermost Self of man is a deathless Being, a god, which reclothes itself from age to age in new bodies, or vehicles, that it may undergo all possible experiences in the Universe to which it belongs, and so reach its own most complete growth and self-expression.

Growth is eternal; evolution is without beginning, and it is endless. We pass through all the mansions of life, as the ages of Eternity slowly stream by into the limitless ocean of the Past.

— G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, p. 30.

Rebirth, then, is the pathway of evolution. It is the method by which Nature progressively draws into growth or unfoldment the limitless capacities latent in all creatures from atoms to gods. Everything that has life reimbodies itself — universes, solar systems, suns, worlds, men, animals, and plants, cells, molecules, atoms. Each of these forms is ensouled by a spiritual consciousness-center which is evolving in its own degree, passing ever upward, and unfolding like a seed from within itself its latent potentialities.

...Reimbodiment of everything, of every individual entity, is one of cosmic Nature's fundamental operations — "laws" if you like; and because

the Whole so acts, does it not obviously carry along with it every part of itself? — *Ibid.*, p. 171

Nature repeats herself everywhere. What she does in the grand she reproduces in the small; and the reason for this is that there is one fundamental law or system of action, of operation, in the Universe, which expresses itself therefore in every part of the Universe, being its fundamental current of consciousness-vitality. Man is born, reaches the culmination of his powers, and dies, because the physical universe does the same thing in the great as man's physical body does in the small.

— *Ibid.*, p. 73

In the human race we call this process of rebirth or reïmbodiment by the word Reincarnation, which means “re-fleshing,” or taking on again a garment or body of flesh. There are various names for the different forms of reïmbodiment which pertain to all beings from the highest to the lowest, but here we are concerned only with that form of reïmbodiment which pertains to man, and which is called Reincarnation.

Human life is thus seen as a necessary and highly important part of the Cosmic Evolutionary Scheme. And we naturally inquire what its purpose is, for there seems to be no clear indication in the present confusion of beliefs and theories as to why we are here and what it is all for.

Briefly, the purpose of life is to raise the mortal into immortality. Or, to expand the idea somewhat, it is to give time and opportunity for the deathless spiritual potency at the core of our being to develop, grow, unfold, into perfection. For Theosophy tells us that the personal man — the everyday self — is not immortal. John Smith or Mary Brown are not deathless beings. They are mere personalities, and as such do not reincarnate. It is the Units of consciousness behind John Smith and Mary Brown, of which these perhaps quite ordinary persons are but the imperfect aspects — this Root of consciousness in each, this Ego it is which reincarnates.

What man or woman has not often felt how short life is! — how inadequate to express all that one feels of inspiration and capacity within his nature. How often we hear it said: “I am only just learning to live — now when I am old, and just about to die.” The Universe, however, is not run in that cruelly wasteful fashion. The very fact that we intuitively *know* that there are large reserves of power and possibility within us that are seeking expression — the fact that nearly everyone yearns to develop, *to be*, that Greater Self which he senses within — this very urge to a larger and fuller life is our daily witness to Nature's true purpose for man. It is only because we are so preoccupied with our limited, everyday consciousness as John Smith or Mary Brown, and live only at rare

moments in that deep, divine urge of the greater being within, that we are for the most part unconscious of the larger possibilities of life for us.

Let a man, then, first of all try to realize that he is in his inmost nature a divine consciousness or Ego; that this Ego which is himself has always existed, and shall never cease to live and grow, and develop towards perfection. Let him set his desire and will to realize his oneness with this divine Ego and to bring it out in his daily life as a larger, deeper individuality than that of his personal consciousness. He will then enter upon a new life. He will become a creator, a self-generator of his own illimitable divine destiny. He will begin at last to work self-consciously with the real purpose of evolution.

It is through Reincarnation alone that we can bring out, and use, and perfect, the fullness of that hidden wealth of power and capacity of which we are all conscious in some measure. For through Reincarnation the Ego undergoes every kind of human experience which this Earth affords. In each life some new facet of character is shaped by environment. New powers and capacities are unfolded from within. Weaknesses, selfishness, and the faults of passion are corrected by suffering, that wise teacher which enables us to recognize and overcome our egoism and limitations.

Every new life gives us another chance. The criminal thus has time and opportunity to reform *himself*, and through restitution and self-mastery can advance to better things. One whose need to support and work for others all his life has made cultivation of his musical or other gifts impossible will, by the very strength of that dammed back energy and the moral power generated by devotion to duty, find increased capacity with freedom in another life for its development. So if we use well our opportunities we shall grow steadily from life to life until in some future reincarnation on this Earth character will flower into divine genius and we shall live and work in the fullness of our true spiritual being.

## WHAT IT IS IN MAN THAT REINCARNATES

So far as we have gone we discover that humans are composite beings. We have already observed three elements in our constitution: a personality known to friends as John Smith or Mary Brown, and back of that a deeper reservoir of consciousness expressed in the ideal desires of the Nature. Lowest of all there is the animal consciousness, including the body, the vehicle of these two higher aspects in human life.

These three elements can still further be resolved until we see man as a sevenfold being. But in restricting our study now to the subject of Reincarnation it will be necessary to regard him only in the threefold division above indicated. This corresponds to St. Paul's description of man as body, soul, and spirit. Christian theologians, however, have persistently ignored this division because they have no conception of the nature of

Spirit. In making this threefold division St. Paul proved himself familiar with the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom, today known as Theosophy.

It is the higher, ideal nature above referred to, the Spiritual Ego, which reincarnates. The name used in Theosophy for this higher part of our consciousness is *Manas*. This is a Sanskrit word and means ‘the thinker,’ so we may call the Reincarnating Ego the Thinker in man. It is the origin of our *self*-consciousness, of the faculty of introspection and of self-realization. Through it we relate ourselves to life, understand what we are learning, and so build into ourselves in the shape of character and propensities the lessons derived from evolution. Without this center of permanent individual consciousness in which the results of evolution can be preserved, the fruit of experience would be dissipated at death and no progressive evolution would be possible. Through this spiritual part of us comes also the voice of conscience. From it we draw high inspiration, unselfish love, intimations and intuitions of the divine, and all impulses to impersonal, magnanimous thought and action.

Thus two selves exist within us: the Self of the Ego or Thinker, which persists through all our reincarnations; and the self of the personality, which is mortal and breaks up at death. It is the play of consciousness between these two which is the great mystery of life. Both of these selves, as yet contradictory in desire and purpose, make us what we are. How familiar everyone is with the duel between them, which is constantly going forward within us! The voice of selfish temptation and the call of incorruptible conscience — each striving against the other for mastery. The struggle is of a depth and complexity unsuspected until we start out in earnest to conquer some habitual fault, like a bad temper, or a weakness of some kind, or an ingrained selfishness. How quickly then we find all the forces within and without us arrayed either on one side or the other! The victory in such deep-seated, essential strife as this between the two natures of man is far too many-sided and involves too wide a range of influences to be completely secured in one short life of limited experience. The struggle must be met under myriad conditions and attained by means of many experiences in life after life until at last complete mastery remains with the higher nature.

What is the origin of this duality within us? Why should we be both noble and ignoble? Theosophy describes how our external, animal vehicle of man was built up in long past ages of evolution on our globe by the lower, instinctual forces of Nature. Slowly it was shaped under the action of evolutionary law as a vehicle for the Reincarnating Ego. When this vehicle of body and animal consciousness was ready, the Spiritual Ego took it in charge, incarnating there to overshadow and guide its further development. The presence of the Ego now began dynamically to change — to mold this vehicle for experience in human life. The spiritual fire of the Thinker through life after life stimulated and developed the growth of

the animal man, so that gradually it unfolded or evolved under this creative influence a semi-independent personal consciousness of its own. And this personal consciousness, expanding slowly, slowly through ages of incarnation under the inspiration of its overshadowing Ego, became the human personality. And now not only is it an instrument wherethrough the Ego may manifest its own divine powers, but gradually by its own struggles and victories under the urge of conscience — the personality itself is evolving. It unfolds and expands, and rising out of the limited personal consciousness, achieves thereby its own immortality. By subjecting our lower selfish natures to the influence and guidance of the higher we enable the Ego to express its light on this plane and thus exercise and expand its own divine potencies. On the other hand, gradually raising our personal consciousness, we lift it at last unto the plane of the Spiritual Ego, and so the human is transmuted into the immortal man. Thus the whole nature in all its elements has passed upward into a more advanced stage of consciousness. A graphic statement of this lifting of the whole being in all its parts is thus given by Dr. de Purucker:

The work of evolution is... the raising of the personal into the Impersonal; the raising of the mortal to put on the garments of Immortality; the raising of the beast to become a man; the raising of a man to become a god; and the raising of a god to become still more largely divine.

— *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 287 {first edition}

But indeed, the personal part of us is only on the evolutionary road to such perfection. We are yet far from the goal. The whole human race is held in the grip of its ignorance of the spiritual, in the grip of suffering and confusion of mind and heart, because we have not yet learned to center our consciousness in the permanent and real part of us — the Spiritual Ego. We are immersed almost altogether in the personal interests of our nature. And this personality is mixed, a mentality combined with passion, with emotional qualities, with physical traits and appetites. At different times any one of these may hold the mastery. At one moment the individual may be calculating with keen and absorbed mind, at another time swept from his moorings by a gust of violent anger. Again, physical pain or illness may turn him into a creature of ailing impotence. But seldom is any one of us for long the same. We pass from mood to mood, and our outlook on life changes perpetually and is never stable. And like all composite things this unstable personality must break up when the time comes for the dissolution of the different energies and classes of life-atoms of which it is composed. For only homogeneous natures are immortal.

This bundle of personal energies, when it is broken up at the withdrawal of the Spiritual Ego into its own sphere — in other words at death — leaves behind it what in Theosophy are called *Skandhas*. When a plant withers and dies, it drops into the earth the seeds which are the fruit

of its little round of growth and development. From these seeds other plants will grow up when the cycle of the seasons has brought back the conditions necessary for their germination. If it was a fragrant violet, its seeds will produce their lovely kind. If it was a ragweed, more ragweeds will appear. So with the psychological-animal organism of man. When it dies and fades out, it deposits in nature's psychological soil or reservoir those invisible seeds of energy which its own growth has produced. Theosophists call these seeds or effects *Skandhas*, using the Sanskrit because there is in English no word which can exactly describe these inner consequences of a life's experience. And it is these seeds or *Skandhas* {or attributes of character} which shape the new personality, when the Ego returns to incarnation, making it the exact result of what it thought and acted and built up of character in the last life.

That in man which reincarnates, then, is the Spiritual Ego, the divine Individuality. The two following definitions of evolution will help us better to understand the Ego and its relation to ourselves:

...Evolution is the working upon and in matter of the spiritual entity which takes and forms and urges onwards the material vehicles in which it is. This is the key of the Theosophical doctrines of Evolution.

— *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 228

Every one of you, my Brothers, is a divinity encased in vehicles, in sheaths, of an enshrouding lower selfhood; and all the work of growth, all the work of evolution, is the thinning out of these sheaths, is the dissolving of the gross physical aspects of them and the raising of them to become ethereal, translucent to the rays of the inner god-son, the god within.

— *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, X, p. 170

## WHY DO WE NOT REMEMBER OUR PAST LIVES?

The fact is that we *do* remember them. The question is here put in this form because that is how it is generally asked by inquirers. But it is not thus correctly phrased. It should rather be: "Why are we not able to recall the circumstances of our past lives?" For character itself is memory. In a certain family are born two children. One is candid and honorable, the other thieving and sly, and the second has to be painfully disciplined into a sense of honor. We all know of these puzzling cases of differing character in one family. The first has learned by experience in past incarnations that dishonesty is base, and so it is born with that innate knowledge as part of its character. The other child has this victory yet to achieve, and will the better achieve it because of its family environment — a favorable condition earned by the beginning of effort towards learning this lesson in a previous incarnation. It is in this way that we can say that character is memory.

Genius too is memory. All inborn faculties, whether good or evil, are the consequences of past self-training or of past weakness in other lives on Earth. Mercifully, it is rare that anyone can remember the particular events through which these victories or failures as to character and faculty have been built into the inner nature. For since we learn almost always through suffering and many initial failures, such memories would in the main be of a painful kind.

We might also include hereditary traits as a phase of memory, developing a little more fully the subject above alluded to. Why is it, for example, that of three children born into the same family, one is a genius, another has a shrewd business head, while the third is entirely commonplace? Theosophy teaches that an Ego coming to birth must automatically, by the natural attraction of psychomagnetic energy, embody those hereditary qualities and traits appropriate to the expression of its own nature brought over from its experience and actions in the past life. We thus see that in every way character is memory. And without these stored-up, accumulated memories, carried over from life to life, — as before emphasized — no evolution of organism either physical, mental, or moral would be possible. Evolution depends upon continuity. Moreover, everything repeats itself. It is the method of Nature that through repetition characteristics are fixed and the type developed. Likewise is it by repetition through life after life that lessons of human character are realized and absorbed and become a permanent part of human nature.

... Things repeat themselves, because Nature repeats herself constantly, and it is this consistency in repetition which is but another way of saying 'laws of Nature.' — *Theosophy and Modern Science*, II, 444

What is true of brain-memory is also true of the personality. The Ego has a different personality with each life. This must of necessity be so because in each life we learn something new, develop mentally and morally, unfold emotionally or spiritually, so that the old personality becomes inadequate — the Ego outgrows its possibilities as an instrument. The Ego, therefore, when it is reborn, makes for itself another personality fashioned afresh from the lessons incorporated into itself in the last life.

So here is another and deeper reason why memories inhere and persist, but details are forgotten, when the Ego returns to incarnation. Characteristics, faculties, which were built into the inner nature are brought back as unconscious memories; but the new-born personality can have no recollection of the actual happenings of a former life for it took no part in them. Just as an actor cannot say: "I was Hamlet" or "I was Macbeth"; but rather: "I took the part of Hamlet" or "I played Macbeth"; so no Ego can truly feel, "I was So-and-so in a former life." For the personality is not the real *I*, it is only the mask or vehicle or garment or

temporary character through which the real *I* expresses an aspect of itself. We may extend the comparison and think of an actor playing many parts in his long career. The actor knows Hamlet and he knows Lear and Shylock, but what do Hamlet and Lear and Shylock know of each other? Then consider the structure of the brain. Though the same atoms which made up the brain in a former life are now used again by the reincarnating entity, the brain of the new personality is a fresh combination entirely. For these life-atoms themselves have undergone changes so that while the instinctive trend is the same, the total effect is a fresh outlook in the character.

Another reason, and a basic one, why we do not remember the circumstances of past lives is that the Universe to which we belong is an expression of Intelligence, Wisdom, and Compassion. It is an Organism, an immense, interblended series of infinitely graded living entities, having at its center or heart a Divine Intelligence, one of the Cosmic Gods. The *laws* of the Universe are the life-rhythms — spiritual, intellectual, and vital — of that Cosmic Divinity, flowing out along the Circulations of the Cosmos, guiding and controlling all things from the mighty Sun to the electrons of the atom.

These beneficent laws protect man, as far as his free-will does not prevent, against those things which hinder his evolution. Evolution always looks forward, is constructive, builds afresh and on developing patterns. Foremost among hindrances to evolution would be a constant pre-occupation with the past. Man is supplied by the laws of the Cosmos with an adequate memory of his own past and that of the Race {humanity}, all that he needs to use: he is protected in the very nature of things from a memory of details which would burden, distract, and bring suffering to his upward struggling nature. To leave behind “the low-vaulted past” is one of the conditions of growth. Does the oak bother about the acorn which produced it, or the butterfly take thought for its abandoned chrysalis? We are children of a Universe of Life, and we are forever and healthily abandoning the worn-out, and developing the new out of the old.

All of us undoubtedly, as Spiritual Egos, have played many parts on this wonderful stage of the human drama, our planet Earth. It is through these manifold roles that we have developed the highly complex psychological apparatus called human nature, which in the great majority is able to adjust itself to almost any condition of human existence, under all climes and in any environment. So true is this that there is a great restlessness upon men today, a feeling that life as we know it has been lived out, exhausted of its possibilities. Humanity inarticulately feels itself upon the threshold of some new discovery. Theosophy proclaims that this is a genuine intuition, a prevision of the New Era which is just about to dawn upon the world.



We must not forget, however, that a time will of course come when each of us will be able clearly to recollect all the events of our past lives. The register of everything that has ever happened to him is imprinted imperishably upon the deathless, divine side of human nature. But we have not yet developed the spiritual faculties which would enable us to peruse that mystic record. Nor shall we develop them so long as we constantly identify ourselves only with the life of the brain and the personality. For now self-interest shuts us in; passions hold us in selfish blindness; prejudice weaves its dense web over intuition and creative power. And so we languish in our narrow prisons of personality. Only occasionally, when the sunshine of divine love or the spirit of self-sacrifice inspires us, do we catch a gleam of the mountains of dawn without our prison walls. Man must use his spiritual will to realize our essential godhood and break through the bonds of selfishness and ignorance into the glorious kingdom lying just beyond the threshold of our everyday consciousness.

### **SOME OBJECTIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS**

One of the commonest mistakes made by inquirers is the belief that reincarnation means that a human being can be reborn in the body of an animal. Some Eastern religions teach that such animal incarnation is a punishment for certain sins. This doctrine is a distortion, which came about in the course of centuries, of an original teaching to be explained later. Theosophy denies this doctrine emphatically; all its teachings are a refutation of this idea. "Once a man, always a man" is one of the great axioms of the Archaic Science. This statement is based on the fact, already referred to, that the Universe is a living Organism. We are a part of that Great Organism and the laws therefore which govern our life spring from the nature of that Organism. Thus, by understanding what happens in the physical world we can get an idea of the corresponding processes in all other spheres or planes within the boundaries of our own Universe. The following quotation will emphasize this view:

The old Seers and Sages taught that the Universe is a living entity, that it is a vital organism — much in the same way as man's body is a vital organism: . . . and man with his life and his intelligence and his consciousness and all his power, all his thought and feeling and emotion, is but a reflection of the Whole, working in him as an inseparable part of that all-encompassing Whole. The part obviously partakes of what the Whole is.

— *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, xiv, p. 253

Looking at ourselves from this standpoint, we see that as the circulations of the human being, arterial and nervous, make growth possible, so do the universal circulations, vital and spiritual, make evolution possible. In man the life forces flow along definite channels

called veins, arteries, and nerves. In the Universe the evolutionary pulsations also pass along definite channels and are called in Theosophy the Circulations of the Cosmos. The relation of this fact to the permanence of the Ego as a human being has been well expressed by one of the teachers as follows:

...*Manas* the Thinker... does not return to baser forms; first, because he does not wish to, and second, because he cannot. For just as the blood in the body is prevented by valves from rushing back and engorging the heart, so in this greater system of universal circulation the door is shut behind the Thinker and prevents his retrocession. Reincarnation as a doctrine applying to the real man does not teach transmigration into the kingdoms of nature below the human. — W. Q. Judge: *The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 68-9

This distortion of the law of reincarnation referred to as the ‘transmigration of the soul’ is a misapplication of a fact anciently known and now again brought forward by Theosophy — the transmigration of the life-atoms. In our literature it has been often explained, as in the following passage:

When death comes, which is the dissolution or breaking up into its component parts of the physical body, its physical atoms are freed and drift whithersoever their magnetic attractions lead them — this magnetic character of attraction or repulsion having been given to these physical life-atoms, during the just-ended physical life, by the tendencies and desires and impulses of the man who used that body.

— G. de Purucker: “Theosophy, the Mother of Religions, Philosophies, and Sciences,” *The Theosophical Path*, February, 1932, p. 99

If a person has led a grossly animal existence, the life-atoms of which the cells of his body are composed will automatically through attraction pass into those bodies or substances which will afford the appropriate outlet for the kind of energy which has been built into them. If the life of another has been high and fine, the vibrations impressed upon the atoms will cause them to be attracted only to clean, wholesome, finely organized substances or organisms. When the period of rebirth comes again, and the life-atoms return by the action of psychomagnetic attraction to the reincarnating entity to which they belong, they bring with them a reinforcement — through their transmigrations — of the bad or good influences educated into them during the last life. Thus it is easy to see how this teaching of the transmigrations of the life-atoms has, like so many of the occult doctrines, been degraded by ignorance or priestcraft from its original and true significance. [For a fuller treatment of this interesting subject see an article by H. P. Blavatsky, “Transmigration of the Life-Atoms” reprinted in *The Theosophical Path*, February, 1930, and the story by W. Q. Judge, “The Persian Student’s Doctrine,” reprinted in *The Theosophical Path*, April, 1932.]

A good many object to Reincarnation because they do not like the idea of coming back to this Earth. They feel that they have had enough of the sorrows and difficulties of human life and do not wish to return to it. And such an objection is just as natural and understandable as a child's objection to being kept in school. But not for nothing has the term 'Mother Nature' been a universal one in all ages, for it springs from man's instinctive knowledge that we are her children, that she is greater and wiser than we are, and will hold us to her laws of evolution and discipline whether we will or no. No person by merely taking thought can add one cubit to his stature! or change any of the processes of life or death. It may be said that the truth of Reincarnation cannot be proved. But it is so grounded in probabilities as founded on all the ways of Nature — day and night, life and death, sleeping and waking, summer and winter, the phases of all planetary motion, and the very cycles of the Sun itself; it is so natural and instinctive a human belief, being at the present time the conviction of a large majority of the human race, and in olden times always universally accepted; it makes such a strong appeal to the human heart and logic that thousands upon hearing it for the first time have accepted it at once as an inevitable conclusion from the facts of life, while it is at the present time spreading rapidly among all classes of thinking people; and finally, it has such power to reform and satisfy and inspire human nature, that it must, once encountered, become a theory that can at least never again be forgotten or ignored.

These things are but a part of the overwhelming 'presumptive evidence' for Reincarnation. To deny it:— to say, "I do not want to come back to earth" — is hardly enough. There is a general tendency in human nature to adopt the easiest way, to think that because we find a certain course unpleasant and another one more agreeable we must be allowed to please ourselves. And this in spite of the fact that the very sorrows and difficulties we are so tired of are there to convince us to the contrary. Man must somewhere meet the consequences of his thoughts and actions, his failures and moral victories. Why not here on this Earth, where he can reap the harvest on the spot where the seed was sown? The following quotation carries out the idea:

...man himself, his whole being, is inwrapped in the Nature which surrounds us, and of which man is an inseparable offspring; and he can no more escape his destiny — the destiny which he himself has builded for himself, step by step, through many previous lives — than can the planets of the solar system escape from the gripping control of their central sun.

— *Ibid.*, *The Theosophical Path*, November, 1930, p. 375

Let us remember, however, that these teachings of Theosophy have nothing to do with what is called Fatalism. We are indeed held in the grip of our present circumstances, because having intertwined ourselves by

former actions into these circumstances we cannot escape them until by a reverse course of action we effect our own liberation. But at any moment that anyone can see and admit that he has this power, he then sets about using his will, he begins to be a master of those circumstances and can use them to bring about exactly contrary results to what they would have produced if he had tamely submitted to them. Thus man, using knowledge and free-will, becomes increasingly master of himself and therefore of his destiny. Theosophy is foremost among all systems of thought in arousing us to this knowledge and realization of our power, and so leading us into creative progress and freedom.

Again people sometimes say, "But if we are all reborn into different bodies, how shall I know my friends?" Theosophy answers that no act of recognition is necessary. We and our present family and friends are knitted together by love, by mutual experience, and by congeniality. We shall not have to seek each other out. Families will be reborn together in continuation of the bonds they are united by now. We and our friends can no more help being attracted and brought together than a magnet can help selecting iron filings from a quantity of sawdust. We cannot escape our friends, or — it must also be emphasized — our enemies!

And there are not a few who object to the idea of being reborn as an infant and having to learn all over again the merely physical side of existence, as well as repeating in each life elementary education and brain development. But, as has been pointed out before, this repetition of even physical experience is a habit of Nature that has been essential to evolution.

Yet as man's spiritual development proceeds he will grow out of the need for this form of repetition. In answer to a question addressed to Dr. de Purucker at one of his public lectures as to whether the time spent in childhood would diminish as humanity advances, his reply was:

Yes... we advance... with the passing centuries, and the future will show us men for whom childhood and babyhood will be very much shortened. This shortening will be the result of evolution.

The time is coming in the distant future when children will be born almost men... practically adult, although this does not mean that they will be born of full adult size. — *Questions We All Ask*, Series I, pp. 549-550

The whole point for us lies of course in the influence of *spiritual* development. We are burdened by conditions of physical weakness because in the past we have inwound ourselves into slavery to them, by living, thinking, and longing nearly altogether for material and personal satisfactions. These, being self-centered or centripetal in their action, create bonds for the Spiritual Ego which cripple its activities in this world. This has reacted on our bodies and slowed down even their evolution. So the need is to so spiritualize and impersonalize ourselves that all

limitations and weakness will gradually dissolve away. The Ego will then be free to control and develop its vehicles of self-expression in harmony with its own divine nature and purposes.

Objections to Reincarnation spring as a rule from unfamiliarity with the teaching and its innumerable close applications to the problems and situations arising in life. And there are, naturally, some who will not accept it because they do not wish to believe it. But the great majority who encounter this doctrine are almost sure, sooner or later, to join that growing multitude of all kinds and classes of people — not by any means all of whom profess Theosophy — to whom Reincarnation is the very foundation of human justice, happiness, and spiritual growth.

## THE PROCESSES OF REINCARNATION

“Granting that reincarnation is true, where was I before I was born?” This is a question pretty sure to follow in the wake of the foregoing discussion. So far we have said little about death, nor shall we now go very deeply into it. For death is one of the grandest and most important processes of life and will be found copiously dealt with elsewhere.

As said before, man is, broadly speaking, a threefold entity, and those three basic elements in our constitution give us a triple line of evolution.

Evolution proceeds on three general lines: the spiritual, the mental-emotional, and the astral-vital; and the physical body is the channel through which all these... express themselves.

— G. de Purucker: *Theosophy and Modern Science*, I, p. 202

When the body dies and breaks up, dissipating its astral-vital energies, the process is followed by the gradual dissolution of the whole personality, the mental-emotional being. Yet there will still be something, in some cases a very large part, of the personality which endures. The Spiritual Ego will absorb into itself all of the personality that it can, that part of it which is of its own nature — its spiritual aspirations, its true and abiding loves, its unselfish and pure desires. Whatever is spiritual in man partakes of the Universal Divine which animates and supports the Cosmos. An ideal of unselfishness, purity, and noble actions, consistently lived up to transmutes the personal elements which so strive and aspire into the incorruptible gold of spirit. It raises the mortal into immortality. When death comes this transmuted energy is not dissipated. It is incorporated into its own nature by the Reincarnating Ego.

{Restated: Evolution, then, proceeds on spiritual, mental-emotional, and astral-vital lines, with the physical body as the channel through which all express themselves. When the body dies and breaks up, dissipating its astral-vital energies, the process is followed by the gradual dissolution of the whole personality, the mental-emotional being. Yet there will still be something, in some cases a very large part, of the personality which endures.

The spiritual ego will absorb into itself all of the personality that it can, that part of it which is of its own nature — its spiritual aspirations, its true and abiding loves, its unselfish and pure desires. Whatever is spiritual in us partakes of the universal divine which animates and supports the cosmos. An ideal of unselfishness, purity, and noble actions, consistently lived up to, transmutes the personal elements which so strive and aspire into the incorruptible gold of spirit. It raises the mortal into immortality. When death comes, this transmuted energy is not dissipated. It is incorporated into its own nature by the Reincarnating Ego. — From: theosociety.org}

This incorporation is assisted by the very mystical experience which takes place at the time of death. In that solemn and beautiful hour after the last sigh has been given, the Ego hovers for a brief time upon the threshold of the earthly portal. And then, before its now unclouded vision, there passes a panorama, like the unwinding of a living scroll, of all that has happened, down to the least detail from birth to death in the life just ended. In its dawning freedom the self-conscious Thinker follows these life-scenes and can then see the plan and significance of all its experiences, the relation of the parts to the whole, and of this life to those gone before. The justice, the necessity, and the beneficence of its trials and sufferings, with their guerdon of wisdom, are brought home to the egoic consciousness. These memories are now carried with it as it ascends into the heaven-world, called in Theosophy *Devachan*. Here it passes a long period of blissful rest. This is one aspect of what Jesus meant when he said, “lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt.” And the same thought is expressed in Theosophical literature many times, as the following illustrates:

when man goes to his sublime Home for the inter-life period of rest and peace, only bliss and high vision and a memory of all that is great and grand in our past life remain.

— G. de Purucker: *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, p. 79

This spiritual rest in the inner heaven-world gives the reincarnating entity an opportunity to absorb and assimilate the experiences of its last life on Earth. For the same rhythmic cycle of activity — sleep, rest, assimilation, followed by refreshed energies — characterizes not only our physical bodies, but is experienced by all living entities, whether physical, psychological, or spiritual. And of course, correspondingly, it applies also to atomic, planetary, stellar, and Cosmic organisms.

So at last the time comes, ‘the hour strikes,’ when the Ego must return to Earth-life. But how or why is this? Is it just because the Ego is rested and eager again for work and play? Partly, no doubt. For as Dr. de Purucker tells us, it is thirst for material life, the hunger for sensation and for repetition of old scenes and experiences that is the “most materially

effectual secret cause of rebirth, at least so far as the individual human is concerned.”

It may prove clarifying to review the chief reasons why the Ego in man, the Thinker, is awakened out of its blissful term of happiness to return to the tasks, the joys and sorrows, of another life on Earth. The first of these causes has been described in these words:

...man, being an essential part of the Universe,... must obey the cosmic law of reïmbodiment: his birth, then growth, then youth, then maturity, then expansion of faculty and power, then decay, then the coming of the Great Peace — sleep, rest; and then the coming forth anew into manifested existence. Even so do universes reïmbody themselves. Even so does a celestial body reïmbody itself — star, sun, planet, what not.

— *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, xxv, pp. 170-171

Then the second cause of rebirth was referred to above as the thirst for material life: the hunger, the yearning for the scenes and experiences of a past to which we consciously or unconsciously cling. Concerning this we further read:

...it is this thirst to return to familiar scenes that brings us back to earth — more effectual as an individual cause, perhaps, than all else. We hunger for the scenes that we have known; we long for the waters of life that we have drunken of; we yearn for the loves of olden days. Thirst, hunger, there, perhaps, is the most materially effectual secret cause of rebirth, at least so far as the individual human is concerned.

— *Ibid.*, Series II, xxv, pp. 172-173

But there are those, as noted before, who vehemently declare: “I don’t want to come back to this Earth! I want to go somewhere else where I can forget it all and never think of this world again!” But is this verily so? Those of us who have lost a beloved helpmate or child — must not that “somewhere else” we think of include those loved forms exactly as we remember them? Who has not sometimes longed to be a child again — to ‘climb into mother’s lap’ and feel her hand that soothed and comforted? — not some heavenly being in a city of jewels and gold, but just Mother with her understanding heart. A small thing, this, perhaps, and a weakness of human leaning. But it is a very real yearning and illustrates what is going on in most people all the time. Our regrets for past mistakes or unkindness, a lifelong dream of a career that was never possible, unsatisfied longings for books, music, travel, luxuries, congenial friends, or for the power to help others — these are indeed energies: somewhere they must work out into their due consequences. These desires make the unconscious hunger of the human heart, and only human life can satisfy

them. And they may well be called ‘secret’ because we are so unaware of them as formative energies.

The following will give us the metaphysical side of the matter:

This ‘thirst’ is a composite instinctual habit, compounded of a host of things — as all habits are, if you analyze yourself — of loves, hates, affections of various kinds, magnetic attractions of the hosts of life-atoms composing man’s constitution, visible and invisible, and of longings and yearnings of many kinds, all of which collect during the various life-terms on earth in the human soul and mind, and which are briefly called by Theosophists ‘thought deposits’ — and emotional, {mental,} and psychic tendencies and biases.... All these things are energies... and they will energize the reincarnating entity’s destiny — G. de Purucker, “*Theosophy, the Mother of Religions, Philosophies, and Sciences*,” *The Theosophical Path*, March 1932, p. 192

Then there is the other side of the picture — the pull of the life-atoms. This is yet a third cause for the return of the Ego to Earth incarnation.

...It [the Reincarnating Ego] is drawn hither, drawn back [to earth], by the psycho-magnetic attraction of its own inherent life-energies combined with those of the life-atoms remaining in the atmosphere of the planet Terra, which life-atoms formerly belonged to the human constitution left behind... at its previous decease or death or passing upwards out of earth-life.

— *Ibid.*, Jan., 1932, pp. 7-8

These life-atoms do not all belong to the physical plane. There are different classes or grades of them acting in the three general planes of evolution already referred to — the physical, mental-emotional, and the spiritual. These classes of life-atoms manifest each a degree of evolution corresponding to the plane in which it belongs. Life-atoms are infinitesimal, undeveloped god-sparks emanated by the Central Life-Flame at the Heart of our Universe, and they are the building blocks on all planes of the Cosmos: they form the ‘stuff’ of which are built the three planes of evolution just spoken of, and from which the higher beings on that plane fashion their vehicles and are thus able to manifest and express themselves therein. Thus man expresses bodily actions and functions by means of the life-atoms which make up his body until death occurs and liberates them to pursue their transmigrations. Likewise he has his mental-emotional and also his spiritual life-atoms through which his personal and Ego-life express themselves. In thinking of these mental-emotional life-atoms as awaiting the reincarnating entity, we must remember where they have been since the Ego passed out of Earth-life through the portal of death:

The life-atoms which composed it remain, however, in the astral realms and there have their adventures and live their respective atomic lives. they



go to this and to that, as even the physical life-atoms do, to the soil, to the plants, to the beasts, to other men. — *Ibid.*, March, 1932, p. 199

There are of course other causes which contribute to the Ego's irresistible urge to return to Earth-life, but here we have said enough to indicate the underlying 'laws,' or, to express the fact more accurately in the words of Dr. de Purucker, "death and birth are habits of the reincarnating entity."

We come now to the processes by which the Ego re-enters existence upon this planet Terra. Owing to the causes mentioned above, combined with others equally compelling, the Spiritual Ego at last awakens out of its blissful heaven-dream and begins its 'descent' earthwards. Its progress is very gradual. Not much is told in the exoteric teachings of Theosophy as to the various states of substance and consciousness through which the Ego passes in its approach to the threshold of material life. But we know of course that at first these states are psychological, as the Ego is *Manas*, the thinking-principle, the creative, formative, self-conscious intellectual element in us. This psychological element combines with the emotional to make the personality which is the distinctive "human" consciousness in man. Thus the psychological-emotional life-atoms awaiting the Ego on the threshold of rebirth are used to make the first garment or vehicle which the Ego weaves around itself as it emerges from the higher spiritual realms. Then the lower vital forces come into play — the life-atoms of ethereal or astral and physical substance guided by their formative tendencies ingrained into them in the last life, and further strengthened in these by their transmigrations during the inter-human interval.

It is the life-atoms which carry the Skandhas referred to previously. As already said, the life-atoms are, during their association with the reincarnated entity, impressed or imprinted or shaped with the physical, emotional, and mental trends of the life being lived. What their own transmigrations are after the dissolution of the body at death will depend on {be influenced by} these Skandhas {or attributes of character}. And when the life-atoms return to the entity about to reincarnate it is these Skandhas imbodyed, so to say, in the life-atoms that will furnish the nature and characteristics of the mental, emotional, and physical vestures of its new Earth-life.

Again, referring to the process of birth itself we are told:

The reincarnating entity, now rebecome a bundle of energies, is drawn magnetically and psychically to the human womb and family where vibrational conditions most similar to its own exist. Its lowest energies connect magnetically with... a human generative particle when the appropriate time comes; and from that instant the reincarnating entity overshadows that particle, as the latter grows into human stature.

— *Ibid.*, March, 1932, p. 194

Here we naturally encounter popular theories of heredity, which nowadays is supposed to be the determining cause of all our characteristics of mind and body. Heredity, however, simply pushes a little further back, without explaining, inequalities in human destiny. Why are some people born in the slums and others with every possible advantage? It is such facts as these that do more to discourage the average person than anything else, and they cry out for an explanation.

But when we remember the selective — because psycho-magnetic — qualities of the various psychological, emotional, astral, and vital sheaths, garments, or vehicles already, even before conception, formed around the Ego, we see that a reincarnating entity imbodyes automatically from its family stream of heredity exactly those tendencies which correspond to its own nature developed in the past. Thus viewed, our so-called heredity is seen for what it actually is, only another name for the effect of creative energies, high or low, generated by the individual itself in its own past. The family and the parents give but the inevitable channel through which these self-generated energies work themselves out as consequences in character, temperament, and physical constitution.

At this point we encounter another instance of Nature's creative processes of repetition. For, just as the Ego on leaving the body sees, as above described, a living picture of the just ended Earth-life, so immediately before it reincarnates, this process is repeated. The events of the coming life are then all foreseen by the Being standing upon the threshold of human existence. The necessity and the justice of all that will happen in the coming life are accepted by the Spiritual Ego, which then enters willingly upon a fresh attempt to guide and urge the human personality through conscience and love into the ways of self-knowledge and self-mastery.

It is interesting to remember that because our whole nature is made up of the life-atoms used by us in many past lives, we are practically the same personality of our past life: yet, because all these life-atoms come together at birth in fresh combinations and after manifold new experiences of their own, in harmony with our own past, our new personality is quite different from the one we had grown so tired of when death kindly compelled us to lay it down like a worn-out tool.

Is it not wonderful to be forever the same, and yet forever new? — forever developing and changing and perfecting the consciousness-stuff and energy-stuff, and the matters of all grades through which and by means of which as spiritual Egos we work?

As to the length of the period between incarnations, we quote again from the same teacher:

“How long a time as an average exists between birth and rebirth?”  
Usually about a hundred times the length of the life last lived on earth... For

instance, if a human being has lived twenty years on earth, he will have two thousand years more or less in Devachan before he returns;... That is the rule; there are exceptions, of course.

— *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, xxv, p. 179

This brief sketch may give some idea, however incomplete, of the complex and compound energies and processes which are concerned in the accomplishment of Reincarnation. And yet, too, it is all so majestically simple when once the basic principles of evolution are grasped. These are: the unity of all beings; the cyclic and periodic nature of all manifested life; and the obligation of all entities — supernally high or elementally humble, which make up the Cosmos — to pass continually forward upon an ever ascending spiral of reïmbodiment.

### THE ETHICAL INFLUENCE OF A BELIEF IN REINCARNATION

A survey of our world of today suggests that the keynote of these times might be appropriately regarded as irresponsible individualism. Anything, almost, which contributes to the *free development of personality* would appear to be allowable the results, as we see them recorded in the daily press or meet them in our vain efforts at moral and social reform, are deplorable.

We need a new basis for the ethical education of the individual. Churches, educational institutions, social service measures, prison reform, all are useful: they serve to keep things going. But until the individual *child* can be trained from infancy to a rational, heart-satisfying, irresistible belief, {philosophy of life,} growing out of the facts of Nature and of life, there will be no constructive, lasting improvement in the moral character of our civilization.

Such a rational and well-nigh irresistible basis for education and living is offered in Theosophy. Reincarnation is but one of the many comprehensive and searching truths which it contains. Every one of the laws it points out anew is grounded in Nature, and evidence for the existence of these laws is drawn from our experiences of the life around us. There is no science or philosophy in the Western world today, outside of Theosophy, which can explain life itself or show an inevitable basis in Nature for morals and ethics. Theosophy, if one will study it conscientiously and fairly as one would study chemistry or music in the hope of mastering either, will solve our every problem. It will give a purpose to all living and an individual objective both satisfactory and inspiring.

Reincarnation, which means as already said the periodic rebirth of the Spiritual Ego as a human being on this Earth until it has exhausted the Earth's evolutionary possibilities for it — Reincarnation is but one aspect

of the general law of Reimbodiment. Reimbodiment itself is an expression of the universal rhythm of life — that ‘law’ or *habit* of cyclic progression in the Universe which we see manifested everywhere as ebb and flow, night and day, sleeping and waking, life and death, the rise and fall of the seasons, the birth, growth, and decay of nations. To express it again in the words of G. de Purucker:

...periodicity is manifest everywhere throughout the entirety of Mother Nature; and not merely on our physical plane alone, but on the invisible planes and in the invisible spheres as much as in the physical.

Death and birth for humans are equally cyclical or periodical in character. We humans are no exception. Why should we be? How could we be? We are not different from the universe. We are not out of it or apart from it. We are individual parts of it, inseparable parts. Man cannot free himself from the universe; nothing can. Whatever he does, he does of necessity, first as a creator of his destiny, which being progressively enacted in the bosom of the universe, of necessity is swayed by the law of periodicity ruling therein. Everything everywhere is subject likewise to the same overruling law. — G. de Purucker: “Theosophy, the Mother of Religions, Philosophies, and Sciences,” *The Theosophical Path*, March, 1932, pp. 191-2

Let us now examine what a belief in Reincarnation ethically implies. First of all it changes a man’s idea of himself. Probably he will think first of his own past. He accepts the idea that he has lived many times and thus must have had a share, no matter how important, or even how obscure it may have been, in building some of the great civilizations of Earth. This gives him a sense of spaciousness, of really being somebody, which our modern standardized living and the ‘born in sin’ teaching had almost crushed out of him. Perhaps he has lost faith in religion. But Theosophy will give him a deep, inner vision of the Heart of the Universe, that glorious Sun of Universal Being of which every creature is a ray in its inmost essence. He will come gradually to feel his oneness with this Universal Life; and so the religious instinct will be reborn in his heart and he will be consoled and uplifted by a sense of union with the Heart of Divinity.

Later he will look around at his environment in this new light, realizing now that it is just what he prepared for himself in a former life; and a feeling of creative moral energy is born. *Why not change it, better it, since he has the power?* Initiative springs up in him, and the beginning of a regenerated activity. Next, he will turn to his relationships: his friends and — his enemies. Who are these people? Mere casual attachments? Why, no; of course not. They are his associates of eternity! Even this man he so heartily dislikes — that is because he has disliked him before in past lives, and the dislike has been growing, till now it fairly darkens his pleasure in life. Is this to go on increasing through all his future lives,

leading to what dark ending no one can divine? Thinking like this he will begin to see the matter as his own problem rather than one of environment, and nine people out of ten will put all their moral ingenuity into solving it; and they will enjoy working it out. It is quite likely that they will end in understanding and loving him who is now a mere thorn in the flesh; and far from wishing to see the last of him he will be added to the number of those who are to pass onward and upward with him onto the next stage of evolution.

Marriage appears, under the pressure of modern conditions, to be growing more complicated and difficult with every decade. There is a sense of impermanence about it. Young people have no teaching that shows them any way to connect sex-life with ethical law. Sex is one of the facts of human existence which seems always to have defied moral law; so much so that many who are really sound at heart have given up in despair before the contradictions involved in this problem. Nowhere else, perhaps, do we drift as helplessly as in this one relation.

But young people who accept Reincarnation come to realize that sex inheres only in the impermanent and perishable part of them, the lower personality; and that happiness which is permanent, which lasts in its essentials for always, belongs to the divine, imperishable Reincarnating Ego. They will be led to test this teaching by study in history and biography, by observation in the lives of those around them; by trying it out in thought and action in their own difficulties. In doing this they will make wonderful discoveries concerning the more enduring aspects of companionship and love which, could they be assured to the youth of the world, would revolutionize society.

Of course, too, young people who believe that they have been together before in other lives and that their present difficulties are the outcome of mistakes in the past on Earth; and that if they slide out of the situation now it will only be postponing the settlement — aggravated the next time by compound karmic interest — such young people will have the commonsense instinct to tackle the problem at once and work it out to a happy ending. As for the harmonious marriages we need only observe that in all human relationships and all forms of enduring love, the teaching of Reincarnation throws a yet more beautiful and sacred light upon the reality of any true partnership in the higher purposes of Evolution. “Marriage when it is real,” said Katherine Tingley in *The Wine of Life*, “is profoundly sacred; then no power on Earth can break up the home.” But to make it real, the love upon which it is built must have its source in the spiritual nature. So it is seen that a belief in Reincarnation, when truly studied and understood, puts an end to all drifting, which is such a prevailing moral weakness of today.

Then how differently do the parents who believe in reincarnation regard their children from the usual parent, who either thinks that his

children ‘belong’ to him or looks upon them merely as the chance-born product of animal evolution. For Theosophy brings into the home the beautiful light of the essential Divinity of man. The child that is expected in the home of those who so believe is not a mere ‘occurrence;’ it is a divine event. The being about to reincarnate is returning from the heaven-world and brings the atmosphere of a holier and purer sphere into the lives of those to whom it is entrusted. Both mother and father share in one of the deepest and most sacred mysteries of life. So they will not only prepare themselves to give their children the highest possible vehicles for their re-entry into this Earth-life, but they will undertake with joy that wider preparation for wise and sympathetic guidance of their children through their karmic problems inherited from their past incarnations, of which they are themselves such an important part. How much they can do for their children’s and their own evolution in this spirit can easily be seen by the thoughtful inquirer. And one need not do much thinking to understand what such an attitude can mean in the lives of both parents and children. These ideas have been most wonderfully expressed by Katherine Tingley in *The Wine of Life*, from which the following lines are taken:

...For those who partake of this wisdom, and whose will is set to live this life, are fed at the Master’s table....

A home established on these lines would have within it indeed the kingdom of heaven. Storms might rage without: trials, poverty, struggles, tragedies, disappointments of all kinds, might assail its peace from without; but no matter how many or how great they might be, they could not daunt the builders of this home; who have heaven within, reflected in a home life which is the expression of the Higher Law. Their children would be born into the wonder of the new happiness with which its atmosphere would be filled. Before the birth of each, they would make preparations for it in much more than the ordinary sense. They married understandingly, this couple, with knowledge of the laws of life: they were companions, and not merely lovers. A child is born to them, but their states of mind were fashioning its character before it saw the light; the influence of all the harmony, peace, hope, courage which they have brought into their lives was preparing for it a larger, broader path than is common, and an environment fit for a soul to live in; so that it finds itself after birth not exiled in this world but at once at home in its surroundings. — pp. 68-9

We understand, when looking into the fundamental laws from which Reincarnation springs, that evolution is a moral — a spiritual, rather than a mere physical process. Physical evolution is but the outermost and least important side of the matter. Of what use ultimately, a healthy and beautiful body if used for evil ends? And how many invalids, and even people who are perhaps outwardly unattractive have contributed treasures of inspiration to the world’s need! We have only to recall Socrates or Dante to see the fallacy of the popular point of view. It is indeed a well-known

fact that physical perfection has never been necessary and seldom present in cases of moral and intellectual genius. On the other hand, how frequently it happens that physical beauty is a source of misfortune or moral backsliding. Character is the spiritual fabric woven by evolution. It is the only thing we can take out of life when we go: it is what we bring back as our heritage from the past when we return to incarnation on Earth.

The whole modern philosophy of “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die,” has grown out of the loss of realization that we are imperishable Spiritual Beings in our innermost. Materialistic science has educated the present generation to regard themselves largely as highly developed offshoots of the ape family. The demoralizing effect of this teaching found nothing in religion with the authority of Life and Nature back of it that could counteract its degenerative influence. That was one of the main reasons why the Mahâtmas started the Theosophical Society through H. P. Blavatsky when this materialistic influence was approaching its apex in the last century. Theosophy has been steadily at work now for over fifty years. {Now a century and a half.} Not only its published teaching, but its potent invisible thought-influence has united with the spiritual instincts of humanity to free us gradually from this nightmare reaction against the superstitions of the past. Materialism has itself been characterized by the great English scientist J. S. Haldane:

“Materialism, once a scientific theory, is now the fatalistic creed of thousands; but materialism is nothing better than a superstition on the same level as belief in witches and devils.”

— Quoted in *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, I, p. 9

Theosophy shows the true spiritual ideal of evolution and its practical working out in all sides of life — spiritual, intellectual, moral, and physical. In Reincarnation the ethical side of evolution is seen to be paramount, for here justice, moral consequences, growth in spiritual power are the decisive influences. None can develop the best within him unless he grows spiritually. A power gained through lives of effort and used merely for selfish gratification withers, for it will be checked in later lives by the effects in suffering and difficulties of environment consequent upon that very selfishness. And the teaching of Reincarnation makes it clear that the best way to make genius and character permanent and divine is to consecrate them to the service of humanity. It is in such wise that the great Saviors of history have been able to sway the minds and hearts of whole Races of men.

We must not leave this subject without noticing another important ethical effect of this belief, and that is in the lives of older people. The great majority look with dread upon the coming of old age, for to most, if it does not mean either feebleness or actual physical and mental deterioration, at least it entails being ‘put upon the shelf.’ But Theosophy

shows why it is that old age should be a most important part of life, as the following will explain:

...the Reincarnating Ego... is not really fully incarnated until a short time before the physical body dies, which means that there is constant possibility for psychical, mental, and spiritual development almost to the time of dissolution of the physical body in any one physical life. In other words, old age is not, as is sometimes supposed, incapable of learning, and merely a period in human existence where the best is all past and the future holds no hope. The reverse is true, for, theoretically, up to a short time before physical dissolution a man should progress steadily in spiritual and intellectual faculty. — G. de Purucker: "Theosophy, the Mother of Religions, Philosophies, and Sciences," *The Theosophical Path*, March, 1932, p. 194

These words bring indeed a new and heartening message for us all. The wise ancients recognized this truth in maintaining that young men were for action and the old for counsel. One of the tragedies of modern life is the disproportion between the roles of youth and even of middle age — but the truth of Reincarnation as presented in the passage above restores the balance. This is yet another case where the teachings of Theosophy give back hope and dignity and happiness to discouraged humanity.

We must, however, not overlook the fact that to realize at its best this ideal for old age, it is necessary to so live in harmony with the divine in youth and middle age that old age may be the perfect harvest of this earlier spiritual development. Yet even so, an aging man or woman, meeting Theosophy for the first time, will find the practice of its teachings a wonderful creative power to restore purpose and energy and stimulate spiritual advancement in the years that remain.

The whole ethical outlook of a belief in Reincarnation has been expressed in the following passage from *Man in Evolution* by G. de Purucker:

...It is through and by Reincarnation as a natural fact, that we learn the beauty of the inner life and thereby grow, developing a larger comprehension, not only of ourselves, but of the loveliness inherent in the harmony of the universal laws. For there is back of all things beauty, and bliss, and truth.

What men call evil and misfortune and accidents, and the disastrous phenomena of the physical world which sometimes occur, arise out of the conflicts of the wills and powers of the various hosts of imperfect but evolving entities, one of such hosts being what we collectively call humanity; although, as I have just stated, the Root of Things is simply beauty, and bliss, and harmony. — Vol. II, p. 442

Above all else Reincarnation demonstrates that Oneness is the great reality of the Universe. It is the basic and the supreme fact of Nature. It



governs all things in both their essence and their evolution. The first of all the elementary propositions of the Ancient Wisdom is that “all men, in their inmost spiritual essence, are not merely in kinship, but in utter and unspeakable union,” to quote Dr. de Purucker. And we are also reminded by him that the most fundamental error that can be made is to deny either directly in thought or word, or indirectly in action, this truth of the utter oneness in essence of all beings. It is, we might almost say, to deny the Divine Source in which we all live and move and have our being. In *The Secret Doctrine* H. P. Blavatsky has given us the foundation in spiritual nature of this truth. She establishes

The fundamental unity of all souls with the Universal Oversoul... and the obligatory pilgrimage for every soul — a spark of the former — through the Cycle of Necessity, in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic Law.... The pivotal doctrine of the Esoteric Philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in man, save those won by his own Ego through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations. [Metempsychosis is a word of wider meaning than Reincarnation. It refers to the re embodiment of the Spiritual Ego in other spheres than that of earth — in the inner, spiritual worlds.]

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 17

We thus see that all creatures have the same origin in the Universal One Life, and that each class must work out its own salvation under the same conditions for all its class. Man at present is working out the purpose of evolution through the Cycle of Necessity called on this Earth Reincarnation. In these facts we see the basic equality of all beings in origin, growth, and destiny. For at the very heart of every one, of whatever grade or degree of evolution, there dwells a god-spark, a beam of the Oversoul or the Universal Life. In the kingdoms below man, this god-spark burns with but a feeble, instinctual light. In man it has increased and thrown out a self-conscious ray which lights his path clearly when he will let it and makes of him a responsible moral being. In the Mahâtmas this god-spark has expanded into the light of semi-godhood, self-conscious union with the One Life; and in those Beings beyond and above the Mahâtmas, the spark has gloriously flamed out into pure godhood. So on and up the mighty Stairway of Being which mounts out of the reach of our present spiritual vision and disappears into the glory of the invisible worlds.

The most beautiful side of this teaching lies in the essential responsibility of each range of conscious Beings to those beneath them on the evolutionary scale. The gods brood over all planes of being, shedding inspiration and life upon the whole. The Mahâtmas, their self-evolved servants, are first of all Helpers and Elder Brothers of Humanity, and although They have graduated from human life and its lessons and might

pass on to higher spheres of evolution if They would, They choose to remain near humanity to foster its spiritual development, helping the gods in their protection and guidance of men. From time to time, as already said, the Mahâtmas send out Messengers to teach in a new form the ancient truths of the Universe which during the course of ages have become distorted or forgotten. H. P. Blavatsky was such a Messenger and the Theosophical Society is the channel through which the Ancient Wisdom, Theosophy, after having been lost to the Western world for almost twenty centuries, is again restored to humanity.

A further development of this aspect of Universal Oneness in connection with Reincarnation lies in our own individual responsibility to the kingdoms next beneath us in evolution. In reference to the constant change and flux among the atoms forming our bodies, and in their dissolution and transmigration after man's physical death, the following is related to the above idea:

Man's emanations thus build up the animal world; the animals feed on these life-atoms of many kinds; physical, vital, astral, mental, and what not.... These life-streams issuing from him give life and evolutionary impulse and characteristics to the entities of the kingdoms below the human, because these sub-human kingdoms are the evolved productions of the thoughts and vital emanations of the human race.

— *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, p. 54

Oneness, then, is not an ideal merely or just a sentiment, but is a living fact. And all of our collective miseries can be traced to ignorance that oneness actually is a law of our being. Not understanding this we are forever disturbing, by selfishness of all kinds, the harmonious development of ourselves and of the {human} Race. It is through Reincarnation, checked and guided by Karma, (which is fully explained elsewhere) and helped by his Elder Brothers and Those above Them, that humanity at last learns the supreme lesson of human evolution,— that only through selflessness and impersonal love can we achieve freedom, happiness, and power.

The Theosophical conception of oneness, which man learns through the long course of his evolutionary progress through reincarnations among his fellows is thus perfectly expressed in *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, where Dr. de Purucker gives us the cosmic basis of oneness:

When man realizes that he is one with all that is, inwards and outwards, high and low; that he is one with them, not merely as members of a community are one, not merely as individuals of an army are one, but like the molecules of our own flesh,... like the electrons of the atom, composing one *unity* — not a mere union but a spiritual *unity* — then he sees Truth.

— pp. 21-22

## REINCARNATION AS A HISTORICAL BELIEF

It is a fact surprising to nearly everyone in Western countries that Reincarnation was taught practically universally over the Earth at the time when Christ was born. But this is only because we have not been educated to associate this doctrine historically with the Jews or with the ancient Greeks and Romans. It is a still more surprising fact that it was accepted by some of the Church Fathers and prevailed so widely in early Christendom that, as late as the middle of the sixth century after Christ, it was necessary to convene a special Church Council in order finally to suppress it. After that it faded from the intellectual and religious life of Europe and, though held sporadically down the centuries by a sect here and there or by a few great thinkers and mystics, it was not really restored to Western thought till it was reintroduced in the teachings of Theosophy. Now, after having been spread abroad for over half a century, {now a century and a quarter} by the Theosophical Society it is rapidly regaining its position as a world belief.

Reincarnation has always been a characteristic part of the leading religions of the East, as every student of them knows. We cannot even think of the Brahmanical or Buddhist teachings without instantly remembering the tenet as taught therein. In Buddhism, owing among other things to its lack of bigotry, the teaching of human reïmbodiment has remained closer than in any other religion to the pure form of the belief. In exoteric Brahmanism it has been greatly disfigured, as seen in one of its excrescences already noted, the erroneous doctrine of the transmigration of the human Ego into the bodies of animals.

Many of the greatest men of antiquity taught Reincarnation, among them being such great names as those of Orpheus, Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Apollonius of Tyana, with Ennius and Seneca among the Romans. We find the doctrine in ancient Persia, also among the Druids, and in the Germany of classical times; while it was a cornerstone of the grand mystical religion of old Egypt. In China it was a part of Taoism, and its hold was deepened by the spread of Buddhism there.

The student may wonder at the varied forms which this teaching has assumed in different epochs of human thought. The following suggests how changes and differences took their rise:

...the general doctrine of Reïmbodiment took several forms or aspects, which were severally taught at different times and in different places, emphasis being laid on this or on that other form or aspect. This is very natural; for this general doctrine which covers the entire field of the history of the soul has a number of differing mystical sides to it; and at different times one or more of these forms or aspects were emphasized in teaching — sometimes, as time went on and the great background was more or less lost sight of, such or another form or aspect rising to practical exclusion of the

larger view. This accounts for the differences in form of presentation that the general doctrine has had in the various literatures of the world. — G. de Purucker: “Theosophy, the Mother of Religions, Philosophies, and Sciences,” *The Theosophical Path*, Nov., 1930, p. 381

Coming down to those periods among the Mediterranean peoples which led up to the Christian era we naturally think first of the Jews, whose religious ideas have done so much to influence and to alter the true spirit of Christ’s message. In the Old Testament we find very few convincing statements even as to human survival after death, at least not in our popular conception of immortality; thereby showing how inadequate are those scriptures, as represented by Christian tradition, to give us a truly comprehensive picture of Jewish thought at the time. For reincarnation was expounded in the Qabbâlâh, the esoteric philosophy of the Jews — their secret, mystic teaching; so did Philo, one of the greatest philosophers belonging to the Jewish race, and a renowned Neo-Platonist. So, also, did the celebrated Jewish historian Josephus. For Josephus was a Pharisee, and he himself recorded that this body believed in and taught Reincarnation. (See his *Jewish War*, Book II, ch. viii. and Book III, ch. viii.)

Dr. de Purucker, in one of his public lectures has told us of this belief of Josephus:

...in his *Jewish War*, Book III, ch. viii, sec. 5, Josephus reproduces his own address to the body of men under his command during their fighting against the Roman troops under Vespasian; and remembering that Josephus himself was a Pharisee, the remarkably clear declarations in these passages of a belief in Reincarnation show that the men to whom he spoke must have been perfectly well acquainted with it and that it was a commonly accepted belief of the day. — *The Theosophical Path*, Nov., 1930, pp. 425-6

These facts need not particularly astonish us, as reïmbodiment and reincarnation in some form were doctrines in vogue at that time, as always, among all the peoples surrounding the Jewish nation. Here and there throughout the Bible, even the St. {King} James version shows that the idea was in the background of the writer’s or speaker’s thought, as when the disciples asked Jesus: “Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John, ix, 1). But how could the man have sinned, excepting in a former life, to have been *born* blind? The disciples evidently took the truth of Reincarnation for granted, nor did Jesus rebuke them for this in his reply. In Matthew, xl, 14, Jesus said of John the Baptist: “And if ye will receive it, this was Elias, which was for to come,” a statement which he seems to repeat in Mark, ix, 13.

These things were of course unsuspected by those earnest men of the Middle Ages (almost totally ignorant of historical developments as they were) who interpreted the Old Testament according to their own

unavoidable limitations. But Theosophy calls attention to this aspect of Jewish history so long overlooked.

A true picture of the intellectual world in the early days of Christianity is illuminating indeed! Such a picture can be constructed from materials supplied by many great writers who, though knowing nothing of Theosophy (like Legge, for example, who wrote *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*), yet present the most telling evidence that many doctrines, always considered in our education as so characteristic of Christianity, are direct or distorted reflections of the Mystery-Teachings of the Archaic Wisdom.

The two principal sources from which early Christianity derived — only to disfigure — its mystical doctrines, such as the Virgin-birth, the passion of Christ, the Eucharist, Apostolic Succession, and others, were the Gnostic philosophy and the Mithraic Mystery-Religion. These two systems were genuine developments of the Primeval Esoteric Wisdom, and they flourished in the early centuries of our era. Mithraism, indeed, very nearly became the accepted religion of the Roman Empire, as Dr. de Purucker tells us:

...the Mithraic Religion in the third century of the Christian Era had reached such a stage of development that it narrowly escaped from becoming the dominant state-religion of the wide-flung Roman Empire. It had so much that was similar, both in doctrine and form, to early Christianity that this fact was commented upon by all the intelligent writers of the time. But, as it happened, Christianity by reason of a number of interesting causes finally prevailed instead of it; and I think that the main reason was that... a religion of ceremonial and formal type, always makes a larger appeal to the general populace than does one which requires some amount of abstract thinking and some searching of the heart. — *Ibid.*, Oct., 1931, pp. 291-2

With its dogmas of the vicarious atonement, salvation by faith, and the practices which grew out of these beliefs, Christianity relieved the great mass of men from strenuous moral effort, and lent itself to the designs of temporal and political aggrandizement.

Reincarnation was a leading tenet of Gnosticism and formed an integral part of the Mystery-Teachings of Mithraism. From these influential and popular sources it was taken over by many early Christians. Several of the greatest of the early Church Fathers, as already stated, taught it in some form; notably Bishop Synesius, and even earlier, Origen and Clement (later Saint Clement of the Christian Church) — all of Alexandria, and the two latter believed to have been initiated into the Mystery-School of their day. It looks as if these wise men were striving to keep alive in the new church a link with the living Wisdom-Religion. The Manicheans, a mystical sect of Hither Asia in those early days, professed Reincarnation, and adopting what might be regarded as the protective

coloring of Christianity, had their share in popularizing an aspect of Reincarnation. This sect bore an offshoot as late as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: the Albigenses of Languedoc, who revived the teaching. But it had then been anathema for about seven hundred years and they were, although with difficulty, savagely exterminated.

A long list could be cited of scholars, poets, and mystics of every country and century in Europe who have believed in and taught Reincarnation. If the reader is interested, an account of them with quotations in evidence of their belief will be found in a fascinating book, *Reincarnation: A Study of Forgotten Truth*, by E.D. Walker, {and *Reincarnation: The Phoenix-Fire Mystery* by S. Cranston and J. Pope.} The whole subject of Reincarnation as a historical belief is a subject worth looking into if only for the surprising and interesting facts, so long suppressed or forgotten, concerning the origin of what we call Christianity.

## REINCARNATION AND HUMAN DESTINY

Our modern point of view in regard to any new ‘proposition’ might perhaps be summed up in the often heard query, “Where will it get me?” And characteristically, every inquirer will naturally wish to know what the individual goal is towards which this evolution of character through many lives is leading us.

One of the first changes that a study of Theosophy makes in one’s outlook is that there are no absolute beginnings and no final endings to evolution or to ourselves. There are only relative beginnings and temporary endings. Everything develops by stages, and it is only the forms through which these stages of evolution are accomplished that pass away. Evolution itself is periodic, as heretofore frequently noted. There is an interval of activity followed by a time of rest; then another period of activity with its consequent period of rest. Thus onward and upward for ever.

The beginning of our period of evolution as human beings took place on this planet as briefly sketched previously and more fully treated elsewhere. First came the animal soul or vesture and its physical body, built by the lower, instinctively structural energies of Nature following the karmic lines of our planetary organism. At a certain point in this process of early development, when the animal vehicle had at last been made ready, the latent fire of mind was awakened therein by those higher beings who had been human in a former Great Period of Evolution.

As one candle flame will light many others while remaining itself undiminished, so was human mentality mystically enkindled by our more advanced, divine Brothers. Symbolically we can regard the prepared animal-physical vehicle of man as the candle, and this aggregated host of higher Beings as a great Spiritual Flame. Descending to Earth, this host of

divine Beings who had once been men brought *mystically* to the waiting vehicles the flame of Divine Mind. The latent faculties of the animal-man were kindled into the first feeble spark of intellect. The Race then became truly human — men — thinkers, and self-conscious. They were then first able to relate themselves self-consciously to their environment. In each one woke up that particular kind of self-awareness which feels, “I am I, and no one else.” From that time onward they became morally responsible for themselves, and their evolution passed from the overlordship of Nature into their own hands. Henceforth what their bodies became, in what direction their evolution proceeded, was a matter of self-directed effort.

But these newly awakened men, who were really only just starting on their evolution as full human beings, were not abandoned to their own devices. They were watched over and guided and protected for many ages by the same Great Beings who had initiated their birth as men, as is fully explained by H. P. Blavatsky in Volume II of *The Secret Doctrine*.

We must not forget, however, that all this happened not by chance or in any haphazard fashion. Our Earth is the direct reïmbodiment, after its own appropriate period of rest — of a world which preceded it, and of which it is the exact consequence, or karmic result. All these processes of upbuilding and the kindling of mind, proceeded on lines inevitably resulting from the past period of evolution.

In this way we started on our evolutionary course through the channels of reincarnation, through the Cycle of Necessity. The ‘Cycle of Necessity,’ like many similar phrases used by the Theosophical teachers, is a poetic yet also literally descriptive name. It has been given to that span of evolution through which every unit of consciousness in the Universe must pass. It is entered upon by the *unself*-conscious god-spark at the beginning of a manvantara or great period of evolution throughout which it advances through reïmbodiment in ever more evolved forms and ranges of unfolding consciousness to its final achievement of self-conscious godhood at the end. Of this great spiral, human reincarnation forms some of the most important rounds.

Now, upon having become a self-conscious thinker and evolved forth the beginnings of his innate powers, humanity began to build civilizations. A certain number of those great Beings — gods they may well be called — who had been human in past worlds and remained to guide the young humanity — then incarnated among them. They became their divine instructors in the fundamental principles and concepts of religion, art, law, science, philosophy, and the conduct of life. Following its cyclic trend, the human race gradually became more deeply involved in material conditions. The personality, under the stimulating presence of the developing egoic consciousness, grew in strength. It developed a feeling of limitation and of separateness from all other beings, with passion, selfish desire, self-interest, and will-power used against others. Then arose

disharmony with the great universal ends of evolution. Man set his selfish will against the spiritual laws of the Universe. So 'sin' was born. Nature, the essence of which is balance and impersonal harmony, reacted upon him. Sorrow, struggle, and pain were the unavoidable results. War and crime came into the world and the moral atmosphere of our globe became so poisoned that the beneficent gods could no longer breathe the same air with us. But they did not desert their karmic charge. A race of demi-gods and heroes succeeded them, beings half divine and partly compounded of the lower elements which Earth was developing. They continued to lead the different Races {human life-waves} as long as they were listened to and followed. Later as we pursued the downward karmic spiral, the 'Shadowy Arc' of evolution, these semi-divine Leaders were succeeded by the Mystery-Schools which they themselves established — great seats of occult learning where the lessening number of spiritual aspirants might still be taught, and initiated into, the Divine Wisdom of the Universe. Finally religion became materialized, corrupt, and bigoted, these Mystery-Schools themselves deteriorated, and were finally extinguished. Yet still today in certain pure and inaccessible places on our globe there are centers of learning where the Mahâtmas, our Elder Brothers, and the Successors of these earlier spiritual Guides to Humanity, keep alight the Fires of Wisdom and preserve the divine teachings of Theosophy, the Light of the Ages.

This brief glimpse into our past history will prepare us for an outlook upon our destiny, which is in harmony with it. For the goal of our evolution is nothing less than godhood like this. In some remote period of the future we who are now human shall be (providing we are successful in the great spiritual race we are now running) ourselves Great Beings — gods, returning to our reimbodied planet endowed with mind, to instruct and guide our Brothers of the lower kingdoms who are now mounting the evolutionary stairway towards humanhood behind us. We are at present engaged in developing our equipment, so to speak, for that supremely important task; not only by self-mastery, but by ourselves doing the same thing to all our atoms and to all inferior creatures in our own small way. And if you stop to think about it, how could any other destiny be so natural or so inspiring!

It may be interesting to consider just here what such a destiny implies in happiness and divine self-expression for each of us. By means of Reincarnation, leading the learning Ego through self-knowledge, self-discipline, and self-directed evolution, man's human consciousness gradually expands — from merely human and limited boundaries, up through spiritual and divine reaches to a sphere finally of cosmic sweep and power. The following passage will afford us a brief glimpse into what Reincarnation has in store for the human being:



Each one is an incarnate god: each one of you is an imbodyed divinity: kin with the immortals who guide and protect the universal spheres; and you can find how self-consciously to become this inner god of you, which you yourself are in your inmost. Become it in your daily life little by little, every day a little more. Yearn to be it; yearn to become it; feel it; think of it; ponder upon it. Even the rewards that come from this discipline and this training are past ordinary comprehension.

Pause a moment in thought and realize what it means to have your consciousness virtually of cosmic reach, attaining the outmost limits of our Solar System, and this not only in the physical sphere but very much more so in the invisible worlds; try for an instant to realize what it is to send your consciousness behind the veils of the physical universe — deep, deep, deeper still, into the very heart of being; and there to learn, by becoming it, what is there, by experiencing all that is there in your own perceiving consciousness; and then, holiest thing of all, perhaps, feeling so strongly your oneness with the Boundless Universe that instinctively and with all the impulses of your life you consecrate yourself to its service — a godlike activity.

This consecration also means becoming ever greater in spiritual power, in growth of inner faculty, in inner vision, in inner hearing, in deeper feeling. Following upon this consecration the inner spiritual senses will open and develop grandly.

— G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, xxxi, pp. 316-317

Such a picture leads us at the very least to wonder: What are human beings trying to make of themselves now? Are we, if even unconsciously, trying to work out our divine destiny? Do you know that scientists say that we are using only an infinitesimal fraction of our immense supply of brain cells!? Evidently we need a bigger motive to draw out merely the crude brain-mind energies still latent within. Theosophy tells us, moreover, that there are in our brains wondrous centers of consciousness, of reminiscence, and of spiritual vision into inner spheres, that are now asleep. This truth was expressed by Katherine Tingley in the following way:

Oh, that we might realize what books of revelation are piled up on the shelves of our own lives! — *Theosophy: the Path of the Mystic*, p. 30

After thousands of incarnations we are now rounding the beginning of the upward curve, the ‘Luminous Arc’ of the evolutionary spiral. Human life as we have lived it for ages has afforded countless opportunities for growth to everyone. We repeat and repeat, and still repeat, the mistakes due to selfishness, passion, and limited personal outlook. And we are enslaved in life after life to the same old treadmill of pain, suffering, disease, and death. For man

...is compelled to follow the ever-turning wheel of life in reincarnation after reincarnation until he learns the oneness, through the developing of his

inner self into intellectual understanding, until, I say, he learns the oneness of all things visible and invisible; then having attained Vision, he is freed from the Wheel of Revolving Destiny, and attains Wisdom and Freedom: he becomes a Master of and in Life, instead of remaining a Slave of the Wheel.

— G. de Purucker, *Theosophy and Modern Science*, II, 446

There are people everywhere, pioneers in spiritual adventure, who are no longer satisfied with any form of modern life or any of its uncertain promises. Every land has its heart-hungry seekers for Reality. It was to gather all these together under the mystical aegis of Theosophy that H. P. Blavatsky was sent by the Masters of Wisdom, the Mahâtmas, to found the Theosophical Society and restore the Ancient Wisdom to humanity. Nor need men any longer follow the weary treadmill. For Theosophy has revealed the short cut to our evolutionary goal, and this short cut lies through the portals of Initiation. This fascinating subject is frequently alluded to by all the Theosophical teachers, and is very fully and clearly set forth as to its possibilities by Dr. de Purucker in his different works, from which the following brief selections have been made:

...there are in fact in evolution certain short cuts or quick methods of attaining proper results. It is possible to shorten the long, long time that the average human being takes in making the journey of evolution. This shortening of the time-period occurs when a man is initiated; and I use the word in the old, mystical sense of the Greek Mysteries of antiquity.

Evolution, as we teach it, and as it is in Nature herself — evolution is the bringing out of that which is within: the unrolling, the unwrapping, the unfolding, through development, through growth, of what the evolving entity has locked up in the core of its own being....

There is a way to stimulate evolution, to stimulate growth, therefore a short cut to comprehension, to higher things.

— G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series I, xxxvi, p. 533

...initiation is the quickening or enlivening of the soul of one who is prepared. It is a quickening process of evolution, for producing a more rapid evolving of the inner self, which otherwise an ordinary man would achieve only after many ages. — *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 241

...the Path of Light, of Self-Conquest and Growth, leads to the very Heart of Being, to the very Heart of the Universe; because, as the inner faculties develop, as they grow and expand under the inspiring rays of the inner spiritual sun, they receive and comprehend new knowledges, take wider and vaster insights into the Secret Chambers of Mother Nature.

...The mind undertakes first to understand; and, finally, knows through immediate perception the realities of the universe, and this is Masterhood.

— *Ibid.*, p. 529

... For that, Masterhood, is the end of discipleship.... — *Ibid.*, p. 528

And the following in relation to chelaship, that is the relation of the chela or disciple to the spiritual teacher who is his initiator, finds an appropriate place here:

These principles of chelaship rest on no vague or uncertain foundation, but on the vast experiences of the human race, which any man or woman can prove by looking within, looking into those founts of spiritual life, crystal clear and pellucid as the water of the mountain tarn; where he may see, as in the beautiful old Mythos of Narcissus, his own reflection, the reflection of his own Divine Self. That can never be done when and as long as the mind is covered with the dust of its enshrouding veils. It is the dust of selfish actions, the cravings of these petty egoisms, the disturbed and untranquil surface of the mind blown upon by the windy gusts of passion, which unfit it utterly to reflect the Higher Self — the Companion of Stars. That which reflects the stars, itself must be in a sense starlike; and only that which is starlike in the soul can understand the lessons of the stars....

The giver of inner Light and the giver of inner Life: such is the Teacher. How rarely is this recognized or even known in the East today.

— *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, pp. 530-533

According to Theosophy the outlook for humanity is full of promise. Although we have so much to learn, and of course there must still be many great tests through which the human race as a whole must pass before it cleanses itself of unbrotherliness and selfish passions, yet the following inspiring passage from Katherine Tingley in *Theosophy: The Path of the Mystic* will strike the appropriate keynote to our conception of man's destiny as glimpsed through even this brief study of Reincarnation.



# 3

## Karma

The Law of Consequences

Gertrude W. van Pelt, M.D.

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## INTRODUCTORY

The word *Karma* refers to one of the basic teachings of Theosophy by which it is able to explain the meaning of human life and to resolve its enigmas and seeming injustices. It is a Sanskrit term expressing tersely the principle of action and reaction, or the law of consequences. This word and the idea which it embodies are now quite commonly used in fiction and philosophy, cinema and drama. Karma is a law of unerring, never-failing justice, the workings of which stretch from the atom to the uttermost and innermost cosmic spaces; from the birth of a thought to that of a Universe.

In the New Testament, the action of Karma is formulated in the well-known words of Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, vi. 7: "For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Yet while it has been thus forcibly expressed by the great Christian Apostle and Initiate, the Christian nations, crippled by the lack of any real philosophy of life, have failed to understand the profound meaning in this formulation of the law of ethical justice. Overlooking its far-reaching action, they have accepted it superficially only and not as a working hypothesis on mental and spiritual planes. But this has been the case only in the field of moral and social life, for the law of action and reaction is so evident in the physical world that our lives are unconsciously guided by our sense of its infallibility. Day follows night unfailingly, as birth is succeeded by death. Certain common principles of mechanics expressing this law are understood and acted upon instinctively, even by children. Law and order are the rule everywhere and are constantly readjusting the disorder which ignorance and carelessness produce. The presence of this law of logical results following upon action is indeed plainly revealed over the whole range of external Nature, yet the Western world, at least, has failed to realize its universal reign and to follow the indelible record written beneath the surface.

This failure to connect human life with the universal working of the habit of action and reaction amounted, in the last century, to a veritable mental aberration. In the pursuit of Science cause and effect on the physical plane were recorded with the greatest accuracy; their relation was studied with such skill that results could be foreseen and absolutely relied upon. Out of the close observations of the transformations of Nature, in which every atom of energy had to be accounted for, grew the formulation of the law of the 'Conservation of Energy,' which, although only partly true, still disclosed the reign of trustworthy law in the physical world. Yet — beyond the borderline which our present physical senses cannot cross, there was said to be chaos — mere chance reigning, and we heard such meaningless expressions as "a fortuitous concourse of atoms"; until finally the strange conclusion was drawn that the very minds which had so carefully observed and comprehended the reactions of matter, were

themselves nothing but the secretions of that which they had studied and controlled!

This special nightmare is passing, for now we find some leading scientists asserting that ‘mind-stuff’ or consciousness, rather than matter, is the fundamental thing in the Universe. [*The Esoteric Tradition* by G. de Purucker, Vol. 1, pp. 409-410.] Nevertheless, this old error of the scientists is here cited to show how adrift humanity has been without a knowledge of the true philosophy of life. Lacking this, they have studied effects only, and through these have undertaken the difficult, indeed impossible, task of finding causes. Theosophy, the Ancient Wisdom, on the contrary, shows the causes which explain the effects we everywhere observe.

To understand Karma, it must first be clearly perceived that the Cosmos, the Universe, is a unit — one single Organism composed of an infinite number of lesser organisms in an immense variety of grades of consciousness and development, all united into a single Whole by the One Consciousness which includes and is common to them all. This sublime idea is well illustrated by man himself, who is a universe, a cosmos, in miniature. Is he not composed of an almost infinite number of centers of life or consciousness — atoms, molecules, cells, organs, ganglia, etc. — under the unifying overlordship of the human individual consciousness, which pervades and unifies and directs them all? And just as a felon on the finger is felt by the whole body, so we are taught that a thought of hatred or a throb of mental anguish has its due effect throughout the greater Cosmic Organism. For the law of action and reaction, of cause and effect, so evident in the limited sphere of mere physical life, is simply an evidence on the surface of what takes place in the inner spiritual and causal realms. The physicist perceives only that action and reaction are equal in the world of matter, but the eye of the spiritual seer discovers the same law acting behind the scenes, and acting with far greater dynamic energy. In *The Key to Theosophy*, H. P. Blavatsky defines karma as

...the *Ultimate Law* of the Universe, the source, origin and fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature. Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, on the physical, mental and spiritual planes of being. As no cause remains without its due effect from greatest to least, from a cosmic disturbance down to the movement of your hand, and as like produces like, *Karma* is that unseen and unknown law *which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably* each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. — p. 201, orig. ed.

From the foregoing it is plainly seen that Karma, or, as it is perhaps at times also spelled, Karman, is the ultimate law of the Universe because every entity contained within the Cosmos is a vital part of it. Every thought and action affects, to the degree of energy involved, every other entity,

which inevitably reacts in corresponding degree upon the thinker of the thought or the performer of the action.

It not infrequently happens that an evil intent is thwarted on the physical plane. A man, for instance, may be filled with hatred for another; he may even go so far as to plan to kill him. But the object of his evil passion, we will imagine, suddenly dies. Thoughts and desires, however, are energies, the more real and powerful the nearer their momentum approaches to expression. In this case the death of the intended victim turns that dark torrent back upon its creator, within whose nature this strong evil energy has been brought into being. Shall this force, though physically unexpressed, produce no effect? Remembering the law of action and reaction, we see that can never be. It is at least plain that the hater has poisoned his own nature. He has altered his character for the worse, and the process of repairing the damage is certain to be a painful one.

It is here that the twin doctrine to Karma comes in to make possible the complete process of man's evolution — the doctrine of *Reincarnation*. This means the rebirth of the spiritual part of man again and again on this Earth. At each rebirth or reincarnation he has a new body which is the karmic result of the thoughts and actions of his past lives. And as with his body so with his environment: it is the unerring consequence of what he has desired, worked for, or failed in, during past lives on this Earth. Thus by living again and again here on Earth and experiencing the exact effects of what he has made himself in the past, he gradually learns how to control and develop his own energies and faculties, and so begins to re-create his destiny. This is what Katherine Tingley called "self-directed evolution." But this wonderful process of self-salvation would not be possible unless all are reborn to reap in character and environment what they have sown in thoughts, desires, and actions in previous lives. Men do not "gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles": neither do they sow a crop in one place and reap it in another.

So in some future life on Earth these two enemies pictured above must meet again, drawn together by those very unexpended forces which connected them before; for hate is as magnetic and dynamic as love. Then, who can tell? — will the rebound return as hate to the one who sent it forth? Or will the victim of this evil energy be great enough to work the magic transmutation, by the divine alchemy of compassion — great enough to transform hate into love? However this may eventuate, the energy brought into being must produce its effect, it may be through many lives, until equilibrium or harmony is restored. We little realize with what dynamics we so idly play in this magnetic ocean of life in which we live. Action and reaction, cause and effect, energy and its consequences, balance each other not only in the outer world of physical effects but also through the inner, spiritual and causal worlds where moral and ethical



forces act with mathematical precision. This is the message which Theosophy brings regarding the majestic law of Karma, this merciful law which is our teacher, friend, and savior.

## **IS KARMA BLIND FORCE?**

It has been stated that to understand karma, the Universe must be recognized as an organic Whole. If this were not the case, its various parts could not act and react upon each other. Take the human body as an example. Through it runs a complex system of nerves, arteries, and avenues for the circulation of electro-vital forces, intimately and instantly connecting every organ, cell, and atom with every other. Let the foot slip and immediately the counteracting muscles seek to restore the balance. The eye closes automatically if a foreign substance threatens to enter it. The reaction is perfect because the body is an organism. Further it is necessary to observe that every cell in this organism is an individual life under the control of a higher center. In the case of a muscle, for instance, all the cells act together; and similarly in an organ. So by a series of grades the cells come under the control of more and more highly developed centers up to the brain, and through that to an invisible center of intelligence which unifies and coordinates all the functions of this marvelous mechanism, making of it an organism. Then the body itself is part of a greater organism, man himself. Men collectively form humanity. Above this are innumerable hosts of beings gradually mounting, each grade vitally connected with and responsible for the grade below it, and helped by the grade above it. Thus we have beings above the human reaching up to gods; then above them, super-gods, planetary spirits; rulers of Solar Systems; greater ones holding together groups of solar systems; up and up to a Ruler of a Universe and ever up to THAT, the UNKNOWN, behind all manifestation. Rivers of Life connect all these infinite grades of beings, like a network of nerves through which run vital currents unceasingly. And this Mighty Being fills all Space, is indeed Space itself. Or we can say that Space consists of conscious beings of infinite types interlinked and interdependent.

This concept may seem strange to many because unfamiliar, but let the mind dwell upon it and it will gradually become clear that unless the Universe was an organic unit, it could not hold together. The chaos which some of our physical scientists have imagined would actually exist, and there would not be the beautiful order and harmony which we have come to rely upon in those celestial bodies which we see apparently floating in an ocean of ether — bodies indeed of divine Beings. The Universe is truly what its name implies — a Whole — and this is what Theosophists mean when they declare that “Oneness is a Fact in Nature.” This identity of origin and nature, this “one in many” and “many in one” makes not only

possible but inevitable the interaction of all the parts of this whole and their reaction to each other.

G. de Purucker in *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, pages 21-22, presents the same idea, as follows:

When man realizes that he is one with all that is, inwards and outwards, high and low; that he is one with them, not merely as members of a community are one, not merely as individuals of an army are one, but like the molecules of our own flesh, like the atoms of the molecule, like the electrons of the atom, composing one unity — not a mere union but a spiritual *unity* — then he sees Truth.

We see that interdependence is a fundamental principle in the Universe, and we shall find that this basic principle is worked out in all parts of the universal Organism. We have shown the human body as an illustration of it. The atom, the Solar System, the Galaxy, all in their structure and their workings proclaim the basic reality of harmony and interdependence as the underlying, regulating principle throughout all life.

Every action, then, every expenditure of energy, whether physical, mental, or moral, has its due effect upon this underlying harmony, this basic balance and interdependence. Selfish thoughts or actions disturb the harmony and suffering in the near or far future results. We see all around us those whose disappointments and struggles in unfavorable environments are the result of ignorance and wrongdoing in this or past lives. The condition exists in some degree in the lives of all of us, for everyone has made mistakes in past lives, as we are making them now. Dr. G. de Purucker has put the matter very forcibly in *Man in Evolution*, ch. 14, “The Rationale of Reincarnation,” p. 177:

Everything that you do, everything that you think, is a productive cause, affecting you and affecting those around you, yet leaving the seeds and the fruits of such thoughts and actions in yourself. This is common knowledge. You have laid up for yourself in past lives treasures for happiness; but you may have also laid up for yourself a treasure house of another kind, and you are doing similarly in our present life.

But — although karma is spoken of as a law, there is no lawgiver, no overruling entity, who decrees this or that. Rather is it a quality inherent in the very nature of things. The Ancient Teaching is that every action is the result of a previous cause, and then becomes a cause for a future action and so on indefinitely. This constant movement is not the outcome of blind forces, but a living stream of changes flowing from the thoughts, acts, emotions and feelings, aspirations, and desires of the lives which make up and are the Universe.

Man is one of an innumerable host of beings, imbodyed Consciousnesses, who infill the Universe. Nowhere do we find anything other than these hierarchies of beings, these consciousnesses active during the Cosmic Manvantara, and each individual of these hosts weaving its own Web of Destiny, its energies pouring out of its own inner being and directed by the intelligence streaming from its own spiritual and mental foci.

— G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, Vol. I, p. 480

There is no lawgiver, we repeat, and yet in a way there may be said to be agents of Karma. Who are they? They are those great and wise Beings who have consciously found their place in the Universe; who are sufficiently evolved to be perfected in regard to a certain stage or plane, and therefore can be relied upon to work in harmony with universal law over that field. Above them are others, and so on *ad infinitum*.

It goes without saying that in this orderly, complex Universe there is a plan, a meaning, and that every unit, being a part of the Universe, is part of the plan. When, therefore, the harmony is disturbed by unevolved, learning entities anywhere, there is an overwhelming force tending to restore it. The actions of Karma are always toward the restoration of harmony, but as every change is due to consciousness and the Universe is but imbodyed consciousness, in the last analysis karmic adjustments are made by conscious Beings, who are incarnate justice in their field of action. For instance, the Ruler of a Planet is such because it has reached that point in evolution when he has absolute knowledge of everything pertaining to that planet. Above that stage he is a learner, but as to the realm below it, he is perfected. His knowledge thereof is of the nature of intuition or instant vision, and its guidance must be in harmony with justice and the divine plan. It is said that the gods never interfere with Karma. They could not. Learning beings must be free to work out their own destiny, which means that their mistakes recoil upon themselves, for it is thus that they learn. Men themselves decide their fate by their choice of the various alternatives which life presents, while karmic agents execute what man has decreed.

Those above, however, guide, protect, and help forward the evolution of their younger brothers. The teaching is very beautiful and inspiring as to these relations. All the way up the Ladder of Life, the greater stand to those next below as parent to child. They live to inspire, to serve their offspring, and in later, more highly developed stages of humanity this relationship is recognized. Even great Masters, though below the level of godhood and still men, are perfected as to *our* plane and turn back to give help, which we realize as little as does the babe its mother's watchful care. Thus it is that the Universe is bound together with a glowing web of Compassion.

Canst thou destroy divine COMPASSION? Compassion is no attribute. It is the LAW of LAWS — eternal Harmony, Alaya's SELF; a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting Right, and fitness of all things, the law of love eternal.

The more thou dost become at one with it, thy being melted in its BEING, the more thy Soul unites with that which IS, the more thou wilt become COMPASSION ABSOLUTE.

— H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, pp. 69-70, orig. ed.

## YOU ARE YOUR OWN KARMA

Sow an act, and you will reap a habit. Sow a habit, and you will reap a destiny, because habits build character. This is the sequence: an act, a habit, a character, and a destiny. You are the creator of yourself. What you make yourself to be now, you will be in the future. What you are now, is precisely what you have made yourself to be in the past. What you sow, you shall reap.

— G. de Purucker, *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, p. 104

It is a fundamental teaching of the Wisdom-Religion that every atom, being an inseparable part of the Universe, has locked up within itself all the potentialities of that Universe, as the seed contains the future tree locked up within itself. Hence every atom will in time become a man — then a god, then reach still higher grades of divine life.

It follows that in the case of man these possibilities have been unfolded as far as the human stage, at which point is incurred the responsibility of creating personal karma. From this time forward, equipped with mind and free-will, he will carve his own destiny. Theosophy teaches that in those early days humanity was instructed as to the purpose of life by Great Teachers, who launched these pilgrims on their long journey to godhood. Many, many times since then have they lived — in various climes under various racial conditions, and in different bygone civilizations. Man has never been left without sufficient light to find the Way: there has been the Voice of Conscience; there have been the results of wrong and right action as lessons for the future; there have been mind to interpret these and free-will to choose. Therefore it is fair to say that man has created himself and is his own karma.

This latter expression implies the fact that every act and thought alters character. From moment to moment we change. Nothing remains for an instant *in statu quo*, so that constantly and progressively man is the resultant, the fruitage, of all his thoughts, emotions, actions; of the use or non-use of his will. He stands at every moment as his own autobiography — or he is the great artist, having the tools of destiny in hand and compelled under the laws of being, to carve and carve until the outer becomes a worthy Temple for the god within. Life is indeed the highest art.

Every moment, then, may be taken as a new starting point, as expressed in a beautiful ‘Salutation to the Dawn:’

Look to this Day, for it is Life, the very Life of Life. In its brief course lie all the possibilities and realities of your existence.

Plainly, one can unfold or grow only from the point at which one has arrived. Whatever of power or vision has been gained, none can take away, and whatever of burdensome rubbish, pernicious habits, or degrading qualities one has acquired, can evidently be removed only by the evoking of the will of the one who acquired them. They have become a part of the Nature, and no extraneous Savior can by any process of magic extract them from the character of another. But the saviors do seek, and all down the ages have sought, to awaken the warrior in the heart of every Pilgrim who has lost his way. When such awakening happens, the sway of karma is altered. The whole purpose of life takes a new direction and gradually constructive forces are generated which modify the old destructive ones. We *must* meet the energies already generated, but we can then meet them with courage and understanding and with a new armor which they cannot pierce — possibly even with an opposite equal force which will neutralize them.

Weak characters furnish a weak focus for karma. They take things easily, as they come, drift along the river of life, enjoy and suffer without asking why, and leave their bodies much as they entered them.

But Nature will not have it thus always: finally there comes the karmic impulse, the karmic stimulus, then you suffer a little; but in doing so you awaken and begin to grow. Bless the karmic stimulus; be not afraid of it. Look to the essential divinity within. Remember that everything that happens is transient, and that you can learn from everything, and in learning you will grow — grow great, and from greatness pass to a larger sphere of greatness. — G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series I, No. xxxiv

But when the real man is aroused and consciously grips himself and cooperates with Nature, which is seeking to evolve him, his unfolding proceeds rapidly. The past will decide the future events. They may bring quickly a sense of glorious freedom with deeper sympathies, new friends and opportunities; or perhaps more often, misfortunes, suffering, or enemies may be called out of the mysterious past; for none of us has avoided clashes with the {universal} Law. All this, however, is but clearing the way. Eventually such self-directed evolution will lead out into the open spaces of freedom; into glorious possibilities; into friendship with those Great Ones who have overcome.

We are constantly upon the fringe of great opportunities and at some crucial point, and then, instead of grasping these opportunities and moving on to a larger view and a broader spiritual life, we shrink, we hold back through timidity — and so we lose them all. The present is an unusual cycle, and never in this life shall we meet present opportunities again....

Fear nothing, for every renewed effort raises all former failures into lessons, all sins into experiences. Understand me when I say that in the light of renewed effort the Karma of all your past alters; it no longer threatens. It passes from the plane of penalty before the soul's eye, up to that of tuition. It stands as a monument, a reminder of past weakness, and a warning against future failure.

So fear nothing for yourself; you are behind the shield of your reborn endeavor, though you have failed a hundred times. Try slowly to make it your motive for fidelity that others may be faithful. Fear only to fail in your duty to others, and even then let your fear be for *them*, not yourself.

— Katherine Tingley, *Theosophy: the Path of the Mystic*, pp. 68-9

Physical disease is one of the unpleasant expressions of past karma. It even shows itself in infants, who may come into life with such marks. The compilers of the New Testament give evidence of having recognized this fact in the question recorded in The Gospel according to Saint John ix, 2: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Dr. de Purucker, in speaking of disease, has said:

I will tell you a little esoteric secret in this connection: Every time when a man flies into a passion, whether of desire or of anger, whether of fear or of hate, he has lost control of himself and at the time exemplifies the characteristic and power of some elemental being under whose influence he has fallen. This natural fact, so simple, so easily understood, is the basis of the old superstition about the action upon human beings of 'devils.'

These elementals are not 'devils'; they are simply elemental beings, and they have a natural and strong affinity for man. They look upon man much as we humans look to the gods; but when the man becomes degenerate and drops to their lower sphere, then is their chance. Automatically and instinctively they act; and they act as impersonally and as much without conscience as does the electric current. And I may say here that the electric current is but a stream or flow of these elemental beings. Turn the switch, release the current, and, if the circumstances are right, the man whose hand touched the switch is a dead man.

I will go a little farther: Diseases are the result of loss of self-control at some time, either in this or in some past life. You can say that an Elemental has entered into the man's vital aura... and if the man does not oust it with his will and by aspiration to better things, in other words by resuming his normal spiritual manhood, that seed will grow, and disease or horrible consequences will be the result for him.

— *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, xxi

This ousting it with one's will is quite different from apparent cures through psychic methods.

A man also can indeed apparently cure certain diseases of the body, if he can use certain psychological faculties that he has.... But the results... are not good. All disease is a purging, a purgation, a cleansing. Nature's law is that the poison should come out. If it remains within, it poisons the body, the constitution, still worse than before; and the physicians of the future will know perfectly well how to lead disease out of the body so that the body shall not be injured at all. But be very careful about damming it back, throwing it back into the stream of consciousness; for one of these days the trouble will come out despite your best efforts and it will have gained strength and power and be like ten devils worse than the first.

— *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, xi

It might be added that the physicians referred to in the above quotation are those of the far distant, not immediate future. Every inharmony, through the beneficent processes of Nature, tends to work to the surface. Sometimes we observe in ourselves or in others a succession of mishaps or disasters which are commonly attributed to 'bad luck.' Then suddenly 'Fortune' changes tactics, and everything undertaken turns out well. This suggests that the so-called bad karma has expended its force. But it is truly bad only if the lessons have not been learned; only if one continues to roam through life in an idle, inconsequent attitude, willing to be buffeted alternately by 'good and bad luck.' If people could only realize that they are the results of what they have thought and felt and done in this and other lives; that through these thoughts and acts they have altered the very fabric of their character — a character often which invites misfortune — would they not learn self-control, kindness, helpful cooperation, and thus become beneficent forces in Nature?

Human nature is complex, and the results of inharmony will naturally express themselves through the channels where the disturbance occurred. This whole subject is complicated in its workings though simple in its broad outlines, and it would be idle for us in our present stage of evolution to attempt to follow the details. We sometimes see a deformed body, fine mind, and sunny disposition in the same individual; or again, a robust body housing a distorted mind and selfish disposition. In the former case, seeds of disease are working off, while in the latter, they are being planted, even though the physical energies may be strong enough to resist them through that incarnation. Often we see a beautiful nature, refined, sympathetic, in one who is working strenuously to benefit humanity, but who is careless regarding the body. It would seem in such a case that karma would begin and end on the physical plane, though there must always be a reaction from one plane to another. Or, one may concentrate his energies on the laws of health and forget the sufferings of his fellow-men. Such may gain a strong

body temporarily, but at what cost! Law reigns throughout. We attain what we ardently strive for. The infinite potentialities of the Universe are before us, but only he whose note chimes with that of the overmastering Law — the Law of Compassion — can hold his victories.

When at last this great achievement becomes a fact, it is said that man rises above Karma. This, however is only a figure of speech. Karma acts forever, everywhere, but when the great currents of the Universe are no more thwarted, no friction is felt. One moves forward easily, rapidly, knowing the “Glory of Action” and the “Bliss of Growth.”

Yes; “our destiny *is* written in the stars!” Only, the closer the union between the mortal reflection MAN and his celestial PROTOTYPE, the less dangerous the external conditions and subsequent reincarnations — which neither Buddhas nor Christs can escape. This is not superstition, least of all is it *Fatalism*. The latter implies a blind course of some still blinder power, and man is a free agent during his stay on earth. He cannot escape his *ruling* Destiny, but he has the choice of two paths that lead him in that direction, and he can reach the goal of misery — if such is decreed to him, either in the snowy white robes of the Martyr, or in the soiled garments of a volunteer in the iniquitous course; for, there are *external and internal conditions* which affect the determination of our will upon our actions, and it is in our power to follow either of the two. Those who believe in *Karma* have to believe in *destiny*, which, from birth to death, every man is weaving thread by thread around himself, as a spider does his cobweb; and this destiny is guided either by the heavenly voice of the invisible *prototype* outside of us, or by our more intimate *astral*, or inner self, who is but too often the evil genius of the embodied entity called man. Both these lead on the outward man, but one of them must prevail; and from the very beginning of the invisible affray the stern and implacable *law of compensation* steps in and takes its course, faithfully following the fluctuations. When the last strand is woven, and man is seemingly enwrapped in the network of his own doing, then he finds himself completely under the empire of this *self-made* destiny. It then either fixes him like the inert shell against the immovable rock, or carries him away like a feather in a whirlwind raised by his own actions, and this is — KARMA.

— H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 639

## THE PROBLEM OF HEREDITY

It may be asked, if you are your own Karma, how explain heredity? Theosophy offers here a solution more in harmony with facts as we observe them, as follows: one is born into his present family because he has been connected with it in the past and belongs there because of the psycho-magnetic ties previously created. These ties consist of vital energies and must have their effects in the sphere where they were brought into existence. In studying Karma, we see again here that we must study equally the teaching of Reincarnation, as one is meaningless without the



other. We are born among certain people and of certain parents because of the ties we formed with them in the past. As long as we love or hate anyone, we have a tie with that individual which will persist as long as that love or hate continues. So we all come back to Earth together — friends, relatives, enemies — to take up again our joys and sorrows, our work and play, our experiences and lessons in human life.

We may say that the family affords the expression for individual heredity, for we repeat again what cannot too often be recalled: Karma is inherent in the individual, it is not imposed from the outside. Remembering this, we see that the heredity of a reincarnating entity is determined by what it itself is. Why do the members of one family differ, often so widely, although all are born under similar conditions and from the same hereditary strain?

The differing combinations of hereditary qualities in individuals are governed by the psychomagnetic attractions inherent in the *Skandhas* of the reincarnating entity. The Sanskrit word ‘Skandhas’ is used in Theosophical literature because there is no English word to designate exactly those qualities which are the concentrated aggregate, the essence, of the personal life of an entity. They refer to the attributes, tendencies, qualities, both high and low, which distinguish one personality from another. They are the seeds of acts, thoughts, and feelings, either of a material nature, which help to form the next body, or of mental or moral traits.

The nature and action of the Skandhas can best be grasped if we understand first about the life-atoms. These may be described as the souls of the atoms, through which the incarnating entity is enabled to embody itself. They are the building blocks of which all things are fashioned. They exist on every plane in Nature, spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and in every degree of development or evolution within those planes. In human life, they form man’s body with its cells and organs, they form his intermediate mental or emotional nature, and also his spiritual constitution.

These life-atoms which now make up our physical bodies, and also our psychological and our spiritual natures, are being every second impressed by our every thought and action, no matter what. If we are loving, pure, unselfish, joyous, we have given them that impress; and equally we can impress them with selfishness, qualities of passion and hate, or give them vibrations of fear or pessimism. As our bodies and inner natures are constantly changing through growth, development, and decline, these life-atoms do not stay with us, but flow out from us to combine temporarily with those other natures and substances which are akin to the impressions they have absorbed from us.

This happens all through life, but more completely after so-called physical death. Then there is a separation of the principles which have made up the human being. The spiritual part, after withdrawing into itself all of the personal man that had become purified, rises to higher spheres;

the passionate, emotional nature rests on its own plane for a time before disintegrating; and the body as we know, is dissolved quickly. Then the life-atoms on all these planes, charged with the tendencies and qualities given them in the last Earth-life, find their natural habitats. But on reincarnation, under the influence of natural attraction, they flock back to the entity which sent them forth.

It is these life-atoms which carry the Skandhas, the aroma of our past lives. They are the building materials of many different degrees of evolution which thus shape by their inherent characteristics the personality that is about to be born. As stated by G. de Purucker in *Man in Evolution*:

...the next body that we shall get will be — not the same old body that we had before; that is to say, not the same John Smith or Mary Brown, not at all; for John Smith and Mary Brown are but a name and a form — but our new body will be composed of these same life-atoms in which we lived and worked and expressed ourself in the preceding incarnation... these life-atoms exist not merely on this physical plane... they exist likewise on the intermediate planes; that is to say, on the astral plane, on the emotional plane, on the mental plane, on the intellectual plane, and on the spiritual plane.

— pp. 241-242

It might be added that because they are our own children, we are responsible for them. They, too, are evolving entities, bound to us throughout the ages. Here only the outlines of the changes which bridge the apparent gap between two incarnations on Earth of the human Ego, have been roughly sketched in order to sustain the explanation regarding Heredity given by Theosophy. Similarities as well as differences are thus accounted for in a way which is not only logical but just.

...We reap what we sow, and where we have sown; and if we have sown seeds of good and evil in this life and on this earth, it is only in another life on this earth that we can reap what we have sown. Would not a farmer be considered a lunatic did he sow a field in one part of the country where he lived, and some months later travel to another part of the country, far from where he sowed his seed, in order to reap his crop? So it is with man. He sows seeds of thought and action, and he reaps that crop where he sowed them, which is in himself and in this physical world.

Our Universe is ruled by law and order; and this word Karma expresses that fact of universal harmony and consistency manifesting as what we call law and order. — *Man in Evolution*, pp. 239-240

## FATALISM OR DESTINY

This Law — whether Conscious or Unconscious — predestines nothing and no one. It exists from and in Eternity, truly, for it is ETERNITY itself; and as such, since no act can be co-equal with eternity, it cannot be

said to act, for it is ACTION itself. It is not the Wave which drowns a man, but the *personal* action of the wretch, who goes deliberately and places himself under the *impersonal* action of the laws that govern the Ocean's motion. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 305

Probably there is no truth which cannot be perverted so as to appear something it is not. As has been said, Karma is essentially, intrinsically, a doctrine of free-will. Yet this, which implies choice of action, is often, by a strange mental twist, interpreted as fatalism. What imp of darkness is it that has ever suggested to man — the embryo god, the carver of his own destiny — that he lives under a doom foreordained? But in any case, whatever may be the surface expression of a mood, every man, deep in his nature, knows that he is free to act and to think. As evidence, he constantly makes efforts in this direction or that from which he expects results. If he attributes to himself those which are favorable, by what logic is the 'will of God' to account for the others — unless, indeed, it be the will of the god within himself? Or, as so excellently expressed by a fellow-Theosophist:

In practical daily life there is no uncertainty about man's having free-will. A man's freedom, within certain natural limits, is obvious. In his relations to his fellow-men his freedom of choice and therefore his responsibility are fundamental. Our whole social structure and our laws are founded upon it. The whole idea of moral responsibility presupposes free-will. A man who refused to act, or to accept responsibility for his acts, on the ground that he did not have free-will, would be considered a man of addled brain or one obstructing duty and right action by senseless caviling. A man whose acts escape the control of his will is defective, a hysteric, or insane. The civil Courts would send him to an asylum, not to jail. They do not execute a man whose free-will is inhibited.

The question of free-will is much beclouded by an exaggerated idea of what freedom is. The assumption, perhaps unconscious, is that if there are any limitations there is no freedom.

Freedom can only be exercised on condition that it is not abused. A man has personal freedom within the laws of the society to which he belongs. If he violates these laws his freedom is thereafter limited to the inside walls of a prison. Does anyone ever doubt or question that a man at liberty has freedom when compared to a man in prison?

In a society governed by law and order all men have freedom within the limits of law and while they conform to the social order. A law-abiding citizen is not a slave because he conforms to the necessary restraints of the social order. — *Lucifer*, Vol. VI, No. 9, March 1935

Law-breakers must suffer penalties, more manifestly when the *Higher Law* is broken — that Law of Unity, Cooperation, and Compassion which holds the Universe together, which is the very nature, the essence of things. Every current set in motion strikes its objective and returns,

rebounding with force in direct proportion as it is aimed consciously against the Higher Law. *But* it is always possible to start a counter current to weaken or neutralize the force of the first. Suppose, for instance, that one is involved in a family feud like those which poisoned the life of Venice during the Middle Ages, with feelings running higher and fed with new life by every generation; and that then such a one resolved — as happened sometimes in those days — to break the spell, to make offers of friendship and settle the old quarrel. That would mean starting a new karma to counteract the old and would bring peace where there had been discord.

There is another twist which the selfish lower mind sometimes brings to bear upon this teaching. All, at times, while traveling their own path, run into others suffering from accidents or misfortunes with which they are apparently disconnected, and occasionally one with a pharisaical respect for the law hesitates to interfere with the other's karma. Or he may be frankly brutal and say: "The sufferer brought it on himself; let him take the consequences." In such cases, there is always this to be considered: we *may* run into the misfortunes of another because in the past we helped to bring them about; and this is to be remembered: "Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin" (*The Voice of the Silence*). In this intricate web of life binding us all together, how often in our blindness do we make a tangle of the threads!

But let us beware of indifference. The 'man fallen by the wayside' which we for the moment travel, has a claim upon us. If it is his karma to be sore beset, it is equally his karma that someone able to help him should come along. That needs no argument, surely. But more fundamental than the Law of Consequences which brought us there, is the "Law of Laws, Compassion." It is our patent *duty* to help and succor him. We can trust the laws of Divine Justice to see to it that a man gets what he deserves, "without ourselves giving an extra pinch." And Dr. de Purucker says very plainly:

It is our duty to help others, where we see that they are in danger or in pain, or need help. It is our duty to share what we have of the beautiful and of the good, with others. This is simply decently human.

— *Questions We All Ask*, Series I, No. xxv

We are our brother's keeper. Woe to us if we callously "pass by on the other side." Better the mill-stone around our neck and the depths of the sea to receive us.

Certain things indeed *are* inevitable. We are all in the Universe and we *must* live. We are here on this Earth and we must continue to come back to it again and again until we learn its lessons — we are tied to it until that day. But we ourselves guide our bark through its streams either wisely or unwisely. When we have mastered its problems and ourselves in

relation to them, we are then free to move forward — we then, in fact, *decree* to move forward. The basic fact overlooked in this theory of fatalism is that man at the core of his being is at one with the core of the Universe, than which there is no higher authority.

We cut these numerous windings in our destinies daily with our hands, while we imagine that we are pursuing a track on the royal high road of respectability and duty, and then complain of those ways being so intricate and dark. We stand bewildered before the mystery of our own making, and the riddles of life that *we will not* solve, and then accuse the great Sphinx of devouring us. But verily there is not an accident in our lives, not a misshapen day, or a misfortune, that could not be traced back to our own doings in this or another life. If one breaks the laws of Harmony... one must be prepared to fall into the chaos one has oneself produced....

Therefore, if any one is helpless before these immutable laws, it is not ourselves, the artificers of our destinies, but rather those angels, the guardians of harmony. Karma-Nemesis is no more than the (spiritual) dynamical effect of causes produced and forces awakened into activity by our own actions....

This state will last till man's spiritual intuitions are fully opened,... Until then the only palliative to the evils of life is union and harmony — a Brotherhood IN ACTU, and *altruism* not simply in name. The suppression of one single bad *cause* will suppress not one, but a variety of bad effects.

— H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I pp. 643-644

## WHY KARMA HAS BEEN FORGOTTEN

It is natural to ask why a teaching so in harmony with facts and common sense should not have had general recognition in Western lands, as it has in the East, wherever the Ancient Wisdom has not been forgotten. The answer is not far to seek. Western nations have been taught to believe in a personal god outside of themselves, one who could be influenced by prayers for special favors — a god who was, in fact, an enormous image of human personality. How could people so believing be expected to develop the impersonal, the lordly and divine side of their natures? How could they, taught that they were born in sin and that eternal bliss or torture was to follow this short life on Earth — lived often against great odds and with little help; taught also that belief in the blood of the Son of God insures their safety: how could they, indeed, fail to have their sense of justice blunted? The fact that, in spite of this, the qualities of compassion, gentleness, forbearance, mercy, kindness still flower in Western lands, is a standing witness to the divinity within the human heart.

But if we step outside the little circle of creed and consider the universe as a whole balanced by the exquisite adjustment of parts, how all sound logic, how the faintest glimmering sense of Justice revolts against this

Vicarious Atonement! If the criminal sinned only against himself, and wronged no one but himself; if by sincere repentance he could cause the obliteration of past events, not only from the memory of man, but also from that imperishable record, which no deity — not even the Supreme of the Supreme — can cause to disappear, then this dogma might not be incomprehensible. But to maintain that one may wrong his fellow-man, kill, disturb the equilibrium of society, and the natural order of things, and then — through cowardice, hope, or compulsion, matters not — be forgiven by believing that the spilling of one blood washes out the other blood spilt — this is preposterous! Can the *results* of a crime be obliterated even though the crime itself should be pardoned? The effects of a cause are never limited to the boundaries of the cause, nor can the results of crime be confined to the offender and his victim. — H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, p. 542

It is astounding how such perversions and misinterpretations of the true teachings ever developed; how there were ever found people to teach them or others to believe them. No doubt there are many mysteries connected with this which must some day be explained. It is certain, however, that the great teacher known as Jesus, one of those Avatâras who appear at certain cyclic periods, never taught any of these dogmas. He came, as did every other great teacher, to restore once more the Ancient Wisdom — that inexhaustible source of all the religions and philosophical systems of the world; for Christianity was, in its beginnings, pure Theosophy. This can be proved through an intimate study of those times in the light of the Neo-Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic systems. For perhaps fifty years after the passing of Jesus, his teachings survived, but even he could not stem the ebbing spiritual tide of that age. A dark cycle, begun about the time of Pythagoras, lifted a little for short periods, but gradually grew heavier, its lethal vapors clouding man's intuitions, until in the fifth century those recognized channels for conveying Truth — the Mystery-Schools — whose light had by this time burned low or vanished, were closed by order of the Emperor Justinian.

Many of the old forms and ceremonies were, it is true, used by the church which called itself Christian, but the life and meaning went out of them, and new interpretations crept in, transforming those vehicles of spiritual splendor into agents for mental paralysis. Rites and forms distracted from realities and drugged the souls of men. The multitudes were obsessed by selfish fear, which was exploited by others until gradually it was as if a dense cloud settled over men's minds, shutting out a knowledge of the glorious past, even of the contemporaneous areas of sunshine on the globe, such as the Golden Age of China, ushered in by Li-Shih-min, until the Europeans were lost and isolated in the gloom of the dark ages.

People speak of Christianity as if it were wholly derived from Judaism. Very little of it is. It is, in its theology, almost wholly derived from mis-

understood Greek thought, mainly, as said, from the Neo-Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic systems; and this is obvious to anyone who reads the writings of those who are called the great doctors of Christian theology, such as Dionysius, the so-called Areopagite, whose system is, in essentials, entirely taken from the Neo-Platonic philosophy. Mainly derived from him, again, are the present standard theological works of the Church of Rome: I mean the works of Thomas Aquinas. These are today the standard by which the theology of Rome is directed and settled when disputed points are to be adjudicated. And yet, while this is so, and while much of that which was taken over by the early Christian Fathers still remains as factors and words in the Christian theology, it has utterly forgotten the spirit of these early pagan thoughts, and that religion today stands reduced to a system of forms and ceremonies, mostly.

— G. de Purucker, *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 487

...practically all the civil institutions of ancient times, punishments among others, were based upon what took place in the Mystery-Schools. Such, for instance, was the crucifixion of the Romans, taken direct from one of the ceremonies of initiation, the “Mystic Death”; taken from it, stolen from it, and made an instrument of legal murder by the State, in later, degenerate times. Another instance, also taken from the ceremony of the “Mystic Death,” was the “Cup,” in India the Soma-draft; in Greece we find Socrates punished by drinking from the Cup of Hemlock; and we are reminded of Jesus, praying that the “cup” might pass from him. Numerous other very different instances could be cited....

Another instance which we might mention, of a quite different type, is that of the wearing of a crown, or a diadem, by civil rulers, formally enacted in the “coronation” of a king — a ceremony adopted from the Mysteries. Some of the earliest crowns which they wore had outstanding spikes, reminding one of the “crown of thorns” of Jesus;... — *Ibid.*, p. 255

It is a few philosophers who, driven by the political events of the day, tracked and persecuted by the fanatical Bishops of early Christianity — who had yet neither fixed ritual nor dogmas nor Church — it is these Pagans who founded the latter. Blending most ingeniously the truths of the Wisdom-Religion with the exoteric fictions so dear to the ignorant mobs, it is they who laid the first foundations of ritualistic Churches...

— H. P. Blavatsky, *Lucifer*, Vol. IV, p. 37, March 1889

Other remarkable instances are the festivals of the Christmas and Easter seasons. These are materialized reflections of sacred ceremonies of initiations held at these times and described in symbols, which the Church interpreted as physical facts. All of which goes to bear out our statement that Christianity *in its beginnings* was pure Theosophy.

From the dark ages we have happily emerged. They are past, and a great cycle of opportunity is before us, but the old false dogmas have left a stain, not yet wiped out. Among those obliterated teachings which were essential to an understanding of life was that of Reincarnation. It was

believed in the early centuries of this era, but discouraged by the Church when it became a political power. Finally at the second Council of Constantinople, A.D. 553, the teaching was anathematized. Thus, gradually, the knowledge of it faded out in the dark night which followed.

Without this fact of Reimbodiment, life would be an absurdity, a grotesque farce without meaning. The events, emotions, ambitions, fortunes, or misfortunes of any one life-period, would be anomalous, as incoherent, as dislocated, as would be any one day with the yesterdays and tomorrows blotted out. Try to picture such a crazy unhinged day, if you can. Observing superficially, one might say that from day to day we have the same body, the same brain, and a memory, conditions not present between lives. But this comprehensive, archaic philosophy, every aspect of which dovetails into every other, relating all parts to the whole, leaves no unexplained gaps, but shows the perfect analogy between the *day* and the *life-cycle*. At the close of a life, all the entities which make up the complex nature of man, separate and go to their respective realms, as has been stated. The body, as we know, disintegrates, and the teaching is that its life-atoms gain experience by transmigrating through the kingdoms of Nature. The human or Reincarnating Ego passes into a state of consciousness known as Devachan, leaving behind the groups of attributes or skandhas which make up its personality. This longer night is for the human soul one of absolute bliss and rest, one in which all the experiences of the past are assimilated; all the nobler aspirations realized and worked into the nature; and from which it awakens, refreshed and strengthened, to take up its unfinished duties. The striking fact in the analogy drawn between sleep and death is that the complete man returns identical in all his elements. The higher aspects begin again to function together; the skandhas again become active; even the same life-atoms which made up the old body are magnetically attracted to their old places. The stage is set in new surroundings, but the same old actor is there charged with the same energies, tendencies, power or lack of power to deal with the problems which he himself has created, and which he is therefore bound to face. Without a knowledge of these facts it has been impossible for people to realize that they must reap what they sow. The thread of continuity, though unbroken and clear to the higher parts of man's constitution, has been lost to view by the brain of each succeeding rebirth. Thus with intuition clouded by false teachings, life has become an enigma. Our civilization is indeed an exemplar of the dire results of the loss of a true, deeply-rooted sense of justice and responsibility.

The Law of KARMA is inextricably interwoven with that of Reincarnation.

...it is only this doctrine, we say, that can explain to us the mysterious problem of Good and Evil, and reconcile man to the terrible and *apparent* injustice of life. Nothing but such certainty can quiet our revolted sense of



justice. For, when one unacquainted with the noble doctrine looks around him, and observes the inequalities of birth and fortune, of intellect and capacities; when one sees honor paid fools and profligates, on whom fortune has heaped her favors by mere privilege of birth, and their nearest neighbor, with all his intellect and noble virtues — far more deserving in every way — perishing of want and for lack of sympathy; when one sees all this and has to turn away, helpless to relieve the undeserved suffering, one's ears ringing and heart aching with the cries of pain around him — that blessed knowledge of Karma alone prevents him from cursing life and men, as well as their supposed Creator....

Truly a robust "faith" is required to believe that it is "presumption" to question the justice of one, who creates helpless little man but to "perplex" him, and to test a "faith" with which that "Power," moreover, may have forgotten, if not neglected, to endow him, as happens sometimes. Compare this blind faith with the philosophical belief, based on every reasonable evidence and life-experience, in Karma-Nemesis, or the Law of Retribution.

...Karma creates nothing, nor does it design. It is man who plans and creates causes, and Karmic law adjusts the effects; which adjustment is not an act, but universal harmony, tending ever to resume its original position, like a bough, which, bent down too forcibly, rebounds with corresponding vigor. If it happen to dislocate the arm that tried to bend it out of its natural position, shall we say that it is the bough which broke our arm, or that our own folly has brought us to grief?

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, pp. 303-305

## KARMA AND JUSTICE *VERSUS* PUNISHMENT

It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter-true  
Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs,  
Times are as naught, tomorrow it will judge,  
Or after many days. — *The Light of Asia*

The sense of justice is deeply rooted in the human mind because mind is part of the Cosmos, all of whose actions and reactions are based upon justice. There is nothing a child so keenly resents, nothing that so embitters an adult, as a feeling that he has been unjustly treated. People will accept misfortunes, at least without bitterness, if they *know* they deserve them. Unfortunately, in the confused and distorted mental outlook of today, with selfishness so rife and the 'every man for himself' doctrine so commonly practiced, there is in Western lands no confidence in the justice of things. How could there be, after centuries of false teachings and counter-strokes of revenge all down the ages, until few can be found who are not in the tangle? Nothing but a true philosophy of life can possibly make men face the facts. There must be a broader outlook than the one-life theory offers. Some chance to harmonize with justice the frequent sight of good punished and bad rewarded must be given men, before they can clean their hearts of bitterness, turn suspicion into trust, and shake off the deceiving lenses

which have disguised every brother as an alien. Theosophy alone, which can restore order to the human mind and thus reveal the order and beautiful harmony which Nature is forever working towards, can save us from ourselves.

It is more particularly in Christian lands that the perception of justice in the Universe has been so completely lost sight of. In Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Vedântism, Taoism, the teaching of Karma has not been lost, and even though the countries under these religions are in their dark cycles, crime is not as rampant as with us. In *The Key to Theosophy*, H. P. Blavatsky said in 1889:

According to the last census in Ceylon and India, in the comparative table of crimes committed by Christians, Mussulmen, Hindoos, Eurasians, Buddhists, etc., etc., on two millions of population taken at random from each, and covering the misdemeanors of several years, the proportion of crime committed by the Christian stands at 15 to 4 as against those committed by the Buddhist population. — pp. 73-4 (orig. ed.)

Since then, we know, crime has enormously increased in the West. In *Lucifer*, Vol. II, p. 147, April 1888, H. P. Blavatsky writes editorially:

This is what one reads in the *Tablet*, the leading organ of Roman Catholic Englishmen, about Creeds and Criminality. I underline the most remarkable statements.

“The official statement as to the moral and material progress of India, which has recently been published, supplies a very interesting contribution to the controversy on the missionary question. It appears from these figures that while we effect a *very marked moral deterioration in the natives by converting them to our creed*, THEIR NATURAL STANDARD OF MORALITY IS SO HIGH that, however much we Christianize them, *we cannot succeed in making them altogether as bad as ourselves.*”

The following quotation from *The Wheel of the Law* (p. 57) may suggest an explanation of these facts:

Buddhists believe that every act, word, or thought has its consequence, which will appear sooner or later in the present or in the future state. Evil acts will produce evil consequences, good acts will produce good consequences....

Theosophy teaches that justice does not call for punishment from us. Karma will take care of this more efficiently than we can possibly do, and bring to all *just* what they deserve. Why should any seek to add to this? *Our* sole care should be to help men to meet their deserts bravely. What might we not accomplish if our prison system were based on educative rather than punitive measures! The wisest and best minds of our

civilization in increasing numbers are realizing this in considering the most outstanding violation of the duty of one to another, namely, legalized murder, which is a stigma upon our age. Future citizens of our Republic will certainly look back with horror to the barbarous custom of Capital Punishment. The Karma of thwarting Nature's plan in this way must be heavy for the nations who have permitted it. Society must, of course, be protected against malefactors, but in such a way that the latter are redeemed, not made worse. When one's moral sense is shocked, it is safe to assume that there is always a philosophic basis for this in the facts. Theosophy has given very specific teachings in regard to the sin of taking the life of another, which seems, in a way, to be magnified when the State is the murderer, because so many are involved in the crime.

Without attempting to explain in detail here the teaching as to the reaction upon society, it may be said that one who is violently deprived of his body does not really die — that is, leave this Earth atmosphere — but remains on the astral plane, more at liberty in a way than behind the prison bars, until his natural life-term has expired. Here he can and does freely influence the weak-minded to commit crime and inject his feeling of hate against society, which has so ill treated him, into the minds of living men. Think of the terrible Karma this brings to all concerned, and contrast that with the results which would follow an intelligent and sincere effort to help the criminal out of the mire he is in. Certainly, in this country at present, we manufacture criminals.

*Resist not evil, and render good for evil*, are Buddhist precepts, and were first preached in view of the implacability of Karmic law. For man to take the law into his own hands is anyhow a sacrilegious presumption. Human Law may use restrictive not punitive measures; but a man who, believing in Karma, still revenges himself and refuses to forgive every injury, thereby rendering good for evil, is a criminal and only hurts himself. As Karma is sure to punish the man who wronged him, by seeking to inflict an additional punishment on his enemy, he, who instead of leaving that punishment to the great Law adds to it his own mite, only begets thereby a cause for the future reward of his own enemy and a future punishment for himself. — H. P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 200 (orig. ed.)

Theosophy also states something which may further complicate the reading of the {Karmic} Law. Besides the so-called misfortunes which come unwittingly and unasked to the majority, there are those who have surpassed this majority in the School of Life, and whose Egos sometimes take up deliberately what is called bad karma for the sake of discipline, to overcome defects, and to gain fortitude. Or, they may assume difficult and unpleasant tasks, such as voluntary living in the slums or our prisons, solely for the sake of helping our brothers. There will occur to the mind many other such examples, which are happily becoming more and more

frequent and form many a bright picture against the black background of our civilization.

Another evidence that the sense of justice is obscured is found in the belief in prayer to an external deity. This does not refer to aspiration, to the effort to reach to the god within — which should be ever in the background of consciousness when not in the foreground — but to the begging for personal benefits. H. P. Blavatsky calls this foolish and useless unless accompanied with will-power; when so accompanied it becomes black magic. Impersonally regard the spectacle of two armies sent forth to murder each other, each side appealing piously to God to bring it victory! If sincere, prayer for personal favors is weakening and degrading; if not sincere, it is pure *cant*. How much more healthy, virile, stimulating, and elevating is the teaching of Karma! How it evokes the innate dignity in man to know that he is master of his destiny; that as he sows, so shall he reap; that there is no chance in the Universe; that ‘privileged beings’ do not exist, but that the unlimited treasures of Nature are open to all who meet the conditions.

There is a gentler aspect to the justice dealt to all which should not pass notice. After the life of struggle, of discipline, of perhaps pain and disappointment, there comes the beautiful Devachan — a wonderful compensation of bliss and rest, a glorious preparation for the new day.

Such is the law which moves to righteousness,  
Which none at last can turn aside or stay;  
The heart of it is love, the end of it  
Is peace and consummation sweet. Obey!  
— *The Light of Asia*

## NATIONAL AND RACIAL KARMA

We have said that all life is one, that it has a common origin: in other words, that the Universe is a great organism. But within this are contained uncountable lesser organisms in an infinitely descending scale, all rooted in the Unknown Source, and springing into life from it as children from their parents. Thus we have, Rulers of the Cosmos; of Solar Systems; of Planets; Gods; Demi-gods; great seers and sages. When we come down to humanity, we find its units assembled together in countries, cities, families, etc. It follows that Karma must act collectively as well as individually. Great cycles will affect Races {life-waves of humanity} as a whole; smaller ones, the various subdivisions. In this some have seen fatalism or inescapable destiny, but it is no more present than in the individual cycles. These groupings are no more arbitrary than are those which the chemist finds among the elements. All are where they are, because they belong there; and everyone has built up his own attractions.

The choosing of environment begins with the individual. The Reincarnating Egos, as has been said, on returning to Earth bring their characters with them — an axiom which, it would seem, could go without saying. Having then well-defined tendencies, they are of necessity drawn to those parents who can give them a body most akin to their characteristics. This teaching casts an entirely new light on the problem of heredity, one in accord with essential justice, as has been shown. When life is viewed from this standpoint, children cannot throw upon their parents the responsibility for the bad tendencies they bring with them, and blame fate and luck for their birth and environment. Parents, of course, may fail to meet the problems they find in their offspring — problems which they, perhaps, helped to create in past lives, and which must, in such event, recoil heavily upon themselves. But that is another story.

Thus, just as the individual chooses his family, so does the family choose its nation and race; that is to say, it is reborn where by its inherent nature it belongs. Therefore individuals are involved in national Karma because they have helped to make it. A narrow and intense nationalism might attach one to a particular nation in one way; while in quite another would a strong feeling of duty toward that nation or a desire to help it.

The old Aztec and other ancient American peoples died out because their own karma — the result of their own life as nations in the far past — fell upon and destroyed them. With nations this heavy operation of karma is always through famine, war, convulsion of nature, and the sterility of the women of the nation. The latter cause comes near the end and sweeps the whole remnant away. And the individual in race or nation is warned by this great doctrine that if he falls into indifference of thought and act, thus molding himself into the general average karma of his race or nation, that national and race karma will at last carry him off in the general destiny. This is why teachers of old cried, “Come ye out and be ye separate.”

With reincarnation the doctrine of karma explains the misery and suffering of the world, and no room is left to accuse Nature of injustice.

The misery of any nation or race is the direct result of the thoughts and acts of the Egos who make up the race or nation. In the dim past they did wickedly and now suffer. They violated the laws of harmony. The immutable rule is that harmony must be restored if violated. So these Egos suffer in making compensation and establishing the equilibrium of the occult cosmos. The whole mass of Egos must go on incarnating and reincarnating in the nation or race until they have all worked out to the end the causes set up. Though the nation may for a time disappear as a physical thing, the Egos that made it do not leave the world, but come out as the makers of some new nation in which they must go on with the task and take either punishment or reward as accords with their karma. Of this law the old Egyptians are an illustration. They certainly rose to a high point of development, and as certainly they were extinguished as a nation. But the souls — the old Egos — live on and are now fulfilling their self-made destiny as some other nation now in our period. They may be the new American nation, or the Jews fated

to wander up and down in the world and suffer much at the hands of others. This process is perfectly just. Take, for instance, the United States and the Red Indians. The latter have been most shamefully treated by the nation. The Indian Egos will be reborn in the new and conquering people, and as members of that great family will be the means themselves of bringing on the due results for such acts as were done against them when they had red bodies. Thus it has happened before, and so it will come about again.

— W. Q. Judge, *The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 96-7 (orig. ed.)

But history shows that often in national disasters, all are not involved. We query why the cyclone, in its seemingly mad rush, chose its victims so curiously; why the earthquake destroyed certain areas and not others; why, when the tidal wave destroyed the city, some had accidentally (?) been elsewhere than at home. Even in the sweeping racial cataclysms the same curious fact is on record. This is strikingly illustrated in the story given in *The Secret Doctrine* of the sinking of the main continent of Atlantis. Before the close of the highly intellectual and brilliant Atlantean civilization, many of the spiritual and higher psychic powers unfolded in the Race. A large portion used these selfishly and became wicked Sorcerers or Black Magicians. On the other hand, many of the nations and tribes turned into what is called esoterically the Right-Hand Path, and became White Magicians, using their powers impersonally. These latter were warned of the coming general disaster by those Great Ones who eternally watch over the Races {life-waves} of men. A striking and graphic description of this period in our ancient history is given in *The Secret Doctrine*, 2:427-9, in which H. P. Blavatsky hints that the story of the Exodus in the Old Testament was built up on legends of this distant event. She tells how the “great King of the dazzling Face” sent his air-vehicles to his chiefs all over the land, and how the great Adepts and their followers escaped to safe quarters of the Earth in Vimānas or air-ships far superior to anything we have today, and became the founders of the Fifth, our Âryan Race {or life-wave}. The description closes with this:

*the nations that were led away, were as thick as the stars of the milky way.... Like as a dragon-snake uncoils slowly its body, so the Sons of men, led on by the Sons of Wisdom, opened their folds, and spreading out, expanded like a running stream of sweet waters.... many of the faint-hearted among them perished on their way. But most were saved.*

One can see the beneficent working of Nature here. Although the evil Atlanteans were destined, of course, to reincarnate later in the Fifth Race, they came into fresh, clean lands, where the followers of the {Karmic} Law had already gained the upper hand, and where opportunities for improvement were greater. They are, nevertheless, a part of ourselves, and it has been stated that we are still suffering from Atlantean karma.

Knowing the close ties that bind together the members of our human family, we must infer that responsibility for the disturbing elements will not end until all are redeemed. Should this fail to be recognized, then the suffering they are certain to cause to the nobler, more advanced, will become a reminder of our unfortunate Atlantean inheritance, and compel action.

Karma, as has been said, is universal. It moves from world to world. Planets are born out of their parent-planets; solar systems and universes, the same. Everything is the result of a previous cause. Nothing comes by chance. The peoples of our Earth make its history in very truth, generate the forces which are so certain to focus at a given time that the great seers can foresee the future to which the Past and Present so surely point. They can tell why and when a Race is to run its course, when cataclysms are due, when the high and low spots of a civilization will appear; and thus know just how and when to use their energies to lighten so far as possible the heavy karma of the world.

Why does this (Karmic) sterility attack and root out certain races at their “appointed hour”? The answer that it is due to a “mental disproportion” between the colonizing and aboriginal races is obviously evasive, since it does not explain the sudden “*checks to fertility*” which so frequently supervene. The dying out of the Hawaiians, for instance, is one of the most mysterious problems of the day. Ethnology will sooner or later have to recognize with Occultists that the true solution has to be sought for in a comprehension of the workings of Karma. As Lefèvre remarks, “the time is drawing near when there will remain nothing but three great human types” (before the Sixth Root-Race dawns [several millions of years hence]), the white (Āryan, Fifth Root-Race), the yellow and the African negro — with their crossings (Atlanto-European divisions). Redskin Indians, Eskimos, Papuans, Australians, Polynesians, etc., etc. — all are dying out. Those who realize that every Root-Race runs through a gamut of seven sub-races with seven branchlets, etc. will understand the “why.” The tide-wave of incarnating Egos has rolled past them to harvest experience in more developed and less senile stocks; and their extinction is hence a Karmic necessity.

— H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 780

Yet in the prognostication of *such future events*, at any rate, all foretold on the authority of cyclic occurrences, there is no psychic phenomenon involved. It is neither *prevision*, nor *prophecy*; no more than is the signaling of a comet or star, several years before its appearance. It is simply knowledge and mathematically correct computations which enable the WISE MEN OF THE EAST to foretell, for instance, that England is on the eve of such or another catastrophe; France, nearing such a point of her cycle, and Europe in general threatened with, or rather, on the eve of, a cataclysm, which her own cycle of racial *Karma has led her to*. The reliability of the information depends, of course, on the acceptance or rejection of the claim for a tremendous period of historical observation. Eastern Initiates maintain that

they have preserved records of the racial development and of events of universal import ever since the beginning of the Fourth Race — that which preceded being traditional. — *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 646

## **FRUITS TO FLOW FROM RESTORATION OF THE TEACHING OF KARMA**

Our civilization is being shaken to its foundations. Many have said that its fate is hanging in the balance. The feeling of instability and uncertainty as to the future is widespread. Earnest people are asking what can restore normal conditions and are answering the question by a growing recognition of the fact that men's hearts must be changed before radical reforms can become effective.

The Great Teachers, two of whom initiated the Theosophical Movement, having foreseen these conditions, sent their Messenger, H. P. Blavatsky, to form a nucleus for a Universal Oneness, and as a necessary preliminary to this, they restated through her the ancient truths which give the basis for ethics. Men are not going to do right unless they see a reason for it; unless their minds are molded in harmony with the facts of Nature. Fed as the Western nations have been, on unpleasant fairy-tales about life, present and future, they are at sea for a rational explanation. Current religious misinterpretations of the original teachings given to every Race, have outraged man's sense of justice; in the groping after truth, a confusion of sects, good, bad, and indifferent, has arisen worse than the Babel of tongues. It is the Ancient Wisdom-Religion, the fountainhead of all the Great Religions and Philosophies of all times, the source of knowledge in Science and Arts — it is this alone which, in its universality and power to coordinate every faculty of the mind, can restore harmony and sanity to our world and evoke the true dignity of human nature.

An honest and whole-hearted belief in the law of Karma in its relation to life as a whole would alone completely change the character of our civilization. This may, perhaps, seem an extravagant claim to those not understanding its deep meaning. Yet the mere broadening of the present-day outlook would, in itself, be a wonderful thing. Human minds are now concentrated on one physical incarnation, a mere wink of the eye in the soul's history, and all events contained in it assume an undue importance in one way and a lack of importance in another. The sense of proportion and perspective is absolutely lost, and can only be regained by lifting the veil and revealing the illimitable vistas beyond. Simple common sense would then call into play the faculties of reflection and judgment, to say nothing of the awakening in the spiritual nature.

Gradually self-discipline would grow, beginning, perhaps, in self-interest, but merging by degrees into something greater, until the character is radically altered. Self-pity and whining would be stamped out when the



realization came that misfortunes had been self-induced, and courage, will, and endurance would be evoked. There would be less condemnation and uncharitable criticism, and more kindness, more patience with the failings of others, if a deeper understanding of the difficulties as well as the possibilities in human nature were in the Race-mind {mind of the human life-wave}. We all know that among the subtle poisons of our life is the tendency to criticize others, to judge them unkindly, to impute to them unworthy motives, etc. And we also know how this takes the edge off every pleasure, and on the contrary, how fresh and clear the air is when suspicion is absent and an atmosphere of healthy sympathy exists.

The knowledge that one is master of his own destiny, would remove the fear that at any time, out of the blue, an avalanche of misfortune might be precipitated, once that the old records are cleaned up; and the knowledge that these old records themselves can be softened in their results or even sometimes neutralized by the force of will intelligently directed, would arouse courage.

The easy-going irresponsibles, the indifferent, would gradually awaken if the truth of Karma were in the minds of the majority, for, by degrees, these sleepers would feel such an invigorating mental atmosphere. Further, when the teaching of Karma is realized, people will not seek to get something for nothing, or envy those who have more than themselves. They will know that time and the rolling cycles adjust all wrongs; that the only way to gain life's treasures is to concentrate on the duty in hand and leave the results to the Law {Karma}.

There is a law of compensation in the Universe, meaning that all evil-doing has its own retribution by Nature's own act. Leave it therefore to the gods to avenge you if you have suffered, and suffered wrongly. "Vengeance is mine," said the Scriptures claimed by the Christians, merely re-echoing an ancient truth, a teaching of the Sages and Seers. Harmony is at the heart of things, for all Nature is orderly, and beautifully moves in system and stately measures. Give justice when you receive injustice. Ally yourselves with the gods, with your own inner god. Requite never hate with hate, for thus you but add fuel to an unholy flame. Requite hatred with compassion and justice. This is the ancient law. Thus also you make no evil Karma for yourself; thus you ally yourself with Nature's own spiritual procedures and you become a child of the cosmic life, which thereafter will beat in your own heart with its undying pulses.

— G. de Purucker: *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, xxvii

Imagine the sense of responsibility which would dignify life if all realized the intimate ties binding together all that is; if each one verily believed that 'no man can live unto himself alone;' that with every act and thought he is either raising or dragging down the hosts of which he is a

part. Even physical health would follow such realization, a natural result of moral health.

We make our own bodies, we make our own lives, we make our own destinies, and we are responsible for it all, spiritually, morally, intellectually, psychically, and even physically. It is a manly doctrine; there is no room in it for moral cowardice, no room in it for casting our responsibility upon the shoulders of another — God, angel, man, or demon

— G. de Purucker, *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 130

Yet, as in every advance that Nature makes, as the cycles in their wheeling course come round, there are some who lag behind and lose sight of their heritage, blinded by the desire of personal gain, by ambition and love of power; so that today there are some who refuse the opportunity that for ages their souls have waited for. The cycles have brought them and ourselves to the point of former achievement and former failure.... We and they have met in the past as in this life, and shall meet again in the future, and by our action today we are forging the links that shall help or mar their progress, as well as our own and that of all humanity, in the future.

But the crucial point of the cycle is past; the fiercest ordeal is over; no powers in heaven or hell can longer stay the onward progress of humanity. The Hosts of Light are already victorious.

— Katherine Tingley, *Theosophy: the Path of the Mystic*, pp. 58-9

# 4

## **The Seven Human Principles**

An Ancient Basis for a New Psychology

Leoline L. Wright

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## INTRODUCTORY

Seven is one of the most important numbers in the teachings of Theosophy, the Wisdom-Religion. It is a key number by which are revealed and explained many of the mysteries of Nature, for in Theosophy it is taught that number and numbers underlie all the processes of 'creation.' This numerical key of seven lies at the root of all evolution, whether physical or spiritual. It is therefore important both in its meanings and application.

There is nothing arbitrary about the use of the number seven as applied to the study of our composite constitution, as this number is found to be universal throughout the Universe. We discover it everywhere. Some common facts are good instances of this, such as the seven layers of the human skin, the musical scale with its seven notes, and the seven colors which make up a ray of sunlight. Then there is the Moon, which Theosophy and Science both show to have close relation to the generation of physical life on our planet. The Moon is governed in its activities by the number seven. Note the recurrence of seven in the gestation period, the phases of the Moon, with the week of seven days, etc. The inquirer has only to look observantly into the matter to find many other examples of the septenary in the world about him.

In Christianity we find our human nature divided by the apostle Paul into three elements: body, soul, and spirit. This division includes, however, the other four principles. Paul was an Initiate in the Mystery-Schools of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion. He was therefore aware of the more complete system which it taught. But then, as well as today, an Initiate in the Mysteries was not at liberty to divulge the meaning of many things. Christian theology, while accepting this threefold division, tells us little about what 'soul' really is, or what is the difference between soul and spirit. Nor can present-day psychology help us. The best known modern psychologists take into account only the lower ranges of soul activity. They study almost exclusively our *physiological* mentality, such emotions as fear, passional desires, and the like. However, this is not surprising. For over a century science has regarded the man as merely a developed ape whose inner life consists of highly specialized reactions to his environment, though a change in this point of view is now seen to be on the way. A number of psychologists of the French school, and a good many others as well, are discovering that to regard man's soul as a complex of merely semi-physiological reactions does not begin to cover the ground. They acknowledge that such a point of view is destructive to all moral and spiritual aspiration. It does not take into account our human nature's spiritual-mental activities. And they are beginning to admit that it is this higher side which is the more important.

Present-day psychology is the newest and most incomplete branch of modern science. How different it was in the great ancient civilizations! They were built around the Mystery-Schools as a nucleus. And those great Esoteric Colleges taught a complete science of the soul, a subject which we moderns name 'psychology.' These Schools or Colleges were the guardians of a Sacred Science which included everything about life, death, man, and the Universe. It included the truths of Religion, Science, and Philosophy in all their immense ranges.

Our present religions, philosophies, and sciences are but pale reflections of that Ancient Knowledge; or else they are new and incomplete growths arising from its remnants. This ancient system, which is referred to in Theosophical works as the Wisdom-Religion, the Secret Doctrine, the Esoteric Philosophy, and the Esoteric Tradition, the Archaic Wisdom, etc., was known all over the ancient world. Clear evidence of this fact can be found by a study and comparison of the basic doctrines and symbologies of all the old World-Religions, including even the Bible. The same is true of the ancient great philosophies. Pythagoras, with his esoteric school at Crotona; Plato in his Academy at Athens; and the Stoics, of whom Marcus Aurelius is a celebrated example, all show, in spite of differences in the form of their systems, that they were teachers of the Wisdom-Religion. Evidence can also be found in archaeological remains the world over and in many other fields of research, should the reader be interested in this fascinating subject.

One of the most important of the teachings of these Mystery-Schools was the sevenfold nature of the manifested Universe, and of its offspring, Man.

## THE MONAD

An explanation of our composite nature with its Seven Principles must include a brief outline of what Theosophy tells us about evolution. Evolution, as taught by the Wisdom-Religion, means an unwrapping, a rolling out; in other words, it is the growth into manifestation or activity of qualities which are latent and invisible in the inner nature of any being. The qualities of a living seed when first dropped into the soil are invisible and latent. But when the time and the conditions are ripe for growth these latent qualities begin to develop, to unwrap or roll out into visibility. An acorn, for example produces first a tiny shoot and then at last the magnificent and sturdy oak.

All organisms, that is, all living beings — plants, animals, men — grow from seeds. In the case of men and most animals these seeds are so minute as to be invisible to any eye but that of the microscope. And yet one of these infinitesimal vital cells may grow into a six-foot man with all

his complex faculties, or into the enormous elephant with its highly specialized organs.

What is it that causes this truly magical growth of an invisible seed into a wondrous individual, such as a great musician or inventor? Why is it that the law of development from within outwards, from invisibility into visibility, is at the root of evolution? It is because at the heart of every seed there is a living Spirit-Soul, Âtman-Buddhi. This Spirit-soul is a spark of the Universal Life-Spirit. It is the urge to self-expression of this invisible Spirit-soul at the core of every organism which causes it to expand, to unfold its own powers through the outward development of faculty and function. Of course it is fed and helped forwards by the stimulation of its environment. But unless there were this living spiritual urge present at its core, the seed would not expand and fructify. A dead seed will not grow, no matter how favorable its environment.

Again, modern science in its theories of evolution has confined its studies to the visible side of Nature — the physical; although there is a new and ultramodern school of scientists whose researches are bringing them rapidly into line with Theosophical teachings. Not only the bodies, however, but the minds and souls of creatures, are subject to evolution. For if evolution is a law of Nature then nothing can be excluded from the action of that law. In every particle of matter there is imprisoned a spark of the universal, indestructible LIFE. This spark is named in Theosophy the ‘Monad,’ a word which means a unit, an indivisible. This Monad is a point, a center of complete, individualized, indestructible consciousness, originating, as said, in the Central Universal LIFE. Such a Monad lives at the core of every organism, from an atom to a star.

But these Monads are in vastly differing degrees of evolution. The Monad at the heart of, say, an atom in the mineral kingdom is much less evolved or unfolded than one which has reached, on its upward evolutionary journey of self-unfoldment, the vegetable or the animal kingdom. The Monad at the core of a human being is immeasurably more advanced than either. The reason is that, during the ages of its progressive self-development through the stages of matter in all the lower kingdoms, it has now reached the point where it has so highly evolved its own latent intellectual and spiritual powers that it can at last manifest as a human being. [The difference between this process, which is a *spiritual* one, and some of the erroneous ideas of Darwinian evolution are fully explained in *Theosophy and Modern Science*, (republished as *Man in Evolution*,) by G. de Purucker.]

There is a Monad at the core of every physical atom. The physical atom is the outmost body or vehicle through which the Monad works and expresses itself. The Monad, when it ensouls a chemical atom is starting at {near} the bottom of the evolutionary ladder. And slowly through countless ages that Monad passes from kingdom to kingdom of Nature, advancing ever upward.

We can understand something of this process if we remember how a plant grows. Back of every plant is what may be called a ‘plant-Monad,’ in other words a spiritual Monad passing through the vegetable phase of its evolutionary journey. A seed is dropped in the soil and immediately that conditions are right, the sleeping or latent energy locked within it ‘wakes up’ and begins the process of building up from the soil a plant-vehicle for itself. Similarly does the Monad make for itself higher and higher vehicles as it passes upwards through the elemental, mineral, vegetable, animal, and human kingdoms — someday to blossom forth in the vesture of humanhood.

The reader will now begin to see that it is these Monads whose activities not only produce, but *are* the very stuff of evolution. The Monadic hosts, high, intermediate, and low in their scale of development, ensoul and build all manifestations of life visible and invisible to us — spiritual, intellectual, psychic, and physical. And they do this because of the spiritual urge at the heart of each Monad, this urge being generated in its origin in the Central Universal Fount of Life.

It is these Monads, with their inner life of urges, activities, and slowly unfolding characteristics, which make up the invisible parts of Nature — that invisible world of inconceivably greater scope and range than our visible. Here in these inner realms work the vast hosts of invisible Monads which are thus the *cause* of visible evolution.

Before passing on to consider man as a seven-principled being, we shall answer here a question that may have arisen in the mind of the student. He may ask: What is the purpose of all this Monadic evolution from kingdom to kingdom and from range to range or plane to plane of evolving being? This purpose can be stated as follows: Each great solar period of evolution is called in Theosophy a Manvantara. In this solar period or Manvantara the Monad starts out at the very beginning as an *unself-conscious* god-spark. And the object of its passage through all the forms of life in that particular solar manvantara is that it may emerge from them as a fully self-conscious god. When the end of that solar period comes, a Monad which has successfully completed its evolution will have first-hand knowledge of — will in fact have *been* — all the life-forms in that Manvantara. It will have absorbed to itself at last, with the help of the Mānasaputras, the power self-consciously to understand and assimilate and use all those experiences. So it becomes a self-conscious god, a Master of Wisdom and Life in that manvantara which it has just rounded out. In a later solar manvantara, the Monad will go on to experience still higher levels of evolution and knowledge.

The Monad at the center of each one of us is far on its way to becoming such a self-conscious god. And this of course means that you and I, who are in reality our own Monads if we could only realize it, are

destined to emerge at the close of this solar Manvantara through which we are now passing as fully-fledged, all-understanding gods.

One of the most beautiful aspects of this teaching is that in thus mounting the evolutionary ladder of being we awaken and stimulate the evolutionary potencies of all the atoms and creatures which we contact on all the planes of experience. It is a law of the Universe — in other words it is in the very nature of things — that we cannot ourselves rise without lifting everything else to some degree. The ethical implications in responsibility and karmic consequences are easily apparent. But let us now go back to our subject of the seven human principles.

## THE HIGHER TRIAD

Man himself, however, are not just a Monad working through a physical body. He is the product of several different lines of evolution combined into that composite nature with which we are all so familiar. It would not be possible for a Monad to work directly through a human body. The Monad is pure Spirit-consciousness, but the body is made of matter which is too dense and sluggish for the Monad to work upon it directly. It would so to speak burn the body up, just as electricity would consume the physical flesh. So intermediate elements between the Monad and body are needed. These must be of a more ethereal and spiritually sensitive nature than physical matter because they have to act as 'transformers.' They must step-down or conduct the spiritual energies of the Monad into the physical organism. Then the directing power of the Monad can inspire and shape our evolution through the experiences of human life. It must be remembered too that the Monad which works through a man is immensely more evolved and powerful than the comparatively unevolved Monad acting, for example, through the form of a vegetable atom.

One of the more ethereal forms of energy-substance used by the Monad as a vehicle to step down or transfer its energies to this Earth-plane is Mind. Mind is a very definite line of human evolution. Our minds are developing all the time on their own lines while our bodies are growing and developing along theirs. And we also carry on mind-evolution {mental evolution} side by side with the spiritual evolution of the Monad above, as well as the evolution of the body and its vital energies below. Mind is the link between the body and the Monad.

And now we understand something more of Paul's meaning when he divided human nature into body, soul, and spirit. Soul is the intermediate portion of human nature, and the higher part of that soul is mind, or intellect.

Before going farther and showing how these three elements resolve themselves naturally into seven, a question which has probably already occurred to the reader should be answered. Where do these principles in



man come from? The Monad, as we have already seen, takes its rise, and is an emanation from, the Universal Cosmic Life or Spirit. It is in one sense the person himself, his immortal Root-principle. But what is the origin of the mind?

Mind as a principle is latent in the Monad. For the Monad, springing as it does from the Central Fire of Cosmic Spirit, contains within itself the seeds or possibilities of everything, even as everything is contained within its Cosmic origin. The part contains everything that the whole contains. One spark is of the same nature throughout as the flame which throws it off. One drop of the ocean is in miniature all that the whole ocean is. So each Monad holds within itself, as being a part of the Cosmic Whole, all the elements and potencies and possibilities that evolution can unfold in the life span of this our Universe. But in the beginning of this universal life-span these potencies are latent, asleep, undeveloped. Then, as the ages pass, and the Monad journeys on its evolutionary pilgrimage from the invisible spiritual and causal worlds ‘outward’ into the visible world of forms and effects, latent potencies — mineral, vegetable, animal — are gradually unwrapped, unfolded, evolved. Finally the time comes when the Monad is ready to take upon itself humanhood. It has advanced to the point where it has completely developed all its lower faculties and is now ready for evolution along mental and intellectual lines.

It was at this point then, ages ago in our evolution, that occurred what H. P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine* calls “the incarnation of the Mānasaputras.” As already explained, the Monad is far above this human plane — too far for it to be able to awaken even the intellectual principle in man’s constitution. For this reason at first the mānasic or mind-element was then still ‘asleep.’ This state of things has been explained as follows:

The course of evolution developed the lower principles and produced at last the form of man with a brain of better and deeper capacity than that of any other animal. But this man in form was not man in mind, and needed the fifth principle, the thinking, perceiving one, to differentiate him from the animal kingdom and to confer the power of becoming self-conscious.

— W. Q. Judge, *The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 53

Thus the intellect of the now almost human being overshadowed by its Monad needed a spark, an impulse to awaken it into consciousness of itself.

This ‘spark’ or awakening touch was given to those evolved human vehicles of the Monad by the ‘Sons of Universal Mind.’ They are called in Esoteric Tradition the *Mānasaputras*, or Sons of Mind. These beings called Mānasaputras are a hierarchy, or range or class, of spiritual entities. They perfected their intellectual evolution in a long, long past cycle of what was equivalent to human experience in a now vanished system of worlds. For this reason the highest of these Mānasaputras are by this time

advanced in their evolution to the status of Cosmic Gods. They are great Consciousnesses who make up, who are, the hierarchy of intellectual self-consciousness in our Universe. As a great hierarchy or group they are what H. P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine* referred to as *Mahat*, or the Universal Mind.

It was these Mânasaputras or Sons of Cosmic Mind who gave the spark, the creative impulse, which awakened mind in the human vehicle already evolved for that purpose by the Monad.

This process was something like the lighting of a candle. You cannot have a flame unless you have the fuel prepared in some definite form ready for lighting. Even a bonfire must be started from carefully laid fuel. In the case of the 'lighting' of mind in the evolved human vehicle, man might thus be compared to a candle. He was a psychological vehicle or instrument evolved by the overshadowing Monad through long ages of evolution. The forces of Nature also contributed, so that when the time came that the creative 'flash' could be given by the Mânasaputras, a flame would spring up, never again to be extinguished. Thus what then was human only in form became in actuality *Manas*, a thinker. And this thinking principle linked the Monad more or less directly to the animal nature, and human evolution was thus immensely quickened.

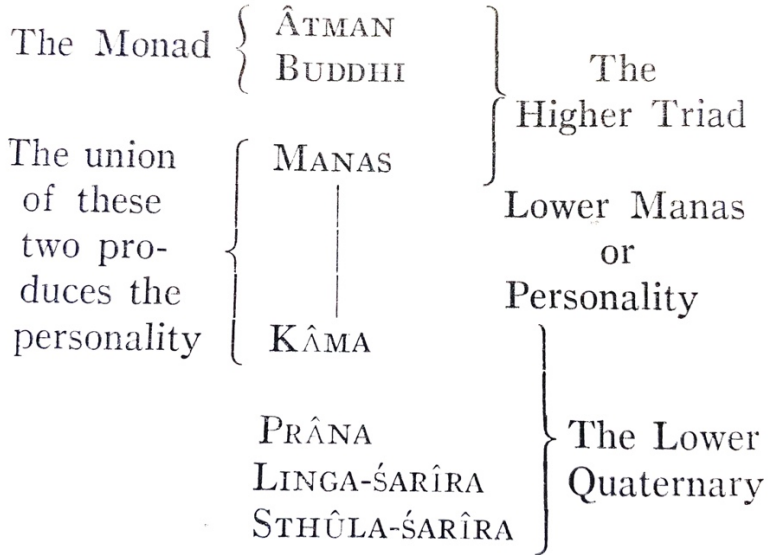
It was then, as said, that man first became truly man. For what differentiates a human being from an animal? Is it not mind, the power to think, to reason, to plan? Man is not guided by instinct alone as the beasts are. He is self-conscious. Sharply developed in him is the Ego, the part which realizes, "I am I and not anyone else. I am myself, not my environment. I am separate from all other things. I can influence or control these other things and bend them to my own uses, and so control my environment. Thus I can shape my destiny to suit myself."

Man alone has this power of self-conscious free-will. He has the power of self-directed choice; and this he derives from Manas the Ego, the self-conscious Thinker, awakened in him by the Mânasaputras. But, if this is the case, why is it, at present at least, that we do not show more power of free-will over ourselves and our destiny? It is this Manas, this Thinker, which in its higher aspects forms the third element of what we call the Higher Triad in man. But before studying the other two principles which make up this higher triad, let us take a quick glance over the whole of composite nature of man.

In the following diagram it is interesting to note that Sanskrit words are used to describe the different aspects of our septenary constitution. This is made necessary by the limitations of European languages. Western science, religion, and philosophy have so long forgotten the knowledge of the metaphysical and spiritual facts of being that no words have been developed to indicate or describe these higher and lower states of consciousness. But in the East the Ancient Sacred Science — Theosophy

or the Esoteric Tradition — has been kept alive. Thus we find in the Sanskrit language, all ready for use, the words needed to make these seven principles easily understandable to those unfamiliar with them. And another reason for the use of Sanskrit is that these terms will then be the same in all languages, thus avoiding the translation of lengthy descriptions.

In the following diagram, the brackets indicate the relationships and some of the interactions of the seven principles.



It will be noticed first of all that what we have called the Monad appears to be dual — composed of two principles, *Âtman* and *Buddhi*. And yet we have been speaking all along of the Monad as a *Unit* of consciousness. But when these two principles are understood, their inseparable existence in human evolution will be understood.

The Sanskrit word *Âtman* means Self. Every being anywhere, no matter how small, no matter how great, is a Self. All these multi-myriad selves are derived from the Cosmic Self, the Universal *Âtman* or Cosmic Life, as sparks are derived from their originating flame. There is the Self or *Âtman* of our Universe from which is derived the *Âtman*, the informing Consciousness of the Solar System; and so on down the mighty scale of evolving beings until we reach humanity. And below humanity every being in all the kingdoms including atoms and electrons and elementals is a Monadic Self derived from the Universal *Âtman* or Self of the Universe.

At the root of our being dwells *his* *Âtman*, the I AM, his Self — his sense of existence, of being alive. This sense of I AM is universal. It is the

same in all creatures. And it is universal and the same in all because the inmost spiritual consciousness of every organism is an integral part of the universal self or Âtman, as a drop is an integral part of the Universal Self or Âtman, as a drop is an integral part of the encompassing ocean. And each single drop is like in composition and nature to every other drop and to the whole ocean itself.

This consciousness of I AM is sometimes difficult to understand, if we have never thought about it before. We are all so familiar with the Ego — it is about all that we know of ourselves. We are steeped in the consciousness of our *differentness* from everyone else. However, we can get some idea of what is meant by watching the young babe. Or we can find it in ourselves when we first awake in the morning — aware of being alive and comfortable but not yet aroused to the sharp edges of our daily lives.

Âtman, the I AM sense in each one of us, is universal and therefore unlike the Ego or Manas from which we derive our sense of I am I. For this Ego-sense is different in every person while, as said, the sense of pure selfhood, of being alive and active, is the same in all creatures, whether human or otherwise. The understanding of this basic Selfhood of universal origin in each of us leads to the realization of true spiritual oneness and develops all our highest, because spiritual, powers.

It has already been noted that Âtman, the heart of the Monad, is in its nature too far above this human plane to work directly here. So the first vehicle or garment with which it clothes itself is Buddhi. This word *Buddhi* imbodyes the idea, to *awaken*. Thus the buddhic faculty in man leads to understanding, seeing into things, because it makes him awake or aware. How many there are who are still ‘asleep’ — unawakened! They are not interested in the common life of humanity — in other people, in the horror of world conditions. Enough if they and theirs have a ‘job’ and an auto and a chance to enjoy life! But the man who has begun to think, to question, to seek, is waking up, particularly if his interest spreads out irresistibly from his own problems to an interest in the problems of others.

*Buddhi* as a principle is spiritual consciousness of the highest kind existing in that grade of evolution to which man belongs. When viewed from the universal standpoint of Âtman, Buddhi is a garment or veil or vehicle of primary substance. But this ‘substance’ is so close to the plane of the divine that viewed from below, from the standpoint of our comparatively gross mentality — it is pure consciousness. And so we can describe Buddhi as spiritual consciousness. Dr. de Purucker in his *Occult Glossary* thus explains this principle:

Buddhi is the principle or organ in man which gives to him spiritual consciousness, and is the vehicle of the most high part of man — the Âtman.

Buddhi is the faculty in Man which manifests as understanding, judgment, discrimination, etc., and it is an inseparable veil or garment of the Âtman.

— {Under “Buddhi.”}

The use of this word ‘inseparable’ explains why we can speak of the Monad when viewed from our point of view as a unit.

Buddhi ‘steps down’ the energies of Âtman to Manas, the Ego. From the standpoint of the Ego, Buddhi is practically a universal principle. It is therefore the seat or organ of impersonal love, that “love of all creatures” which is divine. And in the same sense Buddhi is the origin of man’s conscience, his sense of rectitude and duty. Conscience is rooted in our feeling of duty towards others. It is also a sense of what is right. The right thing is the universal thing — that which everyone ought to do when acting in harmony with spiritual law and order. The Ego is willful — seeks itself and its ‘own way.’ Buddhi moves us to the sacrifice of egotistical feelings and actions to the principle of universal good.

A study of the Higher Triad with its different aspects and their practical relation to our daily problems would be one of the greatest contributions to psychology ever made. For the Ancient Wisdom teaches us to seek and to realize and make use of the almost unlimited spiritual powers which are stored there. It shows how to use them for the mastery of the lower animal and selfish nature by the Higher Triad. It is of incomparably greater utility and inspiration than digging into the ‘libido’ and other underground byways of poor human nature. And as the student goes deeper into this study, he learns the sharp and important difference between the spiritual and the personal will — a knowledge which will be of simply inestimable value to him.

## THE LOWER QUATERNARY

We have outlined thus far a necessarily brief description of the Âtman and the Buddhi principles in our constitution, as well as of Manas, the Ego. We now come to a consideration of those sides of human nature with which we average people are more familiar — the principles which comprise our Lower Quaternary.

The ‘Lower Quaternary,’ as the name implies, consists of four principles: Kâma, Prâna, Linga-śarîra, and Sthûla-śarîra. These four working together form the vehicle in which the Ego, overshadowed and guided by Âtman-Buddhi, reembodies itself on this Earth — in a word, reincarnates.

## KÂMA

The Sanskrit word Kâma means desire. At first thought we may get the idea of Kâma as something low in the scale of human qualities, but such is not necessarily the case.

*Kâma* is the driving or impelling force in the human constitution; *per se* it is colorless, neither good nor bad, and is only such as the mind and soul direct its use. It is the seat of the living electric impulses, desires, aspirations, considered in their energetic aspect. Usually however, although there is a divine Kâma as well as an infernal one, this word is restricted, and wrongly so, to evil desire almost exclusively.

— G. de Purucker, *Occult Glossary*, {Under “Kama.”}

Also, in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*, we find Krishna, who is the personified self of the Cosmos, telling his disciple Arjuna:

In all creatures I am desire regulated by moral fitness. — Ch. vii, 54

Of course in the average man or woman desire is limited as a rule to narrow personal interests and certainly therefore it is not high in quality. We can better understand the range of this principle if we compare the desires of a Christ or a Buddha, in their compassionate self-dedication to the needs of the world, with the desires which motivate a ‘gangster’ — these being examples of extreme aspects of the human kâmic principle.

In the average man desire is neither very high nor very low. It is the work of evolution to train us through experience in many lives to raise the quality of our desires, for these desires obviously form a powerful element in the development of character and therefore of evolution. Unfortunately, due to ignorance and selfishness, man too often use the vital powers of desire and will to secure success for themselves regardless of the rights and welfare of others. So we create disharmony and suffer sooner or later the consequences. This being an ethical universe we have thus had to learn mostly through suffering.

## PRÂNA

*Prâna* signifies ‘life principle’ — vitality. It forms the psycho-electrical field, bounded by the organism, like the air in the lungs. Prâna keeps the astral-physical organisms of all creatures alive and growing. It permeates the Linga-śarîra {astral, or model-body} and the physical body {Sthûla-śarîra} from birth to death with ever-renewing currents of vital-magnetic energies. Prâna also accounts for the falling to pieces of an organism. The death of an organism is caused in the first place by the prolonged wearing-down of that organism by streams of prânic energy

which at last bring it to the point of dissolution. Both death and — as even science is beginning to suspect — sleep come not from the failure of life but from its excess.

### LINGA-ŚARÎRA

This is the ‘model-body’ upon which the physical body is formed. It is like a matrix or mold of ethereal matter into which the atoms of the physical body are built. It is often called the astral body. William Q. Judge wrote of it:

The astral body is made of matter of very fine texture as compared with the visible body, and has a great tensile strength, so that it changes but little during a lifetime, while the physical alters every moment.... The matter of which it is composed is electrical and magnetic in its essence,... The astral body is the guiding model for the physical one, and all the other kingdoms have the same astral model. — *The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 39

It is this astral model, flushed so to speak with Prâna, that preserves our physical identity. We have been told by scientists that within a period of seven years, more or less, the matter of the physical body is completely renewed. Each day we lose atoms which are replaced by others. We are therefore different physical beings today from what we were, say, ten years ago. What is it then that keeps our bodies in shape, so that in spite of this continual flux of entering and departing atoms, which is going on continuously all our lives, each body yet retains its own characteristics of structure? This marvel is due to the model-body which, existing within the physical, molecule for molecule and cell for cell, holds its form so that even scars, deformities, or mere wrinkles are perpetuated.

There is another point which should also be emphasized:

The astral body has in it the real organs of the outer sense organs. In it are the sight, hearing, [taste], power to smell, and the sense of touch.

— *Ibid.*, p. 42

In the case of marking by being born legless, the idea and strong imagination of the mother act so as to cut off or shrivel up the astral leg, and the result is that the molecules, having no model of leg to work on, make no physical leg whatever; and similarly in all such cases. But where we find a man who still feels the leg which the surgeon has cut off, or perceives the fingers that were amputated, then the astral member has not been interfered with, and hence the man feels as if it were still on his person. For knife or acid will not injure the astral model, but in the first stages of its growth ideas and imagination have the power of acid and sharpened steel. — *Ibid.*, p. 41

The Astral Body or Linga-śarîra is made of ‘astral’ matter or substance. Speaking generally, it might be said of course, that it is made of what Science used to call aether. Theosophy, however, can explain much more about the aether than science. The Aether or Astral Light or, to give it its technical name in Theosophy, the Âkâśa is, like everything else, sevenfold. Its highest or innermost levels or reaches are the home of our higher principles. Its lower and grosser levels surround our Earth and we call them the Astral Light. All people cannot see the Astral Light in the way that they can see the surrounding air because they have not developed the astral faculties to enable them to see it.

Psychics and clairvoyants see its faintly luminous coils. It is this star-like luminosity that originated the name ‘astral.’ These sensitives have developed in themselves the astral senses which correspond in their range of activity to the astral plane. But these so-called visions of clairvoyants are seldom anything but glimpses into the lower levels of the astral light. These levels are the ones closest to and surrounding the Earth. They are a welter of images and influences produced upon and within astral matter by man’s unregulated and often evil emotions, thoughts, and desires. Hence these visions are not only misleading but frequently dangerous.

At the moment of death, when the Spirit-soul ‘lets go’ of all the lower principles, they fall apart. The Astral Body then separates out from the physical but does not leave it, as they belong together. And as the physical body disintegrates, the Astral likewise slowly passes away.

### STHÛLA-ŚARÎRA

There are certain interesting facts connected with the physical body, or Sthûla-śarîra, which Theosophy has always taught but which physical science has only recently discovered. One of these facts is that physical matter is ‘mostly holes.’ We are now told by scientists that if all the material spread out in this seemingly solid body of ours were collected into a compact mass, it would actually occupy a space about the size of a pin head!

The body, therefore, though appropriately called the Sthûla-śarîra or ‘gross body,’ is really foam-like, full of vacant spaces, something like a sponge. This is one of the many paradoxes or seeming contradictions which abound throughout Nature and which make the study of her processes so fascinating. The grosser a substance *appears* the more foamy it actually is, and therefore the more illusory. Our bodies appear solid because they are formed of particles of matter in such inconceivably rapid motion that to our senses they seem as if solid. Just as when we whirl a lighted stick fast enough we see what appears to be a complete circle of fire. This indicates one great lesson that we may learn from a consideration of physical matter — that the real things, the permanent things, are



invisible to our physical senses. We do not even *see* physical matter, but only the forms which it takes in the incomprehensible rapidity of its vibrations.

The Sthûla-śarîra illustrates for us another basic spiritual fact of the Cosmos. For it is a convenient example of the law of analogy, “As above so below; as it is below, so is it above.” In other words, the physical body being, in its substances, structures, and functions, an offspring of the Universal Cosmic Life, it is itself a Cosmos in miniature. This being the case, a knowledge of what takes place in physical bodies will, in the light of the archaic Teachings of Theosophy, reveal to us and illustrate faithfully the processes of the invisible spiritual worlds. As Blavatsky tells us:

*Analogy* is the guiding law in Nature, the only true Ariadne’s thread that can lead us, through the inextricable paths of her domain, toward her primal and final mysteries. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 153

The use of this law of analogy therefore — in the action of the nervous system and the circulation of the blood, the nuclear structure of the cells, and many other facts — will provide a wonderful key to the understanding and application of the deeper teachings in regard to the structure and operations of the invisible and causal worlds. To the ignorant the body is a gross drag upon spiritual experience. But when kept in its ‘proper place,’ controlled and intelligently used, the body has its own basic part to play in our evolution. For without it, how could we function in human life, where we are daily gaining such rich lessons in experience and development?

The relation of the Sthûla-śarîra to our evolution may be viewed in two ways:

(1) It is our vehicle of contact with physical Nature, and also with human life where we gain necessary lessons in experience and consequent development. Besides, without a complete knowledge of all the aspects of Nature, divine, spiritual, mental, emotional, vital, astral, and physical, man would never reach the complete evolution of all our faculties.

(2) The Sthûla-śarîra enables our higher principles to act not only upon our own physical atoms but also upon the atoms throughout the whole range of our physical and mental contacts. And this dynamic influence helps unconsciously in the evolution of all those atoms, particularly those used in his own body. We must remember that at the heart of every atom is a Spirit-soul or Monad pouring through it the urge to unfoldment and growth. And the effect of man’s will and evolutionary desires upon these developing Monad-atoms is continuous and immense. So that the physical body has its definite and vital use in our development.

## KÂMA-MANAS — THE PERSONALITY

The everyday self which we live with and imagine that we know thoroughly is called the personality. But it is precisely this personality of whose elements we are so ignorant. And this is true not only of the man in the street but even of the professor of the modern so-called 'science' of psychology. For some of the most popular explanations of the human psychological nature are delvings into what we have already spoken of as the cellar regions, the lower physiological side, of the human psyche or soul.

The whole drama of human life, made up of the struggle within us between the forces of good and evil, centers around the personality. Why is this? If you look at the diagram you will see. It is because the personality is dual, twofold. It is a compound, a resultant of the mingling of the nature of Manas, the Thinking Ego, with Kâma. It may do no harm to repeat that the kind of Kâma exhibited by the ordinary person is selfish passionate desire. It is only the rarest human beings who know much about the higher aspects of Kâma, such as divine desire, although there are many people whose compassionate humanitarian interests and activities are lifting them slowly to those highest planes of desire. Therefore the technical name in Theosophy for the personality is Kâma-Manas. And as humanity is at present constituted, this name is more expressive than Manas-Kâma, there being as said but very few in whom the thinker takes precedence over selfish emotions, or reason over impulse.

Kâma-Manas or the Personality is the instrument, the vehicle, by which the Monad with its spiritual urges and energies is brought into 'remote control' of this mental-material world. All evolution is produced by original Monadic urges and energies poured down or outward through our less spiritual principles. If the Monad were to withdraw its presence, as it does at death, the principles would fall apart and the man would disappear from this physical world.

This personality of ours has been built up in its kâmic parts by the Monad in its passage or pilgrimages through the lower stages or kingdoms of Nature, as already explained. During that time it fashioned what is sometimes called the animal soul, another name for our kâmic nature. And then when this kâmic soul was ready, it was touched into self-consciousness, 'awakened' to humanhood, by the infusion of the divine intellectual fire of the Mânasaputras. Thus Kâma-Manas came into action. It is the combination of the animal soul and the thinking, self-conscious nature in the human constitution.

This personality then began to reincarnate as the vehicle for its Higher Manas. It took human form again and again, life after life on this Earth. But all this time while man has been developing his faculties of will power, imagination, reason, creative intellect, and the like, the instincts and

desires of the animal or kâmic self have been strengthening and developing too, by the very reason of their dynamic alliance with Manas. They have become strong, self-centered, and self-demanding. Thus the two forces in human nature, the spiritual and the animal, have been at war all down the ages. The lower Kâma-mânasîc self always urges to passion, strife, and selfishness; the Higher Mânasîc Ego, inspired by Âtman-Buddhi, slowly through innumerable incarnations has been striving for spiritual mastery.

In this way the lower and material principles are inspired or urged forward in self-unfoldment and are thus slowly transformed and developed from material into spiritual energies. For this is the purpose of life and the object of evolution — to raise the mortal into immortality.

So that today we see our nature hovering upon the point of balance between self-indulgence and self-mastery, the animal and godlike in human nature. And this condition in the individual is naturally reflected in the mass. The present condition of our world well illustrates the situation. Nations on the one hand are urged by ideals of peace, international fraternity, and cooperation. On the other hand they are goaded by greed, ignorance, and the clamor of selfish national interests. It was this very condition which was foreseen by the Great Teachers, the Mahâtmas who, through the work of H. P. Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Society. At the same time they restored to us the knowledge which will enable the Spirit-soul working through our higher nature, both in the individual and in the mass, to win the final victory over selfishness and hatred.

Katherine Tingley once wrote, “Impersonal love is the secret of life.” It is the cure for all present evils, both individual and collective. By ‘impersonal’ is meant self-forgetful love. Even more, it means love for all beings, no matter whether base or noble, no matter how different or hostile to us or dear and close to our hearts. By silencing the Kâma-Manas, the selfish demanding personality, we begin to understand, to love, and to *know* in a wonderful new way, bringing us happiness and peace. Becoming quick to love, and so to understand and forgive, irritation and criticism and resentment fall away from us. No matter what happens we shall then never hinder or be unkind but always try to help. Ultimately we shall go farther still and come to understand and forgive our enemies — the happiest state of all. Broadening then gradually our sympathies, we extend our love to include all nations as well as our own beloved land; and thus we eventually become a power for universal good.

There are truly magical powers wrapped up in man’s higher nature — creative powers which are even now feebly illustrated by intuitive imagination and disciplined will; with the unselfish impulses of our deepest hearts which lead to grand humanitarian activities; and all our dreams and visions and urges towards that spiritual genius which is beginning to unfold in humanity even today. But these seeds of magical powers will not sprout — they cannot — while our whole attention and

desires are concentrated merely upon business interests, selfish self-evasive pleasures, and the race to 'keep up with' or 'get ahead of' everyone else. We are not expected of course to neglect or abandon necessary material pursuits; but in changing our inner *objective* we seize our present opportunity to develop the aspect of Kâma already referred to as divine desire.

The impulse to bless with unselfish service our family or friends, to take an honorable part in civic or national betterment, to give help and consolation to those in sorrow or need — these impulses spring from our Spiritual Monad, Âtman-Buddhi. Under this magic sunshine the dark side of the kâmic principle will wither away; divine Kâma will come into action and coalesce with Lower Manas. Duality will disappear and the two will become welded into a perfect vehicle, a luminous Personality, through which the Spiritual Monad, our Inner God, may pour its divine energies into our human hearts. Such men were Jesus the Christ and Gautama the Buddha.

## WE ARE ROOTED IN A SEVENFOLD UNIVERSE

The sevenfold nature of the Universe has already been referred to. One of the most important teachings of Theosophy tells us that all we see of the real Universe is but its outermost or physical parts. The other six parts are invisible to us. They are built of more ethereal matters than physical and move to higher and finer rates of vibration. We cannot sense them because we have not yet developed the etheric sense organs or the finer perceptions which could reveal them to us. So that six-sevenths of the great organism of Mother Nature is hidden from us at present, just as in the structure of light there are ranges of vibration beginning with the ultraviolet at one end and the infrared at the other. These are either too rapid or too slow to be perceived by our organ of vision, but they nevertheless have a very marked effect upon our health and in other departments of the world of physical causes.

The fact that all things are moved and motivated by inner invisible energies and their living urges, we see around us even in our physical world. A flower or a tree — is not its life of distributing sap, of color transmutation and growth, unseen by us in all but its effects? And a rock is held together by the attractions and repulsions of the atoms and electrons which form the imperceptible side of its structure. For we cannot even see electrons and atoms through the microscope. {We can now.} This fact of the physical and exterior being 'worked from within' is what we call a Law, being universal throughout Nature.

Thus these inner and invisible realms are the causal or creative worlds. They produce the physical Universe. Nature as we see it around us is but the multifold physical organism through which these inner realms

of creative evolution work. But Nature is much more than this. It should properly be called Universal Nature, as has been thus defined:

... ‘Universal Nature’... means Nature-spiritual and material with all the countless hierarchical ranges between, including worlds visible and invisible, beings divine, spiritual, intellectual, ethereal, astral, and physical.

— G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 4

The foregoing will be easier to grasp if we think of it as exemplified in our own human experience. Take our nearest and dearest. All that we can see of them is their physical appearance and activities. But that is the very least of their meaning to us. It is their inner complex invisible selves that we love — their sympathy, intellectual or temperamental fascination, or their moral beauty. These are the *man*. Someone who at first acquaintance may have seemed physically ugly to us becomes at last beautiful because of a noble or loving character. Or another who at first sight charmed because of physical beauty may end in being actually ugly to us when the real nature is discovered to be selfish or cruel. So with the world around us. It is made up of inner forces and invisible creative energies which are the reality of which physical Nature is but the face and form.

There is a direct relationship between the invisible six-sevenths of human beings and the invisible six-sevenths of Nature. In either case the physical aspect is the lowest or seventh principle, the body or Sthûla-śarîra. And as we derive our bodies from the Earth and our vitality indirectly from the physical Sun, so we derive our invisible six principles from the six invisible principles of Universal Nature.

“But,” someone perhaps objects here, “it has already been said that we derive all of our principles from the Monad. The Monad, you have told us, emanates Buddhi, its envelope or garment of spiritual intelligent substance. Then Buddhi produces Manas, Manas unfolds Kâma, and so on down the sevenfold ladder of being. But now you say that man derives his principles from the seven principles of Nature. There seems to be a contradiction here.”

No, because it is just as we see it in human experience. How often we hear the query as to character and environment. Which is the more powerful in shaping a person’s life — his inborn character or the environment into which he is born? In the last analysis we must agree that while environment is tremendously important, character must actually lead in formative power. Otherwise we should never see those cases of people born in poverty who have raised themselves to the pinnacles of achievement. The well-known phrase, a ‘self-made man,’ has sprung from this fact — that the real directing power of a person’s life is within himself. When strong enough it cannot be nullified by his surroundings.

Our own characteristic principles spring from our spiritual individuality, the Monad. But these principles of ours are also acted upon by the external principles of Nature. An acorn will produce only an oak tree. But the acorn is fed by water from the air and chemicals in the soil. It later draws in solar vitality to build up its cells and produce color in its leaves and blossoms. Man likewise, the divine seed of the Universe, draws sustenance from the surrounding seven principles of Nature. The Astral Body cannot be fed from the Earth, only by its own elements contained in the lower levels of the ether; and so on up the scale. Each principle draws its sustenance from higher and higher levels of the invisible six higher principles of Nature.

All our principles are dual. Not dual in the sense of being in two parts like a box and its cover, but two in action in the same way that the electric magnet has a positive and a negative pole. Every principle has an energetic, that is a positive consciousness side, and a substance or negative side. And it is through this latter that the consciousness which derives from the Monad is able to work on the lower planes of being. The consciousness side is spiritual electricity derived from the Life-force of the Monad. The material side is drawn by the magnetic attractions of this Life-force from the reservoirs of life-atoms of the corresponding principles in sevenfold Nature.

We must also remember that the Monad itself is an integral part of *spiritual* Nature. It is an emanation of the Root-consciousness of our Universe, the Cosmic Self, and expresses its homogeneous energy through its immediate vehicle Buddhi. So that we realize that just as we derive our physical energy indirectly from the Sun, we derive our spiritual life indirectly through the Monad from the Spiritual Energies of Universal Nature. It might be added here that the Sun and all the planets are likewise sevenfold. And it is these inner principles of the Solar System to which Theosophy refers when it speaks of the 'inner worlds.' It is in the relation of our seven principles to the seven principles of the Sun and some of its planets that the explanation of this whole matter lies.

This subject is one of the most fascinating of all the Theosophical teachings, involving the glorious destiny of humanity with its experiences and adventures in the inner worlds. But it is too wide-reaching and important to be dealt with adequately here. The reader is recommended to reserve it for later study.

## **AN ANCIENT BASIS FOR A NEW PSYCHOLOGY**

The final test of any idea lies in its power of practical application to the difficulties of human life. Can it help us to develop and strengthen character? Will it lead us into more satisfactory human relationships, giving a greater understanding of our fellow-men with consequent

capacity to help them? Will it give us a larger power to control environment and direct our own destiny? Theosophy answers that the knowledge it confers of the composite nature of man puts into our hands the practical means which enable us to do all these things; and thus it gives us the basis of a sound and workable psychology.

Psychology is one of the most popular subjects in our present-day world. Its uses and implications are evident even to the thoughtless. Such expressions as 'the psychology of salesmanship,' 'mass psychology,' etc., indicate how widely spread is the perception of the importance, for success in any field, of understanding the basic principles of human nature. And the use of every form of commercial or political slogan to create consumer or voter psychology illustrates this point.

If a person will study himself but for one day he will be amazed to see the wide range of moods, impulses, and character trends that his thoughts and actions will exhibit. And he will also be astonished to find how very little he knows about what goes on in his inner Self. He will come to realize that he is almost completely at the mercy of these shifting currents of consciousness upon which he is more or less dangerously drifting — dangerous because of his ignorance of the source or the meaning of these contradictions within himself.

In fact, it is the almost universal *discontinuity* of human nature that shows how composite we are. And this rather highbrow statement means that the inability of the average man to hold one line of thought or feeling or willing for any considerable length of time indicates that there are different and opposing elements in his make-up. These prevent him from continuing in the same frame of mind or feeling for very long at one time. Obviously, then, until we master these opposing elements — bring them into harmony and learn to direct them — they will continue to run amuck in our lives. But to be able to master them, must we not begin by knowing what and where they are?

Then we go a step farther and examine the dual personality — how it works, how to understand it and direct its energies. For here in this dual personality is where the battle is waged in the evolution of the human being into something higher. It is in the struggle between the personal and the divine.

This struggle centers in the dual personality. And this personality is dragged down now by its alliance with Kâma, and now uplifted and purified by its union with Higher Manas. H. P. Blavatsky in *The Key to Theosophy* gives us a very clear and complete analysis of this dual psychology in human nature. At one point she tells us of the

*essential*, inherent, characteristic, heaven-aspiring mind (higher *Manas*) and... the human quality of thinking, or animal cogitation, rationalized owing to the superiority of the human brain, the *Kâma*-tending or lower *Manas*. — p. 184

We must get a practical conception of these two elements in ourselves. We must learn how to recognize each element in its workings in our daily lives; how to cultivate the Higher Manas and how to transform its lower Kâma-Mânasic side into an instrument or vehicle for the use of the Higher Manas. Until we have this knowledge and can put it into self-conscious operation, we will be at the mercy, not only of our moods and weaknesses, but will also react injuriously to the moods and weaknesses of others.

Self-consciousness means self-recognition. It is the power of Manas as the Thinker to realize itself as a separate individual being, different in character and capacities from all other beings. From this follows a recognition of our relationship with others and to our environment — what these mean to us and how to react to them.

It is in this field of self-consciousness that free-will in man first arises. Through his recognition of himself in relation to others and to his environment there comes home to him a realization of his power to develop himself and use his circumstances and relationships to further his own desires and aims. But it is here in this field of self-consciousness that the struggle of duality in his nature takes place. Recognizing these facts, man can apply them to the selfish personal ends of the animal nature below, or he can subject his personal Will to the silent but ever present demands of the Higher Manas. Here at this point, as said, the struggle of human evolution concentrates.

As man progresses he learns to control and to dedicate the lower kâmic nature to the service of the Higher Manas. If he fails to do this, he deteriorates. If he uses his self-conscious free-will to injure others — or even only for his own personal ends — he makes the kind of karma that produces sufferings and failure. Yet, even so, through these sufferings and failures he slowly learns and develops. And at last through many lives the personality is brought to realize that only the alliance with Higher Manas can bring peace and happiness.

When we reach this point we first know true freedom. Knowledge of the *spiritual* psychology taught by Theosophy convinces us that only when the Will voluntarily subjects itself to the good of others does it become really free. A person acting entirely from selfish animal instinct is merely willful. And he suffers as a slave to fear and envy and every form of personal frustration. He only imagines himself to be free.

We may use an extreme case to illustrate this important point. Compare the man of civic virtue, who willingly lives in entire conformity with the equitable laws of his community, with the hunted existence of the habitual law-breaker. Most criminals pass the greater part of their lives in prison, while the more notorious ones who may escape imprisonment live under the heel of some petty criminal dictator who, like themselves, is generally short lived. But the man who obeys the ethical dictates of



oneness and gladly adjusts his life to the laws of his country enjoys freedom of body, mind, and spirit.

Moreover, in exact proportion as we consciously discipline our free-will by conforming to the good of others do we expand in consciousness. For this attitude means that we are turning the personality to the light and power of Higher Manas, and are thus opening our whole lower nature to the divine.

The reason why in following this course we are expanding our daily consciousness and opening our lower selves to the divine, lies in the nature of Buddhi and Âtman. Âtman, as already explained, is the ray of the Cosmic Universal Self which dwells at the innermost center of each of us. It is identical in us all, being therefore the root of universal oneness. Âtman is pure divine consciousness at one with the universal source from which it springs.

Buddhi is the divine vehicle of universal consciousness. It is emanated from Âtman. Buddhi therefore partakes of the universal nature of Âtman. Within Buddhi lie all the universal potencies of Âtman — impersonal love of all creatures, genius in its highest and divine expression, intelligence in its most glorious and abstract power.

Thinking this over we see that when any personality strongly turns to Higher Manas and obeys its mandates of love and compassion and self-dedication to the universal and the real, it brings itself under the quickening power of the Buddhist Radiance. For this Buddhist Radiance broods like a divine presence over the nature and activities of Higher Manas. This radiance is always there. But most personalities are so saturated and obscured in a fog of selfishness and petty personal interests that the pure rays of the Buddhist Splendor cannot penetrate to their brain-minds.

But when, through deliberate self-discipline, these fogs are cleared away, then Manas is free to ally itself with Buddhi without hindrance. It is no longer preoccupied with the effort to control the distracting struggles of the Kâma-Manas. When this happy time arrives, then the Buddhist power of impersonal love, the stimulation of divine and creative intellect, will quicken all the lower man. Unsuspected faculties and powers will begin to unfold in the hitherto limited personality. It will grow almost daily in peace and happiness and the ability to help and bless those with whom it lives.

This is why virtue and unselfishness are truly and literally their own reward. And this too is why the practice of oneness and the spiritual discipline of the human will can lead to a magnificent expansion of consciousness. Such people, living under the glory of the Buddhist Splendor, are on the way to becoming gods in human form.

If the student will compare this system of truly spiritual psychology with the other systems in vogue today, he will see how much farther it

goes in explaining himself to himself and in throwing light upon the complex world of people about him.

The following passage from G. de Purucker's *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy* (pp. 123-124) will be illuminating in this connection. He tells us that the word psychology

is ordinarily used to signify in our days and in the seats of learning in the Occident {the West} a study more or less cloudy, mostly beclouded with doubts and hypotheses, actual guess-work, meaning little more than a kind of mental physiology, practically nothing more than the working of the brain-mind in the lowest astral-psychical apparatus of the human mind. But in our philosophy the word psychology is used to mean something very different, and of a nobler character: we might call it pneumatology, or the science or the study of spirit, because all the inner faculties and powers of man ultimately spring from his spirit. But as this word "pneumatology" is an unusual one and might cause confusion, let us retain the word "psychology." We mean by it the study of the inner economy of man, the inter-connection of his principles, so to speak, or centers of energy or force — what the man really is inwardly.

Theosophy, then, confidently offers this system of psychology, knowing that the man who will apply it to himself and the problems of his daily life will find it supremely practical. It is not new. For it was founded ages ago on the always-existing and unchangeable laws of that Universe of which human beings — their nature, problems, and evolution — are an inseparable part.

It is not experimental. For it was developed and tested, and made as nearly infallible as anything in this world can be, by "the seers and sages of the ages," who, as G. de Purucker tells us, have

penetrated behind and beyond the veil of appearances; have gone behind that veil to the roots of things; have sent their souls deep into the womb of being and have brought back knowledge therefrom. Wonderful indeed are the systems of thought that these great Seers and Sages of the ages have formulated in human language, touching every phase of the human being; systems which are so symmetrical, so profound in philosophical and scientific reach, that every fact that exists in human psychology finds its proper niche, its proper pigeon-hole so to say, its exact lodgment, where it belongs. — *The Masters and the Path of Occultism*, pp. 17-18

The only thing new today in this ancient system is its "formulation in human language" with a few necessary adjustments to the modern point of view. It stands as it has always stood, upon its demonstration of Cosmic Law, revealing man as a sevenfold being like the Universe around him. And pointing out as it has always done the only road to happiness — harmony in thought and word and deed with the Universal Heart of Impersonal Love in which spiritually we all live and move and have our being.

# 5

## After Death — What?

Leoline L. Wright

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## INTRODUCTORY

Death is the Opener, the One giving vision; Death is the greatest and loveliest change that the heart of Nature has in store for us.

— G. de Purucker, *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*

“O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?” We are all familiar with these beautiful words of Paul, but alas, how little real consolation have they given to bereaved hearts! For there has been no teaching or experience to bear out their promise of divine assurance. And yet the truth has been close beside us all the time, whispering to our hearts in the very voice of our own love for our ‘departed:’ *Spiritual man is eternal: there are no dead.*

Love itself is the evidence of our spiritual survival — true love, which is unselfish and undemanding, pure, forgiving, and — indestructible. Can we ever cease to love, though we may at least cease continually to mourn, those who have preceded us into the Land of Light? Our love, just because it is indestructible, must spring from something in us which is also undying, for how can a quality be greater than the source from which it springs?

It is here, in love itself, that we must look for proofs that the human spirit lives for all time. But we must not forget that it is real love only, and not selfish emotional clinging, that can open for us the door of true spiritual communion with our departed.

Theosophy tells us that the seeming separation from our loved ones at death is not a reality, and that we live in illusions. Does not even physical science tell us that matter is ‘mostly holes’? Yet matter and external life seem to have become for us all that we care to understand. We live almost entirely in the material aims and interests of our personalities — our brain-minds, or our emotional mentality. And these personalities, being of the Earth earthy, and bound up with the bodily things that perish with the body, themselves die and pass away from human ken. The great lesson we have to learn, if we would keep in spiritual touch not only with the dead but with all those who are absent from us in the flesh, is the fleeting nature of the personality. We must learn to understand our personal selves for the transitory things they are. Then, discovering and living in the spiritual reality behind them and within them, we shall find our inner Immortal Selves and begin to live in and for that permanent root of our being. When we can do that, we shall *see*; we shall *know* ourselves as being immortal today — now — in this moment! And we shall then also recognize the true Selves of those we love, and experience the fact, in every moment of our lives, that we are together always; always in real touch with one another even when the bodily eyes do not see the beloved face and the bodily ears hear not the voice of the

absent. It is knowledge alone of our Spiritual Selves and of the inner Spiritual Selves of those we love that will give us the victory over death.

There is indeed truth to be had. It is within the power of each one of us to solve all our problems and find healing for every sorrow. Death is not a mystery in the sense of something that cannot be understood. The truths about death are within the reach of all of us.

It is only our ignorance of the spiritual facts behind material life that surrounds death with such grief, and dread, and fearfulness. If we will but have courage and determination we may lift the veil and find, by means of our own awakened spiritual faculties, that death is but an entrance to a higher form of being on a plane where we and our loved ones are inseparable; and that, together always, “we advance from age to age and from heights to greater heights forever.”

Ignorance is man’s greatest enemy, and above all else ignorance of his own nature. *Man, know thyself!* for in thee lie all the possibilities and realities of the Universe. It is because most of us know practically nothing of ourselves beyond that narrow groove of living in which our thoughts and feelings daily repeat themselves, that we are ignorant about why we are here and whither we are bound.

The illusory and deceptive nature of material things is being gradually brought home to the thoughtful by the work of modern science. Physicists, for example, tell us that our bodies in the last analysis are made up of small electric particles which science classifies as electrons, protons, neutrons, etc., but which Theosophy calls ‘lives’ or life-atoms. If all the particles in a man’s body could be packed together, we are told they would be no larger than a speck of dust. And yet it is this speck — spread out as it were by the magic of the life forces — which makes this relatively enormous, seemingly solid physical body. Similarly, a table, a block of marble, or any ‘solid’ body is really a mass of these particles vibrating with such inconceivable rapidity that our eyes cannot see between them, and so we sense the illusion of solidity; as when we whirl a lighted stick, it appears to our vision like a complete circle of fire. Thus we understand how it is that what we have always thought of as ‘solid reality’ is actually an illusion, though real enough when looked at from the viewpoint of experience.

We have also recently discovered that there are forms of matter which we cannot see, because their rates of vibration are not perceptible to our senses — like infrared and the ultraviolet light rays, one too slow and the other too swift in its oscillations for us to see them, though their existence is proved by photography and other experimental tests.

If then we are to understand the mysteries of life and death — to see and to know those things of the spiritual realms which are beyond our present perceptions, we must realize the deceptive nature of merely material things. And we have to recognize the meaning to us of the

existence of forms of matter which are beyond our present ken. We must understand what science is just beginning to demonstrate, but which Theosophy, the Ancient Wisdom-Science, has taught for ages: that the real Universe is built, not of matter, but of consciousness. Man is not a body, for that is illusory. He is a center, a unit of consciousness, imbodyed in a garment of impermanent flesh.

The body and the personality or brain-mind — that is, our everyday selves — are not of course to be undervalued, for they are our tools, our apparatus for experience in the world around us where our present evolution is taking place. Indeed, a true understanding of our personalities would enable us to develop them into a beauty and usefulness now undreamed of. But we cannot do this, nor can they be trained to serve us properly, until we can step aside in our thoughts and view them in their relation to the deeper, undying Self in which lies the key to all our ‘mysteries’

We are bewildered often by our own moods and mental conditions. We do not understand why we are so changeable from day to day. But we know that there is within us something permanent which can recognize these changes and observe them, something by which we have carried forward our sense of identity from childhood to old age, and through all the experiences which so greatly alter character. This permanence within is the true self, which persists beneath our moods much as the sea remains unaltered for all the waxing and waning tides and storms that undulate its surface; and this abiding reality within is the Spiritual Self in man.

In thinking this over we see that the real Man can be best understood if we regard him not so much as a body or a mind, but as a consciousness. The word ‘consciousness’ is one with which we should familiarize ourselves, for consciousness is the stuff with which a student of Theosophy should familiarize himself, for consciousness is the stuff with which evolution works. It is the basis of all life and growth and being. And man is really a complex of different kinds of consciousness in which the Spiritual Self is the binding element — the invisible core, so to speak. Even the leading exponents of science no longer look upon consciousness as something which is a by-product of the brain, but as the fundamental stuff of existence. [See *The Esoteric Tradition*, Vol. I, pp. 409-413.]

Now what do we mean by consciousness? Radically, it is the sense of I AM: I exist: I am alive, feeling, and experiencing. But this I AM is only the Root of ourselves, the impersonal, universal basis. During life this sense of root-consciousness develops into many forms: bodily consciousness, emotional and mental consciousness, and greatest of all, self-consciousness: the sense of *I AM I* — I am myself and no one else. Each of these various kinds of consciousness itself grows into a complex, or bundle, of energies, which exist in us as centers of activity.

That this is true we recognize in the fact that different individuals are pretty sure to think or feel in certain characteristic ways. We do not expect a miser to act upon a sudden impulse of generosity. He has built up through thought and habit certain strong centers of feeling that dominate him, even when generosity might serve his own interests. But most of us have not developed in so definite a way and so are hardly aware of the growth of this inner psychological organism of loosely knitted centers of feeling, any more than we are aware of the growth of our bodies.

Nevertheless, these centers are there. We identify ourselves daily, first with one then with another, as our moods testify. We have built these centers ourselves throughout the years. They are the basis of our characters and actions. All the tyrannies of temperament, the difficulty of breaking habits or getting rid of prejudices are due to the existence of these centers of energy which we have all unaware been building within us all our lives. So it is to the study of consciousness that Theosophy first of all directs us. The mystery of death is one of the mysteries of consciousness.

## SLEEP AND DEATH

The similarity between sleep and death has impressed all thinkers. The ancient Greeks had a saying: 'Sleep and death are brothers.' For death is the same phenomenon as sleep on a larger and deeper scale. We all recognize sleep as a temporary state because we understand it, or imagine that we do. But we think of death as the end of life when, as a matter of fact, death should not be coupled with life in that way. We ought not to say 'life and death' but *birth and death*. We do not think of birth as a final thing because we know it is followed by death. But Theosophy shows us that neither is death final. Death is not only a birth of the spiritual Man into a higher sphere of existence, but death in its turn is followed eventually by man's rebirth upon Earth. So that it is life or consciousness which is the great enduring fact; and birth and death are but rhythmic events in the endless circle of the conscious evolution of all things.

Thus in our daily experiences we find that sleeping and waking are also the rhythmic events through which this life rounds out our personal development. If we would but observe ourselves more closely in the light of Theosophical teachings, and would link up death with the experiences of our ordinary consciousness, it would cease to be such a dark and hopeless riddle. Once recognized as an understandable part of our evolution and as being rich in interest and new discoveries for the mind and heart, the study of death adds a new and wonderful chapter to the romance of our spiritual history.

... I tell you, my Brothers, that each one of you, given the right key, can solve all the mysteries of Sleep and therefore of Death, because Sleep

and Death are psycho-physical brothers.... Exactly the same succession of events takes place in death that ensues when we lay ourselves in bed at night and drop off into that wonderland of consciousness we call Sleep;... Death and Sleep are brothers. What happens in sleep takes place in death — but perfectly so. What happens in death and after death, takes place when we sleep — but imperfectly so.

— G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, No. 19

Now if we consider a little more observantly our various states of consciousness, we find another valuable clue. But what do we mean by ‘states of consciousness’? Most of us, you see, rarely think of ourselves as anything but bodies animated by a physical brain. We do not go deeply enough into our own inner life to realize that the real part of us consists of our consciousness centering itself at different times in different parts of our constitution. This is very simple to understand if we will reflect upon the fact that even our commonplace daily life is made up of states of consciousness as different as possible from one another.

Some of these ‘states’ or functions of our consciousness are emotional, such as anger, grief, happiness, or excitement; occasionally they are purely intellectual, as in the work of a scientist or a writer; again we may center ourselves, when we are hungry or tired or have suffered a painful accident, entirely in the body. At night our consciousness passes into still other and less familiar functions or aspects of ourselves.

Nearly everyone has had the experience, when walking along the street, or in reading or conversing, of noticing something that instantly recalled a vivid dream of the preceding night. Or, upon waking in the morning, one’s mind is full of some dream experience that, though sharp and significant at the moment, fades hopelessly as waking consciousness returns. In the first instance the dream might never have been remembered but for the external event which recalled it. Both instances show, however, that we have experiences in consciousness of which we may remain ordinarily unaware, but which on their own level are as vivid as those of the brain when awake. How many such experiences has the inner Self not had that are never recollected by the waking self! Yet they have existed, have at the moment been as real as waking life, as real as those infrared and ultraviolet rays which we never see. Moreover they have had their share in shaping us to what we are; and herein lies the clue above referred to.

So if we would understand death we must study our own consciousness, we must *know ourselves*. For, as already emphasized, consciousness is the fundamental fact of the Universe. Modern science, so long convinced that consciousness was a mere by-product of matter, is now gradually, through some of our foremost scientists, coming to the Theosophical point of view. Men like Einstein, Planck, Eddington, Jeans, Lodge, and Millikan are beginning to talk about consciousness as the



reality behind all phenomena. Two passages are here quoted from men of different temperaments and outlook, the first being from Max Planck, regarded as one of the most sound and most original researchers:

... I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness. — *The Observer*, London, Jan. 25, 1931

Sir James H. Jeans, another original scientific researcher, expresses the same idea in almost identical words:

I incline to the idealistic theory that consciousness is fundamental, and that the material universe is derivative from consciousness, not consciousness from the material universe.... It may well be, it seems to me, that each individual consciousness ought to be compared to a brain-cell in a universal mind. — *The Observer*, London, Jan. 4, 1931

With the basic thoughts expressed in the above quotations Theosophy, the Ancient Wisdom, is in complete agreement. It has been teaching them as long as humanity has existed. But we now begin to see where this idea leads us: If consciousness is the fundamental reality in the Universe and each person is an individual center of that consciousness, this shows him to be as real and therefore as indestructible as the Universe itself. He is a droplet of the Universal Life.

Indeed, the Universe itself is made up of consciousnesses, stretching in innumerable degrees of development downward from humanity to the lower kingdoms, to the electron, and even below; then upward, from man to Divinity above him — an endless scale of hierarchical beings of which we are an integral part. We are parts of a living whole, so that until the Universe itself passes away, we and all creatures composing it cannot cease to exist. We are sharers in its continuity.

This idea is emphasized again and again in Theosophical literature, but particularly by G. de Purucker, who tells us:

You don't live outside of the Universe, you are a part of it, as a part is an integral portion of the whole.... What the Universe is, that you are; what you are, the Universe is. — *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, No. 20

Know thyself, O son of man! For in thee lie all the mysteries of the Universe. Thou art its child; inseparable from it shalt thou ever be; for It is thou and thou art It. This is the pathway to all wisdom, to all knowledge, to all achievement. It is also therefore the pathway of evolution — of evolving, of unfolding, what is folded up or latent within you.

— *Ibid.*, Series II, No. 30

In connection with the similarity between sleep and death the following interesting suggestion has been made:

If one desire to know how he will feel when he dies, or what he will cognize at the moment of death, let him then when he lies down in his bed to sleep, grip his consciousness with his will and study the actual processes of his 'falling asleep' — if he can! It is easy enough to do this once the idea is grasped and practice in the exercise has become more or less familiar.

— G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, pp. 832-833

We must *re-educate* ourselves if we would be able to solve life's deeper problems. It is our present habit to identify ourselves with our personal consciousness; that is, those mental and emotional concerns which center in self-interest or personal desire. If we would understand and conquer the mysteries of either life or death we must study ourself as a center of *spiritual* consciousness, a Divine Pilgrim progressing ever upward upon the glorious pathway of self-directed evolution.

## WHY DO WE DIE?

Man dies because he is, in his innermost, a spiritual being. Life on this Earth is only part of his evolution. The Spirit-soul of man is native to the invisible spiritual worlds and only sojourns here for a while in order to round out its experience and to afford an opportunity for growth to the innumerable less evolved entities, such as life-atoms, which make up its earthly vehicle.

The Spiritual man reincarnates here during life after life after life; but between these lives it returns to its home in the inner worlds and pursues there the higher ranges of its evolution.

The real reason why we die is because, deep within us, the Spiritual Self feels the call of its 'homeland.' The time comes when it grows weary of the burden of flesh and longs for the freedom and light of the spiritual realms. So, little by little in the case of the average human being, the spirit loosens its hold upon its earthly tenement and prepares to depart upon its sublime homeward way.

What we call 'death' means far more than almost anyone realizes. Laying down its physical body or encasement is not all that the spiritual tenant has to do in order to be free for its journey to the inner spheres. For man is a composite being. He has not only a physical body but his spirit-Soul also uses a psychological vehicle — his personality. This is made up of mental and emotional states of consciousness. It is a complex tissue which in its selfishness and materiality weighs down the Spirit even more heavily than does the gross physical body. This garment of personality must also be sloughed off and must in its turn suffer dissolution. And this later process is called in the Esoteric Philosophy, the 'second death.'

Death therefore is really the breaking up of these two lower aspects of consciousness, the physical and the psychological, into their respective elements. The body is dissolved and disappears. All the ephemeral energy centers of the psychological nature — those of the passions, the earthly desires and appetites, and the purely personal mental activities — dissolve away into the life-atoms of which they were built by the thoughts and actions of the individual who has been using them. The Real Man, the Spiritual Self, having thus sloughed off — like the butterfly its chrysalis — these enshrouding Earth-vehicles, can then wing its way into the freedom and joy of its native spiritual realms.

The whole wonderful, mystical process of death is assisted by the law of periodicity which governs the life of all things. For death and birth are themselves twin manifestations of this universal law of periodicity. All life has two poles, the positive and the negative. Everything swings pendulum-like between night and day, heat and cold, ebb and flow, storm and sunshine, systole and diastole, sleeping and waking — also between birth and death. But as the second of each of these pairs — the ebb, the cold, the systole, and sleep — are really only periods in themselves and not endings, so Theosophy maintains that death is not an ending but is the beginning of a period of life of another kind. And being but a period, it must be followed again by birth.

So it is this law of periodicity underlying the manifestation of all active, composite beings which assists the Spiritual Self to achieve freedom from its earthly tabernacle. But this event, this so-called ‘death’ — which we can see — is only the turn of the tide, beyond which the undying, physically invisible self is carried outward by its spiritual ebb upon the boundless ocean of unending existence.

Let us remember, however, that

... Death is never sudden;... nothing goes in nature by violent transitions. Everything is gradual, and as it required a long and gradual development to produce the living human being, so time is required to completely withdraw vitality from the carcass.

— H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, p. 480

Old age is nothing to fear. It is a blessing. It is a splendor seen as through a veil, of the life beyond, the higher life, the life in which the higher incarnating Ego lives, literally. Shadows: coming events casting their shadows before, the shadows of the splendor to be: such is a fine old age!

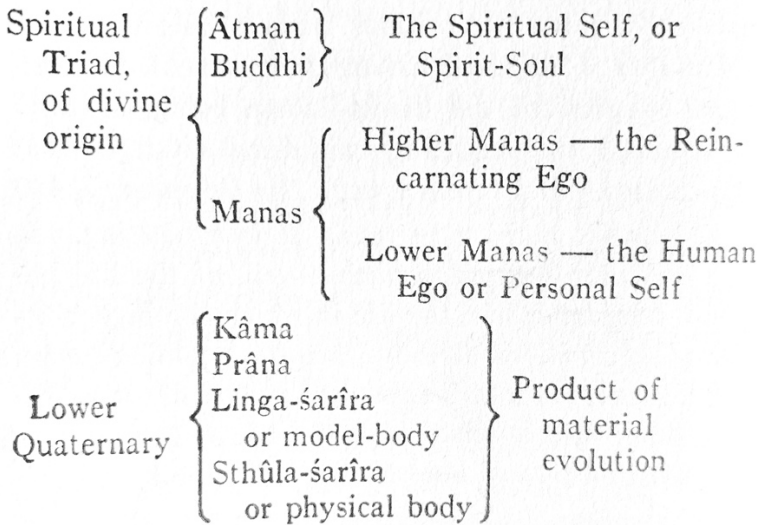
— G. de Purucker, *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, p. 32

## SEVEN HUMAN PRINCIPLES

In order to understand more clearly what happens after death and how the inner Self, the Spiritual Self, abandons one by one the garments or

vehicles through which it gains experience here, let us briefly examine the seven principles of our composite nature.

The following diagram, beginning with the spiritual as the first and highest principle, will give a brief idea of them:



Âtman-Buddhi is the Monad, the Spirit-Soul. The word ‘Monad’ means a unit of life or consciousness — an individual. A Monad exists at the heart of every being — star, planet, animal, plant, atom, electron — no matter what. In man we can regard it more graphically as his Spiritual Self, the sense of *I am*. Âtman is a ray of pure Universal Spirit, linking us with the *ALL*. Buddhi is pure intelligence, wisdom, and love. It acts as a vehicle or channel to step down the Light of the Universal into the man’s constitution. From Buddhi spring all our highest qualities: compassion, discrimination, sympathy, and conscience, as well as the visions of genuine spiritual seership or exalted genius. Âtman-Buddhi is pure consciousness, which is common to all beings, though without Manas (as in the animals) it cannot function intellectually.

Manas is the Thinker in man. It is his Ego, the seat of self-consciousness, by which he feels, “I am I and no one else.” Through it he relates consciously to others and to our environment and thus is able to carry on his own self-directed evolution. It is Manas which gathers in and remembers the experiences of individual life in all the worlds; and these, when finally absorbed by the Universal Spirit, constantly enrich the unfoldment of Cosmic Consciousness. These three higher principles are divine in their origin.

The Lower Quaternary is that composite vehicle, made up of the animal-vital qualities in Nature, which evolution on this Earth in past ages

prepared for the use of Manas, the self-conscious Thinker. In this diagram we observe that Manas is dual, for this self-conscious Thinker or Ego, once it takes up its work on this Earth by means of a physical body, must associate itself on its lower side with the animal quaternary. This association it is which makes the personality or human Ego, which we call the Lower Manas.

But the higher side of Manas is associated with the wisdom and light of Buddhi; and it is this higher side which is the Reincarnating Ego, the Higher Manas. The Reincarnating Ego does not experience death; but Lower Manas, being the product only of the association of Manas with the mortal part of human nature, exists but during Earth-life and meets its dissolution at the Second Death.

### THE LOWER QUATERNARY

We come now to the Kâma-rûpa, the highest aspect of the Lower Quaternary and one of the most powerful and important elements in human nature. *Kâma-rûpa* means literally ‘desire-body’ and is that center of animal appetites, passions, and emotions which is the basic inciting energy in the lives of the majority. For are we not most of us more easily swayed by our passions and appetites, or by self-interest and prejudice, than by unselfishness and impersonal wisdom?

The Kâma-rûpa, as just stated, has been developed by past evolution through many ages. During human life it is that bundle or complex of energies needed by the Higher Triad to come into touch with the material kingdoms of Nature on this Earth. To conquer and transform this desire-complex into a center of spiritual desire instead of animal and selfish propensities is one of the evolutionary tasks of Manas, the Reincarnating Ego.

As the Thinker within us chooses to be swayed by the Lower Quaternary or the Spiritual Self, it makes bad or good karma which shapes its present and future lives. And the object of Reincarnation is that through experience and self-directed effort over a long series of Earth-lives, the Thinker may learn through pleasure and pain the fleeting and unsatisfactory nature of all things connected with the Lower Quaternary. Then, finally discovering how to ally himself with the Spiritual Self, it will raise its mortal parts into immortality.

Another important principle for us to understand is the so-called Astral Body or Linga-śarîra. *Linga* means ‘model’ or ‘pattern,’ and *śarîra*, an ‘impermanent form.’ It is described by Dr. de Purucker in his *Occult Glossary* as the sixth substance-principle of man’s constitution,

the model or framework around which the physical body is built, and from which, in a sense, the physical body flows or from which the physical body develops as growth proceeds. — {Under “Astral Body.”}

Prâna we may think of as the “field” of vital energies circumscribed by our astral-physical organism. It is an aggregation of vital life-atoms drawn from Nature’s reservoirs and determined as to kind and activity by the karmic affinities and characteristics of the person concerned. In a study of after-death states these principles are not as important to understand as the higher ones, for both are dissipated almost immediately after death. The same is true of the physical body.

## AFTER-DEATH STATES

Let us see now what happens to these principles at death. First, the Higher Triad departs from the Lower Quaternary, and the latter immediately begins to fall apart. Dissolution of the physical body at once sets in and this releases its astral model-body or *Linga-śarîra*, which also disintegrates. Prâna or vitality passes back into the reservoirs of Nature.

Upon the withdrawal of the Higher Triad and the break-up of the three lower principles, the *Kâma-rûpa* is, so to say, separated out as a bundle or *rûpa* (form) of desire energies. It is soulless of course, for the Higher Triad, the real Self, has gone; but it will persist for a longer or shorter time according as the passional selfish nature of the man was encouraged, or was controlled and refined, during the life just ended.

But where does this *Kâma-rûpa* exist? And is it still alive and active? This shell of the person that was exists now in what is called in Theosophy the *Kâma-loka*, *i.e.*, the ‘place’ or ‘world’ of desire.

This *kâma-lokic* after-death state is important for us to understand, for it has a very real bearing upon human progress and happiness. The whole psychological realm extending in consciousness between Earth-life and Devachan, the spiritual heaven-world, is known in Theosophy as the *Kâma-loka*. Another quotation from the *Occult Glossary* {under *Kâma-Loka*} will explain this *kâma-lokic* sphere:

**Kâma-Loka** (Sanskrit) A compound which can be translated as “Desire-world,”... It is a semi-material plane or rather world or realm, subjective and invisible to human beings as a rule, which surrounds and also encloses our physical Globe. It is the habitat or dwelling-place of the astral forms of dead men and other dead beings — the realm of the *Kâma-rûpas* or desire-bodies of defunct humans. “It is the Hades,” as H. P. Blavatsky says, “of the ancient Greeks, and the Amenti of the Egyptians, the land of Silent Shadows.” It is in the *Kâma-loka* that the “Second Death” takes place,... The highest regions of the *Kâma-loka* blend insensibly into the lowest regions or realms of Devachan;...

When the physical body breaks up at death, the astral elements of the excarnate entity remain in the Kâma-loka or "shadow world," with the same vital centers as in physical life clinging within them, still vitalizing them; and here certain processes take place. The lower human soul that is befouled with earth-thought and the lower instincts cannot easily rise out of the Kâma-loka, because it is foul, it is heavy; and its tendency is consequently downwards. It is in Kâma-loka that the processes of separation of the Monad from the Kâma-rûpic spook or phantom take place; and when this separation is complete, which is the Second Death above spoken of, then the Monad receives the Reincarnating Ego within its bosom, wherein it enjoys its long rest of bliss and recuperation.

The Second Death is a gradual process and for the average human being is entirely unconscious. It is a perfectly normal process. Remember that by 'death' we mean simply the dissolution of the elements of a body. We are no more aware of this Second Death than we are conscious of the daily and quite normal and healthy breakdown of the tissues of the body, or of the gradual and more subtle changes always taking place in our characters, for the bundle of energies called the Kâma-rûpa or Desire-body is instinctual only. But though it is ordinarily unconscious, it yet preserves for a time the stamp, the characteristic personal impress, of the person to whom its energies belonged — the human individual, in short, who brought the Kâma-rûpa into being. And it is this fact which it is so important for us to understand.

A very large number of spiritistic manifestations are due to the fact that the medium and the sitters attract, by the magnetism of intense desire, grief, or curiosity, these shells or masks or Kâma-rûpas of the departed, left as their remnants in the kâma-lokic sphere. Such shells can be magnetically drawn into the thought-atmosphere of the séance room and, vitalized and given concrete direction by the vitality of the medium and 'circle,' are galvanized into a fictitious life. Then these automata can, like phonographic records, give off phrases, recollections, and ideas closely associated with the life and personality of the departed. Or they can reflect, like a photographic plate, the thoughts of those in the circle. Theosophy maintains that an enormous percentage of so-called 'communications from the dead' are of this class.

That these communications are rarely anything but such automatic repetitions is evident when we remember that no creative philosophy of this world or the next, no hints for new paths of scientific research, or for archaeological and historical discovery, have come from the séance room. A 'Summerland' which is but a rainbow-hued repetition of Earth-life is about all that almost a century and a half {now almost three centuries} of modern spiritistic experiments have given us. What tentative new lines of research have resulted from Spiritism have been the result of living rather than departed intelligences.

This, however, is but the negative side of the matter, as will be set forth later.

The following diagram sums up briefly the various processes and conditions which are brought about by the separation of our seven principles after death:

Âtman	}	Dwelling in the spiritual worlds
Buddhi		
Manas	}	Gradually absorbing the spiritual essence of the Lower Manas or Human Ego and then passing into Devachan
Kâma-rûpa	}	Dissolving away slowly at the Second Death in the Kâma-loka
Lower Manas		
Prâna	}	Already disintegrated when the Second Death takes place
Linga-śarîra		
Sthûla-śarîra		

## DEVACHAN, THE HEAVEN-WORLD

The “roseate beauty” of the Heaven-world are the words of a Teacher which will give us an opening glimpse into what Theosophy tells us of Devachan. By ‘Devachan’ is meant that state of being into which the Reincarnating Ego — what is popularly called the ‘soul’ — is gradually withdrawn at the completion of the sifting process of the Second Death.

The following passage defines Devachan more closely:

This term is a Sanskrit-Tibetan compound word;... and may be translated as God-land, God-country, God-region. It is the state between earth-lives into which the human entity,... enters and there rests in bliss and repose...

{[Tibetan, *bde-ba-can*, pronounced *de-wa-chen*] A translation of the Sanskrit *sukhavati*, the “happy place” or god-land. — From theosociety.org}

Devachan is the fulfilling of all the unfulfilled spiritual hopes of the past incarnation, and an efflorescence of all the spiritual and intellectual yearnings of the past incarnation which... have not had an opportunity for fulfillment. It is a period of unspeakable bliss and peace for the human soul, until it has finished its rest-time and stage of recuperation of its own energies. — G. de Purucker, *Occult Glossary*, {Under “Devachan.”}



Who has not, in looking back over his life, seen most if not all of his best dreams unrealized? Beginning with those ideals of youth which fade so quickly in “the light of common day,” there follow our dreams of dear companionship never found, of musical, literary, scientific, or humanitarian achievement towards which we have aspired, but which we have either failed to reach or have had no opportunity even of trying for. And there are the things we have longed to do for those we loved, but have been too poor or too busy to undertake.

These desires are the best part of us. More than this, they are energies, all the more cumulative and powerful for being denied expression while silently cherished. Being energies they must have somewhere their fruition, and that fruition will naturally take place in the nature which originated them. It is these energies which create for us the conditions of the God-world, the Heaven-world — Devachan. We have seen that man’s baser mental desires have helped by his own unconscious activity to build the conditions of his state of consciousness while in Kâma-loka, which surrounds this planet with a mental-emotional atmosphere. Likewise have his higher thoughts, yearnings, and aspirations towards Spiritual Self-expression built up his Devachan, which is the state of consciousness where these higher energies surround him and bring to him his spiritual fruition in joy and beauty and peace.

Having come this far we may be led to imagine that Devachan resembles the heaven of the Christian religion. But there are in reality radical differences. First, Theosophy teaches that human *creative* evolution can be accomplished only through rebirth upon Earth. The period of Devachan does not initiate any new lines of development; it merely brings to fruition the spiritual aspects of the experiences originated in past lives. Therefore Devachan is but a temporary state of being. Moreover, it is itself merely an extension — a subjective expansion — of the karma of the past life of the Ego. For the character of Devachan, the beauty, happiness, and length of its episodes, will be the unfoldment of only those spiritual thoughts and desires which were felt by the Ego during its Earth-life.

We have pointed out elsewhere the similarity between sleep and death. Sleep, Theosophy tells us — and we repeat it for emphasis — sleep is an imperfect death; death is a complete and perfect sleep. So death, like sleep, must be followed by an awakening to a fresh period of activity in Earth-life. And herein lies of course the greatest difference between Devachan and the Christian heaven.

But there is another striking resemblance which death bears to sleep. In sleep we dream, and our dreams are peopled by those we know; they are filled with experiences of many kinds, all quite as vivid and absorbing while they last as those of waking life. In dreams we often exercise faculties and graces that we lack in this workaday world. We perhaps paint

pictures, or play some loved instrument with skill. There are people who can play a musical instrument in their dreams who have no knowledge of it in their waking life. Or we may meet interesting new friends or travel into undiscovered country. These dreams, good or bad as the case may be, result from our daily thoughts and desires working themselves out in this way when the mind has relaxed its check-rein.

Death, being but a longer, more complete sleep, is also a time of dreams. But whereas our dreams at night are often troubled, after death they are all consoling and beautiful. For we have sloughed off the lower parts of us where nightmare miasmas and suffering arise. Those lower elements have been dissipated at the Second Death. There is nothing left within us to suffer, for we are living then in the light and purity of the harmonious realms of spirit. And over us is the divine aegis of the Spiritual Self.

Here however we must note again that

... in the heaven-world, in Devachan, you will get precisely what you have built into your own character, which is equivalent to saying what you longed for in the way of spiritual recuperation and peace and bliss.

In these few sentences lies the secret meaning of the heaven-world and the nature of its functioning and of what happens to the resting ego. It is, therefore, perfectly obvious that a man, on the one hand, whose whole nature is of materialistic bent or bias, whose thoughts are of the earth earthy, and whose instincts impel him to things of matter, will remain but a short time in the heaven-world for he has built little into his character which will keep him in the heaven-world for a long period of time: whereas a man, on the other hand, whose whole nature is of a spiritual type, who has received but little spiritual joy and peace and rest in the busy turmoil of physical existence and whose nature therefore is entirely unsatisfied along these lines, will pass a long time in the heaven-world; for the entire impulses of the heart-hunger of his being cling to what the resting ego there undergoes and receives.

— G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series I, No. 12

The period passed in Devachan lasts, as an average, for fifteen hundred years. But the rule for the individual is one hundred years in Devachan for every year of life on Earth. A man dying at fifty will thus pass 5,000 years in Devachan; at eighty, 8,000 years of heaven-life, and so on. The low *average* of 1,500 years is due to the very large percentage who, because of their materialistic natures, build within themselves no foundation for the spiritual joys of Devachan and therefore are not able to remain long apart from reincarnation on Earth.

Here it may be well to remind ourselves that there is a marked difference between the bad and the merely materialistic person. It is only the truly evil, those who through selfishness or sensuality have willfully harmed others, who must suffer in Kâma-loka. There are many well-meaning and honest people who live only for their personal interests and

pleasures. Such do not suffer in the Kâma-loka, having wrought no conscious harm; but neither can they experience the blissful conditions of self-expression and self-realization of the Heaven-world. How can they, when they have laid no foundation for it in themselves? And further, we are glad to remember that even those who undergo the mental sufferings of Kâma-loka reach the end of that condition when the energies they have stored up run low, and then they fall into the state of unconsciousness which leads to a rebirth upon Earth. And in reincarnation, through meeting in their own surroundings the misery they have inflicted upon others, they will come to understand what selfishness means, and so have the chance to grow out of evil into sympathy and compassion.

Coming back to an earlier viewpoint of this subject, we may again remind ourselves that life after death is not a state of existence cut off by an abyss from ourselves as we are today. After-death states are merely: first, the dissolution of our physical-astral, and then our lower mental and emotional, consciousness-centers; second, when that is completed, life itself is continued on a higher level than we know it now and in the unimpeded activity of our spiritual natures in conditions where they can for the first time truly unfold and fulfill themselves.

Fear of death is due to wrong education, which has given us no vision of a life beyond death which stands in logical or normal relation to what we know or experience here on Earth. But Theosophy shows us the thread of continuity which runs through the experiences of the individual in all worlds, while demonstrating the interrelation of the invisible worlds with the world in which we are living today.

... Remember that when you lie down to sleep on your bed you die a little death. This will cast out fear from your hearts when you realize its truth. Death will thus become familiar to you. The thought of death will become friendly; and when your time comes to die you will die gladly and you will die with will. I repeat that death and sleep are one. Sleep is an imperfect, incomplete death; and death is an absolute, perfect, complete sleep; but sleep and death are essentially one process of change.

— G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, No. 19

## **CAN WE COMMUNICATE WITH OUR ‘DEAD’?**

Our old childish conceptions of heaven and hell sprang from ignorance of our true nature, and of the nature of the Universe to which we belong. ‘Heaven,’ it is well to repeat for emphasis, is not a place but a state of being, of consciousness. And our heaven is not a reward, as already shown, but a natural outcome of what we have made of ourselves. And the same for ‘hell’ or Kâma-loka, which similarly is not a punishment but a consequence of our actions while on Earth.

Perhaps someone, to whom the Theosophical idea of the heaven-world is still unfamiliar, may ask: "But what about those I love? Am I not going to have them actually with me after death?" How little we understand ourselves, or know where lie our deeper needs! Think of a husband, an old man who has lost an aged wife, his companion through long years of joy and sorrow. How will he wish to find her in the heaven-world if she is to be actually her very self, present there with him? Shall it be as the young and beautiful helpmate of his youth, or as the feeble but beloved partner of his declining years? Will that not be a difficulty for him if heaven is to be the place of literal actuality that he demands? And the mother: will the son she has lost in childhood be a child still, or shall he perchance have grown out of her recognition? These are logical questions springing out of the conception of heaven as merely a place, and of our loved ones merely as the physical personalities we remember so fondly. But a human being is not a personality. He is a spiritual Being using the personality as an instrument for acquiring experience.

... Man is an embryo god locked in sheaths of emotion and thought and feeling, swathed in crippling inner veils in their turn garmented in a body of flesh; and it is to recall men to a realization of the divine light within, the divine spirit within: it is to teach men to transcend and outrange these encircling veils and crippling shackles, that we Theosophists teach and preach and write, and do our best to pass on to others what we ourselves have found to be so fine.

Man, know thyself, said the Delphic Oracle, for in knowing thyself, thou shalt know the Universe.

— G. de Purucker, *Lucifer*, May, 1933, pp. 488-489

The idea that in heaven we shall find our friends actually as they were with us in this life is a materialistic conception springing directly from those personal ideas which help to make the veils and crippling shackles above referred to. If we will study the spiritual nature within us, which is the only permanent part of ourselves, we shall realize that a true heaven-world can have little in common with the personalities of ourselves and our friends; for it is from the faults and limitations of our own and others' personalities that spring our heaviest trials.

Devachan is above all a place of rest. It is the 'sleep' of the Ego in which — paralleling the sleep of the body — it assimilates what it has taken in of knowledge and experience during the Earth-life just passed through.

Now if we look back over our lives we discover that those things which have tried and disappointed us most have sprung from our human relationships. The troubles originating merely from environment, such as early handicaps, lack of money, or opportunity of various kinds, have in many cases proved stimulating and have often brought forth the best that

was in us. It is people who wear us down. A mother, for example, who has passed long, heart-breaking years of struggle to reform a wayward son, and who fails at last — how can she rest after death if she is to be reunited to his turbulent nature? And he, if he has been leading a half-criminal existence, with strong animal desires and indulgences, how can he exist with her in Devachan? He has built up no heaven-world for himself. Instead, he will pass through a period of unrest in Kâma-loka, falling asleep finally to be reborn on Earth. And as his mother has earned a long and blissful rest in Devachan, while he has not, he will perhaps be reincarnated long before she is, and, learning and developing through suffering the consequences of misdeeds in his past life, will perhaps meet her again in a later incarnation as a better and more loving child. Thus the true-hearted mother will receive her reward; for in Devachan all her dreams for that child will be realized and she will experience the joy of seeing her loving sacrifices reach their fruition in his character. And because love is the most penetrating and creative energy in the Universe, and because we do have a deep inner communion with our dead, her joy in seeing his reformation accomplished will reach him wherever he is and be perhaps a more powerful influence for good — because it will work unconsciously upon him — than her living presence with its possibly irritating restraints. For there are some dreams which are more potent than so-called realities.

No, Nature is wise and wholly compassionate. She protects us, while we are at rest in the heaven-world, from all outside and disturbing influences. She releases us from our emotional demands and cravings while healing our bruised and weary hearts. And when the interval of recuperation is over we are reborn on Earth, uniting with those who belong to us in fresh relationships, for higher opportunities and further growth.

These thoughts lead us naturally to a consideration of the subject of ‘communication’ with the dead. But here we are not referring to the various types of such so-called communications obtained in the *séance* room. Theosophy denies that these are true messages from the Spiritual Selves of our departed. It has already been explained that the Kâma-loka, which intermingles in its various phases, higher and lower, with the thought-atmosphere of our world, is thickly populated with the Kâma-rûpas or shells of those who have just died. These shells are also called elementaries, and again spooks.

To recapitulate: the shell is the double or replica, in appearance and apparent character, of the personality that was. It retains, as will a glove that is thrown aside, the impress of the one who has so long used it. And these shells, being made of *life-atoms*, may reproduce not only the lineaments but the very habits and mental characteristics of the departed. This is possible because they are instinct with automatic memories of the past lives of those who have discarded them at death. For that is exactly

what they are, *automata*; and like automata they are unconscious of themselves unless galvanized so often by mediums that they are awakened to a false and dangerous vitality. But as a rule the messages they give off at the vitalizing urge of mediums and ‘sitters’ are but the phantom-echo of a voice whose owner has departed. The Ego which has sloughed off these astral-psychological garments is awaiting the Second Death and the hour when it can enter the bliss of Devachan. This blessed hour of release for the Ego is delayed if its Kâma-rupic shell is kept intact when it should be mercifully disintegrating.

There may be a yet worse effect from these psychic practices. A false and dangerous *liaison* between the decaying shell and the unfortunate relatives of the departed can be brought about by the medium and the activities during *séance*, resulting in unhappy karmic consequences for all concerned. Theosophy warns that all necromantic practices open the door into a psychic charnel-house, the exhalations of which are far more unwholesome and dangerous to humanity than those from the abodes of the physically dead. For the first time in centuries Theosophy restores to the Western world that philosophy and science of spiritual sanitation by which this noxious psychology may be purged from our life.

Theosophy repudiates so-called ‘communication with the dead.’ H. P. Blavatsky in *The Key to Theosophy*, when discussing the difference between Theosophy and Spiritualism, wrote:

... They [the Spiritualists] maintain that these manifestations are all produced by the “spirits” of departed mortals, generally their relatives, who return to earth, they say, to communicate with those they have loved or to whom they are attached. We deny this point blank. We assert that the spirits of the dead cannot return to earth — save in rare and exceptional cases, of which I may speak later; nor do they communicate with men except by *entirely subjective means*. That which does appear objectively is only the phantom of the ex-physical man. — pp. 27-8

In the few cases of true intercommunion between the dead and the living to which she refers briefly in the same section, she says:

...it is not the *spirits* of the dead who *descend* on earth, but spirits of the living that *ascend* to the pure Spiritual Souls. In truth there is neither *ascending* nor *descending*, but a change of *state* or *condition*....

— *Ibid.*, p. 30

And in speaking of genuine *communion* — not ‘communication’ — with the departed she tells us very significantly in the same passage:

...there is hardly a human being whose Ego does not hold free intercourse, during the sleep of his body, with those whom it loved and lost, yet, *on account of the positiveness and non-receptivity of its physical*

*envelope and brain*, no recollection, or a very dim, dream-like remembrance, lingers in the memory of the person once awake. — *Ibid.* (italics ours.)

In the foregoing passages are several suggestions which are illuminating when we think them over. The expressions ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ and ‘a change of state or condition,’ for example, contain the key to true communion with our dead. They emphasize the fact that *spiritual* clairvoyance — not astral or psychic — belongs to our inner or subjective nature, and has naught to do with the senses, either physical or astral. This applies to mediums and sensitives as well as to ordinary humanity. The difference between the two kinds of manifestations are easily discernible, the *objective*, or psychic, being misleading and demoralizing, while the subjective is so often fraught with the deepest spiritual benefit.

An incident can be given which illustrates this; it happened to a friend and is one of many which could be cited. A mother died leaving to her young daughter the care of five children. The grief of the young girl and her sense of responsibility were intense, and she brooded over them to the point of illness. One night as she was falling asleep she suddenly saw before her two great portals which, as she gazed, opened slowly, to reveal a glorious vision of beauty and peace. In the opening stood the form of her mother, but transfigured with light. And to the daughter came her mother’s beloved voice bidding her grieve no longer, for her grief troubled her mother’s rest. Well did the wise mother-heart realize the strength of such an appeal! It aroused at a touch the unselfish courage and will-power of her child. When the young girl awoke, her grief had vanished and she felt within her heart the power to carry forward joyfully the task which her mother’s death had placed in her hands.

This is but one of many such occurrences, experienced by people of all ages, creeds, and nationalities. But they are in the great majority of cases a phenomenon of the dream state which, remember, has its analogy to Devachan. They are purely *subjective*, and frequently have as their result some moral effect upon the recipient.

There are, in contrast, those occasional times when almost immediately after death the form of the departed appears visually to some relative who is wide awake at the time. This is an instance of an ‘objective’ manifestation. Such an occurrence seems generally to indicate that the departed was tormented with some worry before death, at a time when the body was beyond speech. Such an apparition, as in a case known to the writer, led to the discovery of a sum of money which had been concealed by the departed and never mentioned to his relatives. In this case his double returned automatically to the spot where the money was hidden and the daughter who saw it divined what the difficulty was and discovered the money. But in many cases the shell is so vague in its movements, or those

who see it are so frightened or confused, that nothing comes of it. For in this type of appearance it is not the Ego which returns but a phantom of the deceased, strongly energized into *postmortem* activity by the agonized regrets of the deceased. Its discarded Kâma-rûpa is so instinct with the mental disturbance of its departed tenant that it is irresistibly projected into the scene of the Ego's last thoughts.

This latter type of apparition is, relatively speaking, accidental, and is far removed in every way from the spiritual condition and influence of the Ego itself, as depicted in the first instance given. One might say, without much exaggeration, that those who are never conscious of after-death communion — not communication, note — with their departed are either ignorantly or willfully shutting themselves outside the high sphere in which their loved ones now are existing. Grief is often very self-centered and careless of its influence on those who are gone, and such grieving will inevitably raise a barrier between us and our happy dead. They are in the care of the Spiritual Self, at rest and sheltered under the shield of its protecting light. Only the pure vibrations of our selfless attunement to them, and to the ideal conditions of life in which they are isolated from material things, will penetrate the veils which are between us, and give a sure and abiding sense of their serene existence in Devachan, the heaven-world. And only so may we prove for ourselves that we can never be really separated from our departed loved ones, nor forgotten by them in their happy rest.

## A GLANCE BACKWARD

In order to round out the teachings of Theosophy as to after-death states, let us, before passing on, consider such exceptions as accidental death, capital punishment, and suicide. These bring new conditions for our study. It has already been suggested that the same states of consciousness exist as well before death as afterward. But we are not definitely aware of them as such because they are all interblended and working within us as more or less one state of psychological activity — composite in reality of course, but not seeming so to the person who unites them into one tissue of existence.

After death, when the Spiritual Self has departed, this tissue separates into its components — just as the chemical elements combine to make a physical body, with a unified and definite awareness of itself and its functions, but after death splitting up, and the definite physical consciousness vanishing. That which makes our psychological states one tissue is the Selfhood; what breaks them up is the departure of this Selfhood, the Spiritual Self.

*But what if the Self does not depart, even though the physical body dies and is dissolved away?*



When a person is born his constitution may be compared to a clock wound up to run for a certain length of time. If an injury be wrought to the clockwork it will stop running before that time, but not otherwise. Science recognizes that every organism has its time-limit or vitality-period, so to say. We understand that each human being has within him a reservoir of vitality upon which he draws when passing through some abnormal strain, such as a dangerous fever or a stretch of agonizing anxiety. We say that such experiences are 'a drain upon the vitality.'

This reservoir of vitality is the vital-psychological part of us. Vitality and instinctual will-power keep us alive. But these, Theosophy declares, do not originate with the physical body. They depend of course upon the body for expression in Earth-life, but they do not originate there. They are therefore not destroyed at the death of the body, for they do not pass away until their own energy, which determines their term of duration, is exhausted.

In the case, therefore, of accidental or premature death the only thing that suffers dissolution is the body. For the time has not yet come when in the natural course of things the Spiritual Self has felt its periodic evolutionary pull to the invisible worlds. The human attractions which tied it to life on Earth are by no means exhausted. The pendulum of Earth-experience has not yet passed through its appointed arc of movement.

What then has happened? A complete human entity, minus only the physical body, is left in the Kâma-loka to pass through its appointed arc of existence in that sphere, instead of normally in Earth-life.

The words 'accidental death' have been used. But there is in reality no such thing as accident. It may so appear to us because we see nothing of the inner causes which led up to it. But Theosophy teaches that moral justice rules the Universe. A man is not here now on Earth for the first time. He has lived many other lives on this globe, and it was his thoughts or actions in those past human lives which made him what he is today. If he is run down by a speeding automobile, or falls over a cliff, it is because he himself, in this or a former life, laid the train of causes which resulted in that accident. He himself has done things which led him to the precise spot or circumstances where that 'accident' could overtake him. So that 'accidental' death is in reality a part of his karma, a consequence flowing from past actions done by himself. Nevertheless, his karma has cut him off prematurely from Earth-life, and this very cutting-off by so-called "accident" is a part of the unfavorable karma he has built up for himself by past failures.

What happens then in the case of so-called accidental death? This will depend, naturally, upon the man himself. If his life has been saturated with the base desire elements, of which the lower planes of Kâma-loka consist, to those lower elements will he gravitate. And the very identity of his consciousness with them will keep him alive there. Just to the extent that

he has been selfish or has cultivated his animal appetites will he be keenly alive in this lower mental sphere which is so close to physical existence. But he will be able to feel only the cravings of the appetites themselves — he will have no body with which to gratify them. From what all good men would rightly regard as his hell of selfishness on Earth he will pass to a genuine hell of mental torment in Kâma-loka.

When we remember the criminally-minded in every land put suddenly out of life through capital punishment, we can realize how potent a force for evil we are letting loose in the thought-atmosphere of humanity. These disembodied, but still living, human beings keep alive in humanity's mental sphere thoughts of hatred and revenge as well as base desires and appetites. Such conditions in the world's thought-atmosphere must hold back the spiritual progress of all those who are in sympathy with them. Is it any wonder that most types of social reforms find progress such an uphill discouragement? And it is significant that a diminution of crime is often observed to follow where capital punishment has been abandoned.

But of course there is also the brighter side of the picture. Fortunately, even the average among us are very different from the case above pictured. When accidental death comes to a person whose life is marked by integrity and helpfulness, he will have little in his psychological nature in common with this lower Kâma-loka. There will be nothing, therefore, to keep him awake, so to say, in those lower spheres. He will fall into a prolonged slumber — the same state which he would pass through in a shorter form at normal death. All his life through he has lived in a measure of harmony — even if unconsciously — with his Spiritual Self; and that Self as a natural consequence can shed over him its protection, drawing him into its own divine and waiting peace. So he slumbers until that moment comes when his Spiritual Self feels the call, the urge, to depart into its own inner realms.

Then the psychological sifting process, the 'Second Death,' sets in. That part of the psychological nature at rest in the higher regions of the Kâma-loka is absorbed by the Reincarnating Ego and the lower breaks up and dissolves into its component elements.

The two instances above are given as typical cases. Different aspects of the general condition have been thus described by Dr. de Purucker:

Kâma-loka is for every man or woman on Earth. But there are as many different kinds of kâma-lokic existences as there are existences on earth; and the average man or woman passes through the Kâma-loka scarcely realizing it. A very bad, a very evil, man or woman, on the contrary, has a keen realization of where he is in the Kâma-loka; and there are cases where the suffering is simply awful. But it is a mental suffering.... In the case of very good men or women, they pass through the Kâma-loka and they don't know that they have done it. There is no break of the unconsciousness that merciful Nature brings to us at the moment of death: there is no break in that

unconsciousness until Devachan [the Heaven-world] with its roseate beauty is entered....

The excarnate entity, the person who dies, remains in the Kâma-loka just as long as his karmic deserts call for his being there, and not one instant longer. — *The Theosophical Forum*, February 1933, p. 176

And in the case of accidental death:

... when the time is reached which would have been the normal life of the physical body, then there is an awakening in the Kâma-loka and a following out of the simple processes of kâma-lokic freeing that occur to all men.... Kâma-loka is not so terrible, except for those who are genuinely wicked; and there are places on our physical earth which are terrible for men who are wicked and who are caught. — *Ibid.*, p. 174

Suicide is the most unfortunate of all forms of violent death. This is because it means

the deliberate taking of one's own life in order to escape the consequences of what one has earned; and if any man thinks that he can cheat Nature in that way, he greatly errs. He but adds to the heavy burden he has to carry in the future.... He has deliberately forced Nature's hand, so to say; he has deliberately exercised his own will-power and consciousness for an unholy deed in an unnatural way, and done an act which Nature, through its unerring laws, has not itself brought about; and when you break a law of Nature, what happens? — G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series I, No. 6

The answer is briefly given:

The fate of the suicide is a sad one, indeed a terrible one, and it is good and right that the truth concerning suicide be told. The suicide willfully cuts short the life that Nature, as we Theosophists say, intended to be longer, and he has thus placed himself in a *postmortem* condition in which he must live and suffer greatly until the term of his lifetime, had he lived on earth, is closed. The fate of the suicide is an awful one. — *Ibid.*, Series II, No. 19

The whole point is indicated here in the statement that the suicide *willfully* cuts short the life that Karma *intended* to be longer. In other forms of violent death, the accident or crime or execution, as the case may be, was karmic. In suffering such a misfortune the human being is paying his 'karmic price.' Suffering the consequences of his own actions in the past, he thus wipes the karmic slate clean of that particular debt.

But the suicide, by his act of selfishly shirking the consequences of his failures in this life and — as frequently happens — leaving the burden to be borne by others, has set in motion for himself a fresh cause of misery. In his next life he will have to meet again the same conditions which led to his suicide in this, only in a form intensified by the very energy of his

refusal to meet them now. Every act of ours is made up of energy and with every intensification of energy the consequences deepen. So the last state of that person will indeed be worse than the first.

The *postmortem* state of the person who takes his own life is the terrible one of living over and over again the horror of his act and the mental torture which led up to it. Suicides, like executed criminals, must in most cases become powerful vortices of diseased thought-energy adding their force to the existing handicaps to the spiritual progress of the world.

It is good to remember, however, that these cases of misfortune which we have been discussing are but an infinitesimal proportion of the great mass of human beings. By far the greatest number of accidental deaths are of people who have been living kindly and normal lives, and their *postmortem* conditions cannot for that reason be anything but peaceful. And Reincarnation, by giving everyone 'another chance' in life after life, leads each person to achieve at last his own redemption.

We may appropriately close this thought with these further words from Dr. de Purucker:

Every time when you are in intense suffering, mental suffering I mean, if it is something especially which involves the elements of remorse, of intense contrition, that is Kâma-loka; and you are then in Kâma-loka even while alive in the physical body. See the lesson to be drawn from this. You see why H. P. Blavatsky was so anxious that the teaching regarding the Kâma-loka and Devachan should be broadcast among men as a warning, if only as a warning. Live a decent life, a cleanly, manly, or womanly life, and you need not bother your head about Kâma-loka; you need not think twice about it; you won't know anything about it; you will just pass through it like a meteor, but so to speak upwards.

— G. de Purucker, *The Theosophical Forum*, February 1933, p. 177

## DEATH AND THE MONAD

The death of those we love and the prospect of our own passing is so intimate to each one of us that we easily overlook the wider and really more important experiences which death brings to spiritual man. But Theosophy, being an explanation of the facts of existence, directs our attention to this wider view; for what we call death, and the states of living which follow it, are of the utmost importance to the evolution of the individual and of the Race {humanity}.

Theosophy maintains that the problems of life can never be solved until our researchers realize that the secret of all life lies in the invisible rather than in the physical Universe. Scientists themselves are beginning to suspect this, one of them, Professor J. Y. Simpson, the Edinburgh Professor of Natural Sciences, having made this significant statement:

With physico-chemical instruments and methods it is difficult to see how you can get anything but physico-chemical results, and when applied to the investigation of life, such practice constitutes no proof accordingly that there is nothing in the characteristics of life beyond what admits of physico-chemical expression. Further, the assumption that mind, which devises all the experimentation, can itself be the product of analogous physico-chemical happenings, seems altogether too heavy for the premises to bear.

— *The Listener*, March 8, 1933

Let us supplement this negatively important point of view by the positive side as expressed by Dr. de Purucker:

To know the exterior Universe, you must have brought into functional activity within yourself the knower.... To understand the Universe you must have the understanding heart, the faculty of understanding. Do you get the idea? Consequently, while the scientists, for instance, are doing marvelous work,... nevertheless where they fail is just on the point that they themselves are not seers, not genuine understanders of what they themselves discover. You must cultivate your inner self.

— *The Theosophical Forum*, April 1933, p. 230

The secret of evolution is to be sought therefore in the inner nature of man and in the invisible worlds of which our visible Universe is but the physical evidence as the human body is the visible evidence of its invisible but causal Self, its Monad.

Let us remember here what we mean by the Monad: a Monad is a unit of consciousness, an indestructible unit of individuality. There is a Monad at the heart of every being from an atom to a sun. In an atom the Monad is far less evolved than is the Monad of a Man, which has begun to be fully self-conscious. The Monad at the heart of a sun has evolved to the state of godhood. In ourselves we can regard the Monad as our Spiritual Self.

All evolution is produced by Monads. The Monads which now comprise the human kingdom began their evolution in past ages by each one shaping for itself a vehicle in each of the lower planes and kingdoms — first the mineral and the vegetable; then it evolves a beast nature with a physical body; and at last unfolds the potencies from within itself which we call the egoic consciousness or the self-conscious Ego. The kingdoms of Nature beneath the human are made up of Monads which have not yet evolved self-consciousness. So that, speaking roughly, we are at present a Monad or Spiritual Self (Âtman-Buddhi) expressing itself through a self-conscious, Reincarnating Ego (Manas, dual — Higher and Lower); and these again act through a Lower Triad (Kâma, a model-body, and a physical body, with Prâna their breath of life). See diagram, page 144.

The entire purpose of this evolutionary journey through all the kingdoms is twofold: first, to enable the Monad to gain the fruits of self-consciousness on lower planes than its own spiritual one; then to aid the

evolution of the life-atoms — each with its own ensouling Monad — which form its various vehicles on the different planes of evolution, physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual. And we must remember something of this process of evolution, its purpose and objectives, if we would understand the most sublime of all the mysteries of death.

Man has at the core of him the god within, which is not himself but is his Root and spiritual Parent, the Monad from which he draws unconsciously his spiritual vitality. This divine Being within is our Inspirer, Protector, and Guiding Star, the voice of compassion and of conscience within our human hearts. Its holy Light awakens within us all our ideals and true aspirations. Without its surrounding, all-penetrating Presence we poor human Egos would soon perish like fragile moths scorched in the hot flame of material delusion.

The Monad, then, is a part of ourselves or, rather, we are a part of it, and yet it is not ourselves. We cannot exist apart from it because it is our link or channel of communion with the Universal Cosmic Life.

Now the Monad is itself an individual on its own (to us) invisible plane of existence. At times, when we have perhaps gone momentarily beyond the limitations of our daily selves, through some action of unselfish love, an effort of intense self-discipline, or a strong aspiration toward the Divine within ourselves — in such a moment a vibration of freedom, insight, pure happiness or peace may take possession of us. For a time we breathe the ether of a purer world, and all things seem possible to us. This is the Light of the god within, the Monad. Upon the closed door of its realm of spiritual illumination that thought or action acted as a pressure and the door swung briefly open to release a ray of glory into the uplifted heart.

Thus the god within us has its own spiritual world. There it too lives, and experiences, and grows, the while it over-illuminates the Reincarnating Ego in its journey through the shadows of Earth-life. Its own realm lies in that causal divine world of which this physical sphere is the outer garment or vehicle.

Little use in one's asking, "*Where* is this inner, invisible world?" One might as well say to the invisible self of a friend, "*Where* are *you*?" — meaning the mental-spiritual person who is the real friend of one's heart. For the spiritual inner world exists on a different plane, in a different state of matter, vibrates to another scale of existence than this one that we see around us.

We must remember the composite nature of man: Body, Ego, Spirit-Self. Each of these three, as we have seen, must be again divided for accurate study, making seven principles or elements in all. So also the planetary world through which we evolve is sevenfold, there being seven Globes to a Planetary Chain of evolution, of which our Earth is the

physical and the lowest Globe, being the only one we can see, and corresponding by analogy with man's physical body.

Every planet in space is likewise sevenfold — is accompanied by six other, but to us invisible planets. So that, if we had the proper organ of inner sight, we could look at night deep within the starry Universe above us to envision a countless host of more ethereal worlds, within and ever within the outer spaces. It is these inner, more ethereal worlds which are the causal ones, the Roots of the physical Universe, in the same way that our Spiritual Self is the root of our visible being.

H. P. Blavatsky tells us about these worlds:

... the occultist does not locate *these spheres* either *outside* or *inside* our Earth, as the theologians and the poets do; for their location is nowhere in the space *known* to, and conceived by, the profane. They are, as it were, blended with our world — interpenetrating it and interpenetrated by it. There are millions and millions of worlds and firmaments visible to us; there are still greater numbers beyond those visible to the telescopes, and many of the latter kind do not belong to our *objective* sphere of existence. Although as invisible as if they were millions of miles beyond our solar system, they are yet with us, near us, *within* our own world, as objective and material to their respective inhabitants as ours is to us... each is entirely under its own special laws and conditions, having no direct relation to our sphere....

Nevertheless, such invisible worlds do exist. Inhabited as thickly as our own is, they are scattered throughout apparent Space in immense number; some far more material than our own world, others gradually etherealizing until they become formless and are as “Breaths.” That our physical eye does not see them, is no reason to disbelieve in them; physicists can see neither their ether, atoms, nor “modes of motion,” or Forces. Yet they accept and teach them....

But, if we can conceive of a world composed (for *our* senses) of matter still more attenuated than the tail of a comet, hence of inhabitants in it who are as ethereal, in proportion to *their* globe, as we are in comparison with *our* rocky, hard-crusted earth, no wonder if we do not perceive them, nor sense their presence or even existence.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, pp. 605-607

In the higher and innermost reaches of these invisible worlds dwells the Monad, the Spiritual Self of man. Yet that fact, as can be seen from the above quotation, does not make it absent from us. No more are the real Egos of our friends absent from us although we can see only their physical bodies. We must learn, as already said, to think of living beings more in terms of consciousness than we now do. The Spiritual Self of man is a being of pure consciousness imbodyed in its Buddhic vehicle or garment; the Ego is an intellectual center of consciousness imbodyed in a personal-animal vehicle; the lower triad is likewise compounded of elementary

consciousness imbodyed in astral-physical shape. And all these are blended into one by their common origin in the Monad at the heart of them all.

So we see that these different centers form, during Earth-life, one being. If it seems a strange thought that the god within us is evolving on its own plane continuously, we can better understand by recalling that the mind and the body are also developing simultaneously on two different planes, one of which is invisible to our outer senses. Each principle or element in us over-illuminates and helps the one immediately beneath it. As the lower advances in evolution it gives a greater liberty of action to the consciousness-centers above it, as a man who has subdued his bodily appetites is free of them; one who has not is in some degree their slave. And this is true in a far greater degree of the vices of the mind and emotions. Free ourselves of them and the whole nature advances to a larger and deeper kind of activity. And conversely, no one can think a thought or commit an action that does not influence for good or ill the countless lower lives of his own organism that his consciousness interpenetrates. The effect of our vices upon our physical health is one instance of this. And to complete the thought, our daily thoughts and actions help or retard the spiritual evolution of our higher principles, whose wider ranges of consciousness interpenetrate and inspire our ordinary human selves. Thus there is an evolutionary interaction throughout all planes of being.

Death is the great friend which releases the Spiritual Self of man from its encasement in the heavy gross matter of physical Earth, while it opens for the weary human soul the beautiful portal into Spiritual Self-fulfillment and peace.

## **PEREGRINATIONS OF THE MONAD**

The teachings of the Esoteric Wisdom about to be briefly sketched are a beautiful answer to what has been an intuitive dream of poets and thinkers of every age. How often, when looking up into the deep infinitudes of the midnight sky, has the spirit of man not longed to pierce the secrets of those shining worlds that circle in their far-distant majesty above us! And many have had the true vision that it actually is the destiny of man's spirit to visit after death other worlds and planets which beckon in serene beauty from the pathways of space. The poet-astronomer Camille Flammarion, at one time a student of Theosophy, was one among the modern thinkers to express this belief, which is so logical and romantic an answer to the heart-questings of humanity.

The journeys of the man's Spiritual Self to the worlds of outer and inner space are called in Theosophy the 'Peregrinations of the Monad.' In the foregoing pages we have set the stage for the great adventure which follows death upon this earthly sphere. We have seen how the four lower principles or elements of the individual dissolve away at the first and



second deaths; how the higher nature of the personality is absorbed by Manas, the self-conscious, Reincarnating Ego; and then how Manas itself is withdrawn into the bosom of the Monad, its 'Father in Heaven,' for a long period of blissful rest.

The Monad (Âtman with its spiritual vehicle or garment, Buddhi) is now free to pursue its peregrinations or pilgrimage through the inner worlds. For we must not imagine that the Monad, which is a divine Being of cosmic consciousness and potencies, rests during the periods between our Earth-lives and while it is holding the sleeping Ego within it. The Monad has no need of what we call rest. It is ever active, ever occupied during the periods of solar manifestation in its work as evolutionary emanator and inspirer of those hosts of less evolved entities with which its vast range of karmic affinities brings it into contact. And this aid and inspiration it accomplishes by clothing itself with, building for itself, vehicles made up of these lower entities on all the planes, inner and outer and 'higher' and 'lower,' which it must pass through in its peregrinations. Among these lower entities which act directly and indirectly as vehicles for the urges and activities of the Monad are the six other and less evolved principles of the human being, Man, as well as all the forms throughout the lower kingdoms which the Monad has animated, as explained later.

It may make the following teachings clearer if we briefly repeat that everything in the Universe is sevenfold in its manifested evolutionary nature or constitution; that is, in the universe of form, life manifests through seven different degrees of consciousness and substance, of which our seven principles are illustrations. The other six principles or elements through which the Cosmic and also the individual Monad manifest are invisible because their substance is too ethereal for perception by our physical senses, which are not attuned to the finer rates of vibration of those ethereal matters. And this Earth of ours is therefore but one of a system of seven Globes or planets of which ours is the outermost and most material and the only one apparent to our physical senses. These six sister Globes of our Earth are on inner and higher levels of being.

We must pause here just a moment to remind the reader not to regard these sister-Globes of ours as being the other six principles of the Earth, for they are not. Each one is itself, like the Earth, a complete septenary entity. But together with the Earth they form a series of seven evolutionary stages or planes of development through which we all must eventually pass to round out our own complete septenary evolution and become thus complete aspects of the Whole. {For a fuller description of these seven globes of our planetary chain, see *The Secret Doctrine*, 1:170 *et seq*; for a study of the seven principles of the earth, *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy* by G. de Purucker. From: [theosociety.org](http://theosociety.org).}

To these invisible Globes of our Earth-chain the Monad or Spiritual Self, now that physical death and the second death are completed, wings its way. There on each Globe, pursuing the same process as already

described, it evolves forth ‘bodies’ or vehicles or forms appropriate to evolution on those higher planes of consciousness. These peregrinations through the invisible Globes of our planetary Chain are a phase of the ‘Inner Rounds.’ Then, the cycle of the Monadic peregrinations on these higher Globes of our Planetary Chain being at last completed, the Monad enters on its cycle of journeyings through the ‘Outer Rounds’ — that is, it makes the circuit of what the ancients called the ‘Seven Sacred Planets’ of our solar system.

But what and which are these sacred planets, and why are they called sacred? Obviously, being rooted as it is in an organized universe governed in its every part and aspect by changeless law, the Monad does not wander aimlessly about on its peregrinations through the spheres. It follows instead those definite paths which are called in the Esoteric Philosophy the ‘Circulations of the Cosmos’. The peregrinations of the Monad are also strictly defined by its own innate karmic affinities or attractions, and these affinities limit its cosmic journeyings to the seven sacred planets.

These planets are Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, the Sun {Vulcan}, and the Moon {Lilith} — the latter bodies being used as symbols or substitutes for two planets, very little information about which has been given in the literature of the Ancient Wisdom, Theosophy.

Now why are these particular seven planets called sacred and what is their karmic relation with humanity? The explanation is given in *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy* by Dr. de Purucker on page 408 as follows:

... these seven planets are sacred for us, inhabitants of this globe, because they are the transmitters to us from the Sun of the seven primal forces of the Kosmos. Our seven principles and our seven elements spring originally from this sevenfold life-flow.

Moreover, these seven sacred planets, or rather their Rectors — indwelling Spiritual Beings of which these planets are the physical vehicles — each one oversees the building or formation of one of the seven Globes of the Earth’s planetary Chain plus the swabhava or innate karmic characteristics of that Globe itself. For further information on this and other aspects of this teaching the reader is referred to G. de Purucker’s *The Esoteric Tradition*, “Circulations of the Cosmos.”

In *The Secret Doctrine*, H. P. Blavatsky refers to these tenets, one such passage being here quoted (Vol. I, p. 577):

The planetary origin of the Monad (Soul) and of its faculties was taught by the Gnostics. On its way to the Earth, as on its way back [to its native divine home] from the Earth, each soul born in, and from, the “Boundless Light,” had to pass through the seven planetary regions both ways.

Thus it is through these seven sacred planets and their respective planetary Chains that the Monad continues its after-death peregrinations once its imbodiments on the invisible Globes of our Earth's planetary Chain are completed. A description here follows, in passages taken from *The Esoteric Tradition*, which will answer many questions and describe much that has been merely outlined so far:

... during its [the Monad's] activity after the postmortem existence for the man is commenced, it passes from sphere to sphere, going the rounds anew on its ceaseless peregrinations during the Manvantara. It passes through the spheres not merely because it is native to all of them and is therefore drawn to them by its own magnetic attractions and impulses, but likewise because it itself wills to do so; for free-will is a godlike thing and is an inherent and inseparable attribute of itself. — p. 857

The reader's attention is called to the words "going the Rounds anew," which refers of course to the fact that these Inner and Outer Rounds are followed by the Monad after *each* of the incarnations on Earth of the human being. And also note the free-will exercised by the Monad as showing that it, a divine being, takes upon itself voluntarily the immense task of embodying itself in all classes of the lower lives of its own cosmos in order to lift them up, to urge and inspire *their* self-evolution into godhood like its own. To continue:

Now, during the peregrinations of the Monad through the 'Seven Sacred Planets' of the ancients, the said Monad must of necessity follow those pathways or channels or lines of least resistance which the Esoteric Philosophy has called the 'Circulations of the Cosmos,' or by some similar phrase. These Circulations of the Cosmos are very real and actual lines of communication between point and point, or locality and locality, or celestial body and celestial body, as all these exist in the structural framework, both visible and invisible, of the Universe. These Circulations are not merely poetic metaphors, or figures of speech; they are as real in the inner economic working of the visible and invisible Worlds of the Universe, as are the nerves and the arterial and venous blood-vessels in the human physical body, and just as these latter provide the channels or canals or pathways of the transmission of intellectual and psychical and nervous impulses and directions, as well as of the vital fluid called the blood, so in identical analogous fashion, the Circulations of the Cosmos provide the channels or canals or pathways followed by the ascending and descending Rivers of Lives, which Rivers are composite of the never-ending stream of migrating and peregrinating entities of all classes back and forth, hither and yon, 'up' and 'down' throughout the Universal Structure. — p. 859

The Monad on reaching the next planet in order after it has left this sevenfold Earth-chain, thereupon produces or forms a Ray or Radiance from itself during its passage in and through such planetary chain, a psycho-

mental apparatus or 'soul' of temporary existence, which takes in consequence temporary imbodiment in a correspondingly fit vehicle or body there, the such body being of a spiritual, an ethereal, an astral, or a physical type. — p. 867

Thus the Monad, our Spiritual Self, our Essential Self,... gathers at each one of the seven sacred planets a new harvest of soul-experiences only to be gained in each such planet, each such 'harvest' being the aggregated experiences in imbodiment acquired by the Spiritual Monad which belong in essential characteristics of substance and energy to each such respective planet. — pp. 870-871

Is not this a magnificent picture? — sweeping us from our moorings in the stagnant backwaters of lingering medieval theology or of modern materialism, out upon the ocean of spiritual adventure! It well illustrates the meaning of a phrase often used in Theosophy, the 'expansion of consciousness.' No: we are neither worms of the dust nor merely developed simians. We are destined neither to a static heaven or hell nor to merciless extinction. Instead, there are for us illimitable fields of cosmic activity and adventure sublime beyond our present imagining.

It is true that the purer side of our present consciousness will be dreaming blissfully in Devachan while the god within, the Spiritual Self or Monad — carrying us 'in its bosom' — is pursuing its divine adventure through the pathways of the Solar System. It is rather as a goal of inspired effort that this picture of our grand destiny is painted for us by the Adepts and sages of the Archaic Wisdom. They have drawn aside the dark curtain of our ignorance to reveal the unfathomable vistas of life that fill the inner reaches of Space. They assure us of our happy place, our fruitful and unending share in the immensely varied and fascinating drama of the Universe.

We now see something of the meaning of the evolutionary process touched upon later. In this process, the re embodying Ego at the close of its great cycle of evolution becomes at last itself a Monad. It will have evolved from the core of its own being the *monadship* now latent, or only just beginning to unfold there. Then in a future Manvantara it too as a Monad will follow, between its imbodiments, the Circulations of the Cosmos; while what is now our animal nature shall have evolved and advanced to humanhood.

## VALUE OF THESE TEACHINGS

One of the best things about Theosophy is that its idealism is constructive and practical. It might seem at first thought that it is difficult to relate this sublime scheme to our hurried, over-commercialized present. Yet there is not one of the teachings of Theosophy, not even the most

seemingly abstruse, which has not an intimate, almost a utilitarian value to the daily thought and conduct of people like ourselves. For merely one example, could there be anything more practical in its effects than the certainty that we survive after death? Its ethical influence would obviously be tremendous, especially when taken in connection with Reincarnation and Karma.

Why, in the main, do we dread death for ourselves? Is it not that we fear to 'let go,' to give up our familiar daily consciousness? We do not dread sleep, for we remember yesterday and we know that after an interval of loss of consciousness tomorrow will certainly restore it again. But in regard to death we are like little children who struggle every night to hold themselves awake dreading the moment when they must sink into the unconsciousness of sleep. It is only when we are older and more experienced that we learn what a friend and consoler is life's daily interval of blessed Lethe. {The name of the Greek spirit of forgetfulness.}

The same difference in development between child and adult in regard to sleep marks the difference in growth between incompletely developed men like ourselves and the spiritual Adept or Mahâtma in regard to death. For to overcome death, that is to carry the consciousness without break from life to life, is one of the great results of true occult training. And by true occult training is meant the scientific application of Theosophical teachings to self-development, under the guidance of a spiritual teacher.

We die, in the sense of losing grasp upon ourselves, because we live now almost wholly in that part of our natures which is bound to die, the personal and physical consciousness. Even the highest god of the inner spiritual worlds must, could he take upon himself human flesh, sooner or later witness its dissolution. The physical nature of Jesus, who was a high Avatâra — or the manifestation of a god — had to pass through the gates of physical dissolution. "But," you say, "he rose again from the dead." Indeed yes — as every one of us must learn to 'rise' — "greater things than these shall ye do," he promised us.

The 'resurrection' is an initiation-teaching from the ancient Mystery-Schools. These schools existed in antiquity as a vital part of all those old civilizations. Their purpose was to teach humanity the origin, constitution, laws, and destiny of the Universe and of our relations and experiences within it. In the days of Jesus these Mystery-Schools had deteriorated, as all things must with time. The truths, however, which that Mystery-knowledge had been teaching for ages, were so interwoven into the mental and moral fabric of the Mediterranean civilizations that the Christian Church was obliged to adopt a great deal of the Mystery-language and ceremony to attract the people and make its new dogmas intelligible. But in partially adopting these, it misunderstood them and debased them to material levels; and the glorious 'resurrection' of the spiritual man

triumphant over his own selfish and animal nature was debased into the present illogical doctrine. The true resurrection has a deep place in the teachings of Occultism, or applied Theosophy:

Its meaning is this, that within each one of you is a divine being, a living god, prevented from manifesting its transcendent powers only by the cramping bonds of our personal selfhood — our prejudices, our whims, our small petty hates and loves; and that when a man can conquer these lower things — conquer them in the sense of making them servants of the god within, fit instruments and tools for self-expression — then you will see man walking the earth as a human god, because manifesting the transcendent powers of the god within him, of the immanent Christ, of the inner Buddha, as the Buddhists put it.

— G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series I, No. 44

True Resurrection means initiation — that final glorious consummation of the long course of self-directed evolution under the guidance of a spiritual teacher which Theosophy offers to all who will live the life and embody its teachings. The subject of initiation is copiously dealt with in Theosophical literature, so we shall quote but one passage in regard to it:

... there is a pathway steep and thorny though it be for the average man, yet it leads to the very Heart of the Universe. The man traveling this path passes through the portals of growth quickly, relatively speaking; and I can show you how to put your feet upon this pathway, so that instead of spending ages and ages and ages and ages in slowly evolving, in slowly expanding, in slowly bringing forth the powers and faculties within you, you can grip yourself, guide your own evolution, and thus much more quickly grow.

This is 'self-directed evolution,' ... This is initiation.

— *Ibid.*, Series II, No. 4

There is actually of course a kind of resurrection of the body in the meaning herewith described:

...when you realize that the very atoms of your body do not come to you by chance, that they are the same atoms which you used in your last incarnation on earth, then you quickly see that there is a resurrection of the physical man in that sense of the word: *i.e.*, that when you return to earth in the next reincarnation, the atoms in which you live in this present body, will automatically fly to that new body, will be psycho-magnetically drawn to you, for they are your physical, astral, and ethereal children.

— *Ibid.*, Series I, No. 44

Both these teachings however, belonged to the Mystery-Schools and were, as seen, badly distorted by early Christian pietists who adapted them to the uses of the new religion, Christianity.

Theosophy but re-states the ancient Mystery-teachings, which Krishna, Lao-Tzu, Gautama, and Jesus all taught in their varied ways — varied because each was given to a different age and people. Theosophy now voices again the immemorial, mystic call from the Heart of the Universe to the heart of man, bidding him to arise and go to the Father, within whose temple of the Spirit he may find that strength and wisdom that will lift him above the illusions of the selfish personality and give him victory over death. For said the great Avatâra: “In my Father’s house are many mansions,” and “I go to prepare a place for you.”

These great ideas and promises relate themselves to our daily experience because they express the goal of all humanity. We suffer and toil and die because we do not understand ourselves or the elements of which we are made. We do not know why we are here. We understand so little about life that our own selfish interests seem the most important part of it. We have wrong ideas about almost everything. Those things which are the call of the spiritual nature within, such as pain, self-sacrifice, sorrow, and discipline, we avoid when we can, too often accepting in their stead the narcotics of self-indulgence or indifference. And this leads only to more pain, more sorrow and disease, and to all the deeper aspects of personal mortality.

We recall again Katherine Tingley’s declaration that the object of life is the “raising of the mortal into immortality.” But immortality is not bestowed upon us any more than character or environment. It must be earned and built up by effort before it can be ours. The human self must achieve immortality and its own right to the divine adventure by transforming its lower composite nature into the unity and homogeneity of Spirit. Things made up of varied elements, whether material or psychological, must fall apart when the energy that brought them together is exhausted. But the god within is a pure ray of Universal Oneness and cannot decay or cease to be. When man can transmute through selfless and universal thought and action his own human nature into the homogeneity of the divine then he will know himself immortal because he will have become so through self-directed efforts. He will be a Master of Life.

The great promise of Theosophy for the individual may fitly bring this thought to a close:

the old initiations have not died off from the face of the earth. They take place even today and in the archaic way, under the supervision and the guidance of men, great Sages and Seers,...

The personal man, my Brothers, must be ‘crucified,’ *i.e.*, ‘slain’ — metaphorically speaking — in order that the Christ within you may resurrect or arise....

The Pathway of Beauty, the Pathway of Peace and Strength, the Pathway of the Great Quiet, is within you — not within the material body,

but within the inmost focus of your consciousness. This is the Pathway that the great sages and seers of all the ages have taught. Follow that Pathway; it will lead you to the heart of the Sun, the Master and Guide of our Solar System; and later if you follow it, it will conduct you to a destiny still more sublime. Yet that sublime destiny is only the beginning, only the beginning of something grander; for evolution, growth, expansion of consciousness, go on forever. — *Ibid.*, Series II, No. 32

## DEATH AND REBIRTH

It is hardly possible to think of survival after death without also thinking of pre-existence and rebirth, for anything supposed to be without an end must also be regarded as having no beginning. In a logical system of thought we have to account for and describe not only what happens after death but also what happens *before birth*.

And just here it will be interesting to note the immediate causes of the reincarnation of the Ego in man. Reimbodiment is of course a 'law,' that is, a universal habit of Nature. Everything in the Universe reimbodies — an electron, an atom, a mineral, a plant — that is, the Monads evolving through these forms must re embody; likewise for an animal, a man, a planet, a sun, a solar system, a universe — nothing can escape its essential destiny of the evolution or unfolding of its inner nature and powers through reimbodiment and progressively advancing organization and environments. And man's Ego naturally shares in this universal habit of self-evolution.

But it is the *immediate* reasons which bring about reincarnation on Earth, with the methods and procedures which are followed in the process, that concern us particularly now. We left the Monad, the Spiritual Self, peregrinating through the seven sacred planets carrying the Reincarnating Ego "asleep in its bosom." But as always in Nature, that which rests or is asleep must awaken and enter afresh upon self-conscious activity for the purpose of carrying forward its own evolution.

So at last the Reincarnating Ego begins slowly to reach the end of its period of devachanic spiritual assimilation. Memories of its former Earth-lives, vague but compelling, stir it from its blissful sleep. And so harmonious and flexible and self-adjusting are all the processes of Nature that the Monad has completed its peregrinations through the Inner and Outer Rounds by the time the Reincarnating Ego is reaching the end of its dream-rest in the Monadic essence.

Consequently, as is obvious enough, an Ego having a short Devachan, or an Ego, contrariwise, having a long Devachan, has no difficulty in either case, because the spiritual Monad is more or less strongly influenced by the spiritual condition or quality of the Reimbodifying Ego which it holds in its bosom, and thus it is that the pilgrimage of the Spiritual Monad is to a certain



and often large extent controlled as regards the time passed in the interplanetary pilgrimage. — *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 885

The Reincarnating Ego is therefore gradually carried ‘downward’ or ‘outward’ through the invisible interplanetary spheres until it begins again to approach the threshold of Earth-life. Here it sends out from itself a Manasic Radiance or Ray, and the presence of this Ray acts dynamically upon all those centers of energy which were cast off when it last passed through the portal of death here on Earth. The life-atoms composing these energy-centers or principles or elements begin to crystallize around the Manasic Ray as a nucleus. These principles or elements are four in number, as already enumerated, and constitute the Lower Quaternary or lower self which the Ego used as its vehicle on Earth in the last life. They are: Kâma, passionnal desire; Prâna, the life-principle or vitality; the astral or model body, the Linga-śarîra; and the physical sheath or Sthûla-śarîra. And when once these begin to reform around the Manasic Ray, the personality, Kâma-Manas, comes again into Earth existence.

The final process is thus described for us:

The Ray or Radiation from the Reimbodying Ego finally reaches the critical point or stage in its ‘descent’ where it is drawn to or attracted by the specific and definite human germ-cell whose growth, if not interrupted, will eventuate in a physical body. The psycho-magnetic attractions and inner impulses of the Reimbodying Ego... have karmically led it to that one cell which is most appropriate out of the number of other possible cells, the father and the mother in due course joining to give what we may perhaps figuratively call the magic link of united ‘life,’...

From this instant the living protoplasm begins to grow from within outwards, and little by little to manifest forth what is stored within itself.

— *Ibid.*, p. 888

The Ego is usually drawn to that family and that type of social environment in which it laid down its burdens, problems, and relationships at the last death of its physical body.

The study of death and after-death states of consciousness and experience is of the deepest importance to everyone and for the following reasons, among others:

(1) Because it will teach us how to bridge the gap, which is apparent only, between ourselves and those we love closely who have passed onward into the invisible worlds; and this removes the sting of death.

(2) Because it dissolves away the fear of death from our hearts and inspires us with a great hope and purpose in so shaping today that death’s tomorrow may be a glorious one.

(3) Because we cannot understand death without learning the secrets of our own natures, a study and a mastery of which will reconstruct all living for us both here and hereafter.

There is about Theosophy a completeness, a rounding out of many processes of Nature, which science at present beholds only as half-truths. Such are gravitation and evolution, as H. P. Blavatsky explains in *The Secret Doctrine*. Science regards human life, for example, as a straight line, a fragment, whereas it is an infinitesimal section of a mighty circle turning upward upon itself through alternating degrees of light and shade — a tremendous spiral ascent. Upward, ever slowly upward it trends, carrying the individual from the murky shadows of one life here into the gleaming curve of the between-lives period; then, into another shadowy patch of Earth-existence and so on, still gradually climbing until the goal is reached.

As for the goal or ‘ending’ of this evolutionary process of which life on this Earth is one segment with ‘death’ and beyond as another — this goal too is but a partial ending. It is a mere stopping place, a period for rest and spiritual assimilation of a higher sort, as is clearly indicated in the following passages:

It was precisely the ancient religions and philosophies which in their inner meaning taught that the Universe is based on law and order, builded around imperishable centers which vary never, and which, each one, pursues an evolutionary course towards the Divine Polar-Star of the Universe; and which further taught that the imperfect things that we see in Nature around us, like us human beings ourselves, are imperfect because they are as yet not fully evolved.

And hearken, they taught more. They taught that there never is an ultimate, a final stopping-place, beyond which the evolutionary stream of life cannot go. But they said, no matter how great and how highly evolved such and another stream of life may be with all its component entities, there is veil upon veil behind and beyond the frontiers of the Universe, stretching into other Universes. Endings of evolution, as I have said, exist not at all.

— *Questions We All Ask*, Series I, No. 31

The spirit or monad is constantly growing; it is evolving, on its way to become the super-spiritual, finally to become the Divine, then the Super-divine. Is that the end of its evolutionary possibilities? No, it advances ever, constantly and endlessly evolving, growing. But words fail us here to describe this sublime conception. We cannot describe it in faltering human language. Our imagination falls palsied {paralyzed} in any such attempt, and we can merely point to the evolutionary path vanishing in both directions into infinity and into eternity, as beginningless as it is unending.

— *Ibid.*, Series I, No. 13

We have now taken a somewhat detailed view of what death really implies and of the place which it holds in human evolution. As to the process itself, it may be useful very briefly to review the stages through which the human consciousness passes when death brings release to the Spiritual Self. These are:

1. Death itself, or the sloughing off and disintegration of the physical body, caused by the severance of the link between the Spiritual Self and its lower principles. The astral model-body or *Linga-sarîra* also now disintegrates — a process which is greatly hastened by cremation of the physical body.

2. The review by the Reincarnating Ego of the events of the just ended life. This is a most important and solemn part of the act of dissolution, when the Ego views every thought and act of its life, seeing clearly the justice and meaning of the life's events. At such a time, immediately following death, there should be perfect, reverent quiet around the departed so that no breath of disturbance from the outer plane may interrupt this necessary and sacred event.

3. The falling asleep of the human personality or consciousness while the next two processes take place.

4. The dissolution of the Kâma-rûpa, unless it should be kept alive by mediumistic interference.

5. The second death, during which the spiritual essence of the personality is absorbed by the Ego. The two latter processes are unconscious ones for normal humanity.

6. The passing of the Reincarnating Ego into its Devachanic rest in the bosom of the Spiritual Self, or Monad.

7. Peregrinations or Cosmic Journeyings of the Monad or Spiritual Self upon its 'Divine Adventure,' carrying the Reincarnating Ego 'in its bosom.'

8. Re-awakening of the Reincarnating Ego to the pull of Earth-life and its descent towards reincarnation in a new personality.

## SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

In connection with our study of this profound and wonderful subject many questions are likely to arise. It is often asked, for example, if, since Theosophy teaches that there is a heaven-world, does it not also teach something about a hell? And how about purgatory, which many people believe in: what has Theosophy to say about that?

If by 'hell' is meant a place of eternal punishment, then Theosophy emphatically denies both the ideas implied in this expression. In the Ancient Wisdom there is no place for the illogical and childish idea of punishment. We meet only the *consequences* of our own past thoughts and actions in this or former lives — that is, our karma. No one imposes or

forces these resulting conditions upon us: they follow our own actions as naturally as heat follows combustion, or as the furrow follows the plow. Also, to repeat, no state or condition of existence can be everlasting!

Our theological ideas of heaven and hell are more of those man-made misconstructions already mentioned — those distorted remnants of the ancient Mystery-teachings which still prevailed in the popular mind at the beginning of the Christian era. All these misconceptions were fastened upon human thought at a time when humanity was passing into an age of spiritual inertia, culminating in the so-called ‘Dark Ages.’ And the theological doctrines of hell as found in all religions in some form have, to condense the words of Dr. de Purucker, become almost without exception highly embroidered misconceptions of the original doctrine taught by the founders of such religions. All these misconceptions came to be accepted literally instead of symbolically and figuratively, and have brought about almost untold suffering and misery to human hearts. Thus the words ‘heaven’ and ‘hell,’ in their true mystical sense as a part of the ancient Mystery-teachings, are seen to refer — the heavens to

those spiritual realms of experience through which all Monads whatsoever shall and indeed must at some time in their age-long peregrinations pass, and in which they dwell for periods proportionate with the karmic merit attained or won; and the so-called ‘hells’ are those spheres or realms of purgation, to which all Monads whatsoever during certain periods of their age-long peregrinations must pass, therein washing the matter-laden, and therefore heavily-laden, souls; so that once cleansed they may rise again along the ascending arc of Cosmic Experience.

— *The Esoteric Tradition*, pp. 543-551

Indeed this Earth itself is regarded by those beings who have long ago transcended its matter-weighted vehicles and temptations as a hell of a particularly trying variety. Thus Theosophy, while explaining the origin of these theological misconceptions, frees the human mind once and for all of their degrading and cruel influence.

There is of course in Nature’s vast realms a condition or state of being which is the opposite or nether pole to those stages of spiritual attainment and rest which extend all the way from Devachan to the different degrees of Nirvâna at the close of the greater periods of evolution. This other state of being is called ‘Avîchi’ and is also of many degrees according to the material propensities of the entities who are drawn into it by their own evil actions. Those who are given over to hatred, revenge, lusts, or vices of any kind, gravitate inevitably to some form of avichi, to which state the lower stages of the Kâma-loka belong. Here dwell the psychic remains of such people, for human life gives as incomplete a scope on the one hand for the deepest degrees of evil as for the attainment of the purest spiritual happiness on the other. Yet if men accumulate within themselves desires

and energies of either the basest or finest, these must find their outlet and expression somewhere. The ‘hells’ or lower reaches of the Kâma-loka are the direct karmic consequences of the indulgence by people in degrading human attributes. But even so the results are merciful, for these ‘hells’ confront the entities attracted to them with the terrible consequences of unbridled self-indulgence in evil, and so impress them that the road to Avîchi may later be avoided. And happily they are but temporary and the number of such unfortunate people is relatively small.

Theological doctrines about purgatory are another example of the distortion by ignorant men of the Mystery-teachings of the Ancient Wisdom to serve the ends of exoteric religion. How they arose can easily be seen from the foregoing, though the Ancient Wisdom tells us that in the actual state of Kâma-loka — excepting in the rare instances already cited of suicides and the very evil — while there is purgatory of a sort in the sense of the dissolving away of the material and selfish elements of the deceased, this purification is an unconscious process and involves little or no suffering whatever for normal human beings. All these bugbears of theology and superstition Theosophy explains, and in explaining casts aside.

Another point that inquirers often bring up is in regard to the possibility of shortening the period between Earth-lives. There is a perhaps surprisingly large class of people who cannot endure the idea of thousands of years of bliss while the human world is toiling painfully along without their efforts to help and alleviate. In this light the state of Devachan seems essentially selfish. To such inquirers the following will be of interest:

*Question:* In *The Mahâtma Letters* [to A. P. Sinnett] I read that Devachan is a state of intense selfishness.... I believe that real love will shorten the time we are in Devachan; and I hope I am right;...

*Answer by Dr. de Purucker:* Dear Brother:... I absolutely agree with you. Now, when we analyze the devachanic state closely, we must come to recognize that, however beautiful it may be, however much of a rest and recuperation it is — for it certainly is all that — it nevertheless is a selfish state. Say what we will, it is necessary at the present time, on account of its being rest and recuperation and peace and a rebuilding and an assimilation of the experiences of the life just closed; but granting all that, it is a selfish existence; because, for the hundreds of years that we are in Devachan, we are sunken in roseate dreams, and the world may be going to hell, and we don’t care. Now, that is not the spirit of the Buddhas of Compassion. Love, impersonal love, which loves all things both great and small, will free us even from Devachan; and it is just this spirit of impersonal love, love for all things, a yearning to help all, and to aid — it is this spirit which is the very core of the Buddhas of Compassion and of our own Order. It is this spirit which will shorten our Devachan and advance us rapidly on the pathway of chelaship. It is the spirit which infills our Elder Brothers, the Masters of

Wisdom and Compassion and Peace. They have no Devachan. They have advanced beyond it — at least the higher ones among them have.

— *The Theosophical Forum*, February 1933, p. 178

An intense impersonal desire to live for humanity, if persisted in during life — particularly if it is not mere sentimentality but takes the shape of daily self-sacrifice in thought and conduct — is an energy of the most powerful kind. It is powerful above all other energies because it partakes of the moving harmony and love which flow forth from the Heart of the Universe to pervade and animate all that is. It will find its appropriate expression by drawing the ex-carnate entity back to that field where alone this spiritual desire-energy may work itself out — reincarnation upon Earth in any environment where such humanitarian activity is possible.

The foregoing leads to a question often brought up as to the relative importance of the two states, Earth-life and Devachan. To suggest the answer in a homely form we might ask: Which is more important, eating or digestion? For Earth-life gives the accumulation of experience and Devachan brings about its assimilation. To average humanity both are necessary and each complements the other.

Yet, even so, as the astute reader will have deduced from answers to questions already given, the Mahâtma, the Adept, the Master of Life, has ‘advanced beyond’ Devachan. He passes from life to life and body to body without break of consciousness. But we must not overlook the fact that in doing this he has also passed beyond the need, for himself, of any further experience of Earth-life. He reincarnates as a man of flesh that he may devote himself to the spiritual welfare of all things. To overcome the power of death and its conditions, one must first overcome the thirst for life. For these two, life on Earth and life in the inner worlds beyond death are at present man’s method of evolution. And only by transcending the need of both can we become Mahâtmas — self-consciously immortal.

But death, even for the average person, will change its conditions eventually, for of course we are constantly evolving. Under the influence not only of our own inner urge, but with the help of an environment which we, in common with our family, nation, and race, is daily creating, we will develop, unwrap, unroll from the core of our own being new powers and capacities. And as we evolve these new faculties, so will we at the same time be bringing about the conditions whereby to express them. This is a part of the grand outlook which Theosophy offers for the future of the Race {humanity}.

As Dr. de Purucker tells us:

In the future, when the human race shall have advanced somewhat farther than now it is, old age will be universally considered to be the most beautiful period of Earth-life because the fullest in intellectual and psychical

and spiritual power, *and it will remain so until within a few short hours before actual physical death occurs.* [Italics ours.]

— *The Esoteric Tradition*, Vol. II, p. 813

Another matter which should be touched upon before closing this study is the new light which Theosophy throws upon our present unscientific conceptions of immortality. This point of view was recently expressed in the following way:

...men do not know what real immortality means; they think it means unchanging continuance of the human soul as it now is — and what a hell that would be! Fancy being for ever, and for ever, and for ever what one is now!

The teaching of Occultism is just the contrary of this. Its teaching tells of an endless growth, endless improvement, endless development, endless evolution, therefore an endless changing of consciousness, going ever higher and higher out of the human sphere into the semi-divine, and out of the semi-divine worlds into the divine, and thereafter into the super-divine, and so on *ad infinitum*. There is no such thing as immortality as commonly understood. The only immortal thing is the Universe itself; but even this is by no means immortal as it now is, because it itself is constantly changing, and its essence is its life, which is of the very essence of change which means growth, which means evolution.

— G. de Purucker, *Occultism and Psychic Phenomena*

The point to be marked in the above passage lies in the words, “as it now is.” Nothing continues to exist forever *as it now is*. It is this fact, so illogically and unscientifically ignored by theologians and so completely supported by Nature, that lies at the root of modern scientific prejudice against the idea of immortality. The individual persists, but his very persistence is by means of change. We are our karma — we grow into what we make ourselves to become. And it is what we make of ourselves that persists, and in this progress or retrogression lies our future. Could there be imagined a greater or more compelling challenge to common sense as well as to the best and the strongest and the purest in human nature? Even the beautiful phrase “to raise the mortal into immortality” has only a relative validity. For the Monad itself into which we ourselves aspire to transmute our consciousness, and which is immortal as compared with the human Ego, that Monad is growing and evolving on its own plane to greater and greater heights forever.

To return to the idea with which this brief inquiry was opened:

You will never fully understand death nor its mysteries as long as you concentrate your attention on the bodies in which this flame of consciousness enwraps itself. Follow the consciousness within you, become acquainted with yourself, know yourself better, follow this flame of

consciousness inwards, ever more inwards, which also means upwards; and then you will no longer fear death, but will recognize it as the sweetest, holiest friend that man has; for it means laying aside imperfection for perfection, restricted consciousness for an enlarged sphere of consciousness. Follow that stream of consciousness continually; and finally you will reach inwards to the core of your being, the divinity at the heart of yourself. There is the secret for understanding the real mystery of death as it is taught in the ancient esoteric schools of all races of men.

— G. de Purucker, *Lucifer*, April 1934, pp. 441-2

A fitting conclusion to this very brief exposition of the Theosophical teachings about ‘Death and After’ may be found in these final words:

Remember that you are a child of infinitude, each one of you, inseparable from the boundless Universe in which we all live and move and have our being; remember that you are well taken care of by almighty Nature’s laws, which brought you here, which will take you out from this life, and which will infallibly guide you on your way. Trust yourself then to death in happy confidence; die with a strong and happy will; die with gladness when your time comes; be not afraid. Mock at the phantom of ‘death’ — mock at the old hideous specter which the fearful imagination of ignorance wove in the hearts and minds of men. Mock at that specter, that evil thing of the imagination! Cast it out! Remember that you are well taken care of. — *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, No. 19



# 6

## Evolution

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## INTRODUCTORY

The word *evolution* is used in Theosophy to denote the universal process by which everything is brought into being; and consequently the subject, if treated in full, would be much too large for a single manual; besides which, the student would be overwhelmed with the vastness of the subject and confused with a mass of details. What we must do, therefore, is to present a broad outline of the subject as a whole and to confine our more detailed treatment to special branches of it, such as the evolution of man and the animals, the Darwinian theory, and similar matters of general interest. And this plan will of course involve the making of approximate statements, true as far as they go, yet not the whole truth. In short, we pursue the usual method adopted by students of any science, and that is to begin with an elementary course and leave the higher course to a later time.

Evolution is the universal process by which things change and grow and develop. Its nature can be understood by a few familiar illustrations. A seed is planted, a minute particle, hardly distinguishable from other kinds of seed; but it goes through various stages of development until it has become a fully grown tree with flowers and fruit. This is evolution; the tree has evolved from the seed. A fertilized ovum in the womb passes through many stages until a fully formed human infant is produced, and this again develops until a fully grown human being appears. This again is evolution, and the human being has evolved from the germ. An architect conceives in his mind an idea; this idea takes form on paper, and plans are drawn; ultimately the plans are executed in marble and granite, until through many stages and by the work of many hands there has arisen a superb and mighty cathedral. This again is evolution, and the edifice has evolved from the idea. Human affairs illustrate the same law of evolution; for here we find institutions, social orders, customs, growing up through stages as manifestations of some idea or plan in which they originated. In a word — evolution is the realization of ideals.

There are other ways of defining the meaning. We can say that it means the bringing into visibility of that which was invisible; the bringing into activity of that which was latent; the coming into manifestation of what was unmanifest. But it does *not* mean the creation of anything that did not exist before. The cathedral existed before; not as a stone edifice, but as an idea in the mind of the architect. The tree existed before its physical manifestation; it existed in latency, in potentiality, within the seed. The entire future human being was concealed somewhere in or about the germ. Were this not so, there would be nothing to determine why one seed should produce one kind of tree, and another another.

We know that the growing seed gathers to itself elements from earth, air, water, and light; and of these builds its physical structure. The biologist with his microscope can study the evolution of a cell and give a most

elaborate and detailed description of what happens; but he cannot see the agencies at work, and may define them as inherent properties of matter or of some life-principle.

No sense can be made out of the matter until we recognize all these activities as guided by intelligence. Mind, purpose, intelligence, instinct, desire, guide all the processes in Nature; and if we do not admit this, we shall be obliged to invent something else which in some mysterious way performs all the results of intelligence. Moreover, the mind, purpose, etc., are the attributes of living beings, and cannot be thought of apart from the living beings which possess them. Hence it becomes necessary to view all Nature as an assemblage of living beings; and, once this is done, difficulties vanish and we can present a rational explanation of the Universe and of life and evolution.

The idea of evolution has been held by philosophers from the earliest times, and is an alternative to the idea of special creation by the divine word. The idea that God created the Universe at once, at some particular time in the past, is very unsatisfactory to thinking minds. It is natural to think, as we see everything changing and growing around us, that the whole Universe and all that is in it has come into being by the same process of growth. The controversy between those who believe in special creation and those who believe in evolution was well illustrated by the celebrated case at Dayton, Tennessee, in which a young school teacher, {John Scopes,} was tried for teaching children the modern scientific doctrine of evolution. Most people probably thought the attitude taken up by the prosecution was very backward and narrow-minded, and that they showed little knowledge and less respect for the work of science. But yet one feels that they had reason on their side. Crude as their reasoning may have been, they felt strongly that important issues turned on this question between the evolutionists and the religionists. The issue has been vividly and epigrammatically put in the phrase ‘Angel or Ape’: did humanity descend from the angels or from the apes? In other words, it was felt that the evolutionist stood for a materialistic and animalistic view of human nature, as opposed to a spiritual and divine idea championed by their opponents. So it is hardly fair to accuse the religionists in this trial with making such a fuss merely about their Bible teachings, for there was more behind their zeal than that. They were championed by no less a person than W. J. Bryan, surely a man of intelligence and culture. It was the conviction that the scientific theories stood for materialism, animalism, a mechanical, mindless, soulless, godless Universe; it was this feeling that actuated them and that still actuates many in their opposition. We may recall the bitter animosity aroused at the time when the modern scientific theory of biologic evolution was first promulgated.

But at the same time we feel that the scientific side is worthy of our deep respect. It is represented by people of intelligence and worth, whose

findings cannot be dismissed in such a wholesale way. It is owing to this that so many earnest thinkers have sought to find some way of reconciling the conflicting claims. It has been said, for instance, that though God created the Universe, he did not create it complete as it is now, but left it to evolve; that God is still creating the Universe, his work being continual. It has been said that evolution represents the divine method or process. These are steps towards a unification of knowledge, but the matter needs to be much farther thrashed out. It is evident that the views of both sides in the controversy are very partial, containing truth mixed with error. The view which we stated above — that the Universe consists of living beings — will enable us to solve the question.

## THE MODERN SCIENTIFIC DOCTRINE OF EVOLUTION

In the words of Huxley: “Evolution, or development, is, in fact, at present employed in biology as a general name for the history of the steps by which any living being has acquired the morphological and the physiological characters which distinguish it.” It is the theory that the various types of animals and plants have developed by descent with modification from other pre-existing types; and man is included in the animal kingdom and regarded as having been developed in this way from lower types in the animal kingdom. The general direction of this evolution has been from simpler types towards more complex and more highly organized types; but sometimes a retrograde movement has been observed. The attempt is to be able to trace the chain of evolving types back to a few very simple forms, or back even to a unicellular organism. Prominent among the names associated with these ideas comes the name of Lamarck, who held that the modifications occurring in organisms, and thus leading to their evolution, were brought about by response to their environment. This theory was developed by Darwin, and what is known as Darwinism has been defined as the theory which maintains that organisms tend to produce offspring varying slightly from their parents, and that the process of *natural selection* tends to favor the survival of individuals whose peculiarities render them best adapted to their surroundings. This is the doctrine of the *survival of the fittest*.

This means, then, that the higher types of organisms have been developed from lower types by the slow accumulation of small changes; that these small changes have been communicated from parent to offspring by procreation; that these small changes were caused by the effect of the environment (climate, food, enemies, etc.) upon the organism, causing it to change itself so as to become better adapted to its surroundings; that some of the changes thus produced did not survive, and only those best adapted to meet the conditions of life did survive; so that on the whole the trend of evolution was upwards towards more and more perfect forms. The

theory does not give us any idea of the cause behind this process of evolution, nor of its purpose, or its goal. It shows us a mechanical process going on, started we know not how or by whom, and reaching out towards an unknown destiny. In short it represents life as a mechanical process, devoid of soul and mind, end or purpose; and this is what causes the repugnance which many feel towards it.

Much study has been given to the subject since Darwin's time, and many of his views called in question; but the general theory of evolution is still held. Less importance is now attached to natural selection as a factor in evolution; indeed it is seen better than it was at first that natural selection is really a name for an effect; certain unspecified or unknown causes result in a natural selection; it is illogical therefore to speak of this result as if it were a cause.

The declared scientific method is to frame provisional hypotheses for the explanation of certain observed facts, and to change these hypotheses from time to time as new facts are discovered. But the human mind has a tendency to fixed dogmas, and retains its provisional hypotheses too long; and when new facts are discovered which do not square with the hypotheses, will try to twist and force the evidence so as to make it square, rather than give up the theory. The scientific view of evolution has been gradually giving ground by sheer force of evidence, so that it becomes every day more and more like what Theosophy teaches. This is an instance of the effects of candid and patient research in dispelling the dogmatic tendency.

The analogies between different types of organisms give a strong presumption that there has been evolution, but the difficulty has always been to find evidence of the actual process taking place. If the Darwinian theory is true, we ought to find intermediate forms between the existing forms and representing transition stages from one to another. But what we actually find is separate forms with gaps between. This, however, is explained by saying that the intermediate forms have disappeared, as not being adapted to their environment; and it is pointed out that the paleontological record supplies us with many such intermediate forms which must have existed in long past ages when the conditions were different, but have since become extinct. But paleontology shows us that the reptilia reached an acme of development in the Secondary Age, being represented by gigantic saurians, which now exist only as lizards a few inches long. So here we have an instance of a type reaching its fullest development and then dying out. This is one evidence that the plan of evolution is not so simple as was at first supposed; and it is but reasonable to suppose that the workings of Nature would be far more complex than any simple plan that might at first be thought of.

The later studies of biologists have confirmed the view that evolution, as it proceeds on the physical plane, tends rather to diversity than to

uniformity; that each species tends to develop along its own special lines and to diverge from the main trunk, rather than to lead on in a straight line to the next higher form in the scale. Moreover it has been found that species which have been differentiated by external conditions, such as domestication, tend to revert to their original type when these special circumstances have been removed. For instance, there is a type of fowl called the jungle fowl, which seems to be the original from which our numerous breeds of fowls have come; and domestic fowls, if turned wild, instead of preserving their acquired characteristics, soon revert to the primitive type of the jungle fowl. And the same with other instances that are cited. This seems to show that the evolution of types is not in a straight line of continual progression from simple to complex, but that each form tends to diverge along its own special path. In fact, evolution has been compared to a tree with main trunk, limbs, branches, and twigs; the species represent the branches and twigs; while the main limbs are the primitive forms from which they have diverged. If two forms are found to be similar in structure, is this evidence that one of them has been derived from the other, or that both of them have been derived from a common ancestor, each then pursuing its own course, so that as time goes on they get farther apart? In this latter view, the multiplicity of forms which we see today would seem to have diverged from a comparatively few original forms.

Again, it is not clear that changes in species are produced by hereditary transmission. The elaborate studies which have been made in genetics serve to complicate rather than to solve the problem. But if small chance modifications are not transmitted by heredity, the general theory breaks down. And yet we can scarcely avoid the idea that there has been evolution, for such growth and development is evidently a general law of Nature. How escape from the dilemma?

These and many other difficulties which arise in the interpretation of evolution are due to the attempt to represent it as a purely physical process, and as a mechanical process; but with every succeeding day science is approaching nearer to a just view of the question. Biologists now give more importance to the organism itself than to its environment; and certainly no environment could produce any effect unless the organism itself responded to the influence. So that, if the effect of environment is alleged, it is necessary to *assume* that the individual is capable of responding to it; and this, to an unprejudiced mind, is tantamount to admitting that the individual is a living being, a being with some degree of feeling and intelligence — in fact a soul. Such a conclusion can only be avoided by falling back on ‘inherent properties of matter,’ or inherent properties of living matter, protoplasm; which is a very lame explanation, and is really no explanation at all. And the distinction between living matter and dead matter (so-called), though admittedly a difference in kind, can hardly be an essential difference; for, if so, we should be obliged to

suppose two kinds of matter in the Universe, one living and the other not; an unnecessary complication, and one that leads to insuperable difficulties. We observe in the mineral kingdom of so-called dead matter all kinds of wonderful properties and activities, which an unprejudiced mind might be disposed to regard as evidences of life and mind. But scientists, having assumed that this matter is dead, have been obliged to account for its properties and its activities by supposing the existence of blind 'forces,' the well-known physical forces of heat, light, electricity, magnetism, attraction and repulsion, cohesion, etc. And when asked to define these forces, they define them by their effects, which is reasoning in a circle. If attraction is the coming together of two bodies, then it cannot be the cause which brings them together; that would be like saying that things are moved by motion. Heat is known to physics as something which is accompanied by molecular vibration, expansion, and other effects; but what it is that causes these effects remains a mystery; and the old explanation of an invisible agent is much more satisfactory. The forces which move matter so as to produce these effects of heat, chemical action, etc., cannot be themselves material; or at least they must be of a finer kind of matter.

There seems no valid reason for admitting life in the plant and denying it to the mineral, though of course it must be conceded that life manifests itself in different ways in the different kingdoms of Nature. And thus we get back to the proposition that all Nature is composed of living beings, many of them microscopic in size, yet each of them organized, and each of them evolving and growing. With this proposition as a starting point, the doctrine of evolution becomes much easier to understand. We have more than once used the expression 'an unprejudiced mind;' and this refers to the fact that modern biologists, despite their professed freedom from religious bias, have nevertheless certain unconscious prejudices derived from the dogmatism of past generations. The theological notion of a god outside the Universe who has created the Universe, has given rise to the notion that there must have been a lot of dead matter which he used as material, or to which he has given life. So the notion of dead matter is a corollary to the notion of a god separate from his universe. We find that in antiquity people believed in the universal sentience of Nature, and that they still do so in areas where the idea of the theological God has not penetrated. People call this superstition and say that these ancients endowed dead things with imaginary life; whereas it is we who have invented the superstition that there are any dead things in Nature.

But of course what troubles people most in the controversy is the question of the origin of man. The idea that humanity has descended from an ape or any other animal is abhorrent. In order to avoid such a conclusion the anti-evolutionists have thought themselves obligated to deny much that science has affirmed to be fact. Hence they have put themselves into

strange positions, hard to defend. But is there any necessity of overthrowing science and denying things that cannot be denied? There is not. For, as has been shown, evolution cannot go on at all unless there are living beings who evolve, and the whole process is inconceivable except as a result of intelligence at work behind the scenes. This leads our thoughts to the true conception of evolution — spirit seeking to express itself in matter, soul embodying itself, mind creating for itself organs. Science has concentrated its gaze on the building and the building process, overlooking the builders and the plan. It has imagined a primordial germ, endowed with mysterious and undefined powers of growth and developing itself through innumerable stages towards an unknown goal; feeling out experimentally into the infinite, as it were, and producing forms by a casual process of adaptation to surroundings. But biologists are more reasonable than they were in the days when H. P. Blavatsky criticized the evolutionary theories in her book *The Secret Doctrine*; and some of them admit now that the real agent in evolution is the animal itself. But to include forms below the animal kingdom, we must use a more general term and say that the agent is the *Monad*, which means the living soul within the organism, whether that organism be animal, vegetable, or even mineral.

So evolution is a process of self-realization or manifestation carried on by the Cosmic Life or Spirit or Intelligence; ‘God’ unfolding and revealing himself, we might say in theological language; and nature the visible garb of Deity. Evolution must be considered as a twofold process — spirit involving into matter, and matter evolving after the pattern of spirit. These two are often called involution and evolution, but the one word evolution is as often applied to the whole process. Such variations in the use of words have to be recognized and allowed for. But the point here is that mind has not evolved upwards as matter has. It has involved down into matter. So the attempt to imagine an evolution of mind parallel with the evolution of form in the kingdoms of Nature is wrong and creates confusion. This confusion culminates in the attempt to argue that human intelligence has evolved from the intelligence of beasts. There is a radical difference between mind of man and that of even the highest beast: self-consciousness. This is either present or absent and does not come in stages.

Evolution means the unfolding of what is latent, and thus implies that the original germ contains in potentiality all that is afterwards manifested. Evolution does not mean a putting together of separate parts so as to make a composite; it is not an additive process. Such a method would make a building or a machine, not an organism; or rather it would not even make that, for the building and machine must pre-exist as a plan in the mind of the designer. It is true that the seed draws to itself elements from soil and air to build its structure; but the building is done according to a model. Before the plant exists as a physical organism visible to the eye, it has



already existed as an astral organism and could be seen as such by the eye of a clairvoyant. And when the plant decays, that astral organism remains, to form the model for future physical organisms of the same kind.

At the time of writing (1939) we continually come across utterances by leading biologists, which show an increasing readiness to accept the views here indicated. They see more clearly now that a mere description of *process* is not a sufficient explanation of evolution, and that there is no escape from the conclusion that intelligent forces are behind the process. Nay, even the physicists are saying the same thing, and are in some ways more reasonable than the biologists. They see that their 'forces' are merely effects produced in matter by the agency of something unknown; and they have analyzed matter to a point whence it is impossible to proceed further without passing the bounds of matter. However complete may be the physical explanation of natural phenomena, it is complete only within the limits assigned; and still leaves plenty of scope for the introduction of ultra-physical agencies without in the least upsetting the physical explanation. And some physicists have taken the inevitable step and cut the knot by inferring that even physical matter is actuated by living forces — that is, by living beings.

## THE ASTRAL PLANE

Evolutionists, in their attempts to interpret the evolutionary process, are much hampered by a neglect to take into account the existence of other kinds of matter than the familiar physical matter. But, as explained elsewhere, it is impossible to explain the phenomena of physical matter without assuming the existence of a subtler form of matter behind these phenomena. As said above, a growing plant seems to build itself up mysteriously, according to its peculiar pattern, without visible agency to account for such building. The explanation is that the entire form of the plant exists beforehand in astral matter, and that upon this model is built the physical structure, the physical atoms taking their places in accordance therewith. In the scale of plants and animals, the changes take place in the astral form of the organisms, not in the physical structure; and thus is explained the gaps in the chain. This has been illustrated by the following analogy: if people are ascending a spiral staircase, a spectator looking from one side will see people at different stages, but will not see how they pass from one stage to the next. He may assume that they jump, or that they proceed by gradual ascent; but he will fail to see the process actually at work. The fact is that the people pass by gradual ascent round the back parts of the spiral, which are hidden from view. The physical species on Earth remain unaltered for long periods; but this does not mean that there is no evolution. The physical species on Earth remain unaltered for long periods; but this does not mean that there is no evolution. These physical

forms are merely the successive houses in which the evolving *Monad* dwells; but the Monad itself is evolving all the time; its evolutionary changes take place in the astral form, and when thus changed it incarnates in the corresponding physical form.

At this point it is advisable to consider what we really mean by an animal or a vegetable. The assumption that it is merely a physical organism is wrong, and we cannot explain evolution on such a wrong assumption. The plant or animal is essentially a *Monad* — a living soul, a spark of the cosmic Fire, an atom of the Universal Mind and Life and Spirit. It is performing a pilgrimage through Matter, in the course of which it is gradually and progressively evolving various forms for the expression of its own latent capacities. It is a growing, learning thing. This Monad is a seed, and contains within itself all the potentialities of its divine origin. This Monad or spark of life is imbodied; but not merely in a physical body, for beyond the physical there are other imbodiments in subtler forms of matter. It has a psycho-mental imbodiment, which makes of it an animal (or a plant) soul; this again has an astral imbodiment, and this again a physical imbodiment. All this has to be considered if evolution is to be rightly understood.

If we would look within our own consciousness, we should get a clearer idea than by looking at the outside of things. We find that we are primarily a self-conscious thinking being; our organs and bodies are instruments which we have built for ourselves in order to express ourselves in and to contact the outer world. We grow from within. It is the same everywhere; everything is growing, and everything grows from within. Visible plants and animals come out of the invisible; and it is in the invisible that the evolutionary changes take place. As the soul of the being gradually develops, the changes in it are produced in the astral form, and thence transferred to the physical form.

As said elsewhere, it is impossible to explain how the body of a plant or animal could remain the same throughout life when the physical atoms are continually changing, unless there is some permanent mold upon which those physical atoms are built and which preserves the integrity of the organism through all the changes of its physical atoms.

Thus we cannot explain evolution without taking into account the existence of the astral plane and the astral bodies of organisms. But, once this is grasped, the difficulty disappears.

## THE EVOLUTION OF MAN

### THE MEANING OF THE WORD ‘MAN’

We must first know what we are to understand by the word ‘man.’ If we may for the purposes of the argument assume (though without

admitting) that the scientific evolutionists are right in their theories as to the evolution of the human body, we should still be left entirely in the dark as to the origin of the human intelligence, the human soul — in a word, of man himself. This is what the anti-evolutionists feel so strongly, however inadequately they may be able to express their objections. They feel that the acceptance of the scientific view would commit them to an animalistic materialistic and brutalizing conception of human nature. It is true that scientists may reply that they are not concerned with this aspect of the question, they only study physical facts. Yet the fact remains that such a materialistic and mechanistic view does actually influence our minds and tend to promote in us a pessimistic view of human nature. In other words, science tends to become a religion, and a religion which denies Deity, or at least disregards Deity; a religion which emphasizes the brutish instincts in man; a religion which accustoms us to look back to the animal world for our ancestry. Not even the animal mind, nay not the intelligence that makes the plant grow true to kind and perform its functions, can be interpreted as mechanical or chemical products. Still less, very much less, the mind of man. Let us look within and try to sound the depths of our marvelous conscious being. If that came from matter, then matter must be God. Like creates like, and streams cannot flow higher than their source. Our consciousness is part of an ocean of consciousness; our mind is a little focus of light; and our organism cannot furnish more than the screen upon which the light falls.

Theosophy deals with facts, and what fact can be more factual than our own conscious existence? We cannot find anything more fundamental than our own consciousness to use as a starting point. The evolution of spirit is in the opposite direction to that of matter; by the conjunction of the two is formed mind. Man is (broadly speaking) the result of two lines of evolution coalescing: that of spirit from above, and that of matter from below. The whole manifested Universe is created by the union of spirit and matter, by the cosmic life and intelligence building for itself vehicles for its expression. As said before, it may be better to speak of the involution of spirit into matter, and the consequent evolution of matter. Science has studied the evolution of matter, but not the involution of spirit. Moreover, it has sought to make both conform to the same process, and to represent mind as having evolved upward through the animate kingdoms to man. It is spirit which causes the organisms to evolve; the form changes and adapts itself to the growing capacities of the indwelling Monad. If an analogy from science itself were asked, we might mention the case of heat entering a body and causing it to undergo many changes, as from water to steam, or any one of the innumerable chemical changes produced by heat. We see here that the heat is the invisible agent which promotes the visible changes. But biologists have argued as if the changes took place of themselves, and the heat was a by-product of the process. If it is necessary

for a devotee of science to shut off all his finer sensibilities and to view Nature with a cold eye, he might fail to see in the eye of the animal that spark of conscious light which he might recognize as akin with his own; otherwise he might see the animal as a thing in itself, apart from its mere body.

## SELF-CONSCIOUS MIND

But to speak of man particularly — he is not the end product of the chain of plant and animal forms; for there is a very marked gap, the gap of self-consciousness, as said above. Man has the power to study his own consciousness, and he has the power to alter himself by an act of will and imagination. These faculties the animals have not; and these faculties are either wholly present or wholly absent; they do not exist in any intermediate or partial stages. Here it is necessary to amplify a statement which was made in a qualified manner above, when we said that man is a product of a twofold evolution. We will consider him now as a product of *three* distinct lines of evolution. The third line is the line of the self-conscious mind.

As said in religious cosmogonies, the Bible included, man was created in the first instance out of the dust of the ground and made a living soul — that is (according to a more exact rendering of the Hebrew) an animal soul. Later this soul was endowed with the divine Fire, so that man was created in the divine likeness. This is a universal tenet; nothing has even been more a matter of agreement than that of the double creation of man. It is a truth, and we shall witness its confirmation by science, though science may use terms of its own instead of the Biblical phraseology.

By observing facts we shall find that intelligence is communicated from mind to mind or, to speak more accurately, it is aroused in one mind by the action of another. A child, left to itself, would not develop or evolve intelligence, but would remain a sort of instinctual creature, as has actually happened in some recorded cases. But he learns from his parents and family, both by instruction and imitation; and is afterwards taught in schools. Great movements in thought have always been started by master minds, thinkers of force and originality, who have gathered around them disciples, and thence the wave of thought has spread through the mass. Light is always handed on. It is true that intelligence lies latent in every man, but it would continue to lie latent unless called into manifestation. The highest types of animals remain what they are, and show no tendency to develop intelligence. What reason can be alleged for supposing that it was anywise different in some past age? The hope of finding the fossil remains of creatures intermediate between humanity and the higher apes has not been successful; and it is likely that the bones of degraded human types would be mistaken for such links. The analogy between the structure

of anthropoid and man works both ways, and may equally well prove the descent of the ape from the man; and there are biologists who believe that the evidence is in favor of that view.

Man is, then, the product of *three* principal lines of evolution, the third line being the *Manasic* evolution — that is, the evolution of *Manas*, which means self-conscious mind. It is this self-conscious mind which so sharply distinguishes humanity from the animal species; and, as said before, it cannot be represented as a product of direct evolution from the *unself-conscious* mind which animals have. It was a distinct acquisition made by man at a particular stage of evolution. There was a time when he had it not; there was a time when he gained it. This marks the difference between the early ‘mindless’ Races of humanity and the later ‘awakened’ Races.

This event is called in Theosophy the Coming of the *Mānasaputras*, which means ‘Sons of Mind.’ These were godlike beings who had once been men; but, as they belonged to a previous Round of the evolutionary cycle, they had evolved beyond the status of humanity as known today. It is from these beings that humanity derived its special intelligence. But it must not be thought that they *gave* mind as one gives a gift to someone who has it not. What they did was to awaken in the mindless human beings the latent seed of self-conscious mind which was already in them. For we must bear in mind that the highest potentialities lie dormant in every being in the Universe, however lowly, awaiting development into active power at some time in the future, however remote. The Sons of Mind, then, were the Teachers or Instructors of man, the Awakeners or Saviors. This event is described in allegorical language in many sacred scriptures and mythologies, the Biblical Genesis included.

In the present place we must limit ourselves to what is necessary to explain the present topic. It is this manasic part of us which forms the necessary link between *spirit* and *matter*. We have to imagine a natural evolution proceeding from below and producing more and more complex forms, and a Spiritual evolution (more properly involution) descending from above. But the Spiritual Beings are unable to incarnate in the animal organisms produced by the lower evolution, the gap being too great; so that it is this intermediate principle, Manas or self-conscious mind, intelligence, which bridges the gap, bringing the Spiritual into union with the physical, and thus making the complete human being.

Our own familiar experience will give us illustration of the fact that such is the method by which knowledge is actually conveyed from one person to another. We all learn from contact with other minds. These minds do not *give* us something, but rather arouse our own latent capacities. This is the true meaning of education, which means ‘drawing forth,’ as shown by Plato in the well-known story where he *elicits* geometrical truth from an untaught slave.

If it be asked whether the present animals will ever become human, the answer, as we said above, is Yes and No. It is not true to say that beast bodies can evolve into human bodies, or that animals become human by gradual transformation. But it is true that the Monads now inhabiting animal bodies will one day pass over into the human kingdom and become enlightened with the fire of mind. But this will not occur in the present Round {or great terrestrial cycle}; the door into the human kingdom is now closed for this Round, and the present beasts await their turn in a future Round.

### LIMITED VIEW OF SCIENCE

It has been well said that physical science is of a highly metaphysical nature, and this is obviously true of the evolutionist philosophy. Those who uphold it seem hypnotized with the idea that things are developing upwards from the very simplest beginnings; but what a view of the world scheme does this make in our minds! The amount of things which we must presuppose and take for granted is wonderful. Upon the atom and its innate properties are loaded the whole responsibility of the Universe and all its beings. Well may we call it the Almighty Atom! But, apart from this, the movement from simplicity to complexity is only one half of an observable universal process, the other being the movement from complexity to simplicity; and these two processes are working both at once and all the time. The processes at work in cosmic evolution are vast and various, and the whole scheme is infinitely elaborate and complicated. Science has hold of an important truth, but has glimpsed only a small part of its workings; the hypotheses of science are timid and confined. Again, science is unconsciously affected by the shortened view of human history fostered by religious teaching, and consequently seems determined to allow man only a few short years at the end of its time scale. This shortened idea of human history is further favored by the determination to make man the latest product of an end-on evolution.

Archaeology is continually frustrating these attempts and is always bringing to light new evidence that humanity, even highly civilized humanity, is of vast antiquity. An examination of the facts, without the pre-existing prejudice, would have led us to different conclusions; for in truth there is nothing to show that humanity has recently developed up from savagery.

And in biology, too, it has to be admitted that the structure of the human body shows a primitiveness which ill accords with the view that it is the most recent product of evolution. Man is in fact the original and therefore the most primitive stock of all, and bears in his body primitive arrangements of bones and muscles. As scientific authority for this statement may be called for, we refer to *Theosophy and Modern Science*,

by G. de Purucker, Vol. I, pp. 133 and following, where are enumerated at length a number of anatomical details in confirmation, chiefly drawn from the anatomist Dr. Wood Jones. A synopsis of them is given in Note 1 at the end of this section. {Also, see: *Man in Evolution* by G. de Purucker, ch. 8, which is an updated version of *Theosophy and Modern Science*.}

## HUMANS THE MOST PRIMITIVE STOCK

According to the teachings as to evolution, as given by Theosophy, and speaking for the present only of evolution in this Fourth Round {or terrestrial cycle,} man was actually the original and root stock of the mammalians, and the other stocks have sprung from the human stem. This accounts for these primitive and simple conformations in the human body. In the various animal stocks we find specializations of particular organs and functions, such as wings, trunks, claws, horns, gills. These, according to the theory which evolutionists have been trying to establish, are features which have been discarded; but their presence is much more consistent with the Theosophical doctrine of evolution than with the theory of the evolutionists. According to the Theosophical doctrine, the human stem threw off from itself the germs of the future animal stocks, and these germs then proceeded to develop and specialize, each along its own peculiar line, so that as time went on the tendency was towards ever wider divergence. And a candid study of the facts shows that this is the case; for it is found that species do actually tend to specialize along their own lines, rather than to pass by gradation into other species.

In saying that the germs which afterwards developed into the mammals were thrown off from the human stem, it is necessary to add a qualification and to explain why we said 'human stem' rather than 'man.' The events referred to took place in the very far past, and since then the human race has been developing, so that the humanity from which the mammals were thrown off was very different from the humanity of today. It is also necessary to bear in mind that, in a universe where everything evolves, matter itself has been evolving; and that its present stage, which we call 'physical,' represents the latest phase of a continuous succession of phases or states through which matter has passed. The process by which the germs or seeds which were afterwards to evolve into the mammalian stocks were thrown off is one that biologists call 'budding' or 'gemination.' The present human organism is not able to produce offspring in this way, though this method of reproduction exists today in some of the lower orders of creatures.

So the question, Did the animals descend from humanity? can be answered both Yes and No; they did descend in the way described here, but not in the Darwinian sense. They did not come from human beings by procreation and as the end product of a single-line upward evolution; the

germs of the animal stocks did proceed from the human stock, at a time in the far past when that human stock was not like what it is now. Thus the type of evolution in the animate kingdoms is like a tree with a main trunk, branch trunks, boughs, twigs, and leaves. This is quite different from the single-line type of evolution at first imagined, and science itself is coming more and more to this tree-like form of evolution, as facts accumulate and as studies progress.

## HUMANS DESCEND FROM — HUMANS

The ancestors of man were — man himself; prehuman perhaps, but still man. And this necessitates that something be said as to what man is and whence he has come.

Man came into existence on the spiritual plane as an *unself*-conscious spark of divinity, destined, after cycles of evolution, to return to unity with the divine essence from whence he sprang. He is a Monad, a germ of the Universal Life. The Monads destined to become men were thus godlike beings who came to Earth in the earliest days of the planet's life. The first *physical* man existed on this Earth some 18,000,000 years ago; but before that, man existed on Earth in astral or ethereal form. Here is a point which the modern theories have overlooked — that matter itself evolves, and that the Earth was not always physical. This has a great bearing on the whole picture of paleontology, and many difficulties arise from supposing that the conditions and properties of matter were the same in very remote periods as they are now.

In the present Globe-Round of cosmic evolution, there are seven human Root-Races, of which we are now in the Fifth. The First Root-Race was in Paleozoic times. Each of these Root-Races had its own peculiar form and its peculiar method of reproduction, the First by fission, the Second by budding, the Third by androgynous generation and egg laying. These methods are still found in some kinds of animals. The present method of sexual reproduction is a passing phase. The progenitors of the mammalian stocks were the first physical men and the astral-ethereal men who preceded them. At this time man was 'mindless' — that is, he was instinctual, for the light of self-consciousness had not yet been kindled in him. He was able at that time to start the evolution of the various mammalian types by the cells or seeds cast off from his own body. These then pursued each its own special line of evolution, thus during the ages producing those widely divergent types which we see today.

Thus far we have spoken of the mammalia; there remain the types below, namely reptiles, birds, fishes, etc. These did not issue from the human stem in this Globe-Round of the great evolutionary cycle, but in a preceding Globe-Round. It is thus seen that the plan of evolution is much more complex than has been supposed. We do not propose to go into it



here more fully or in more detail; and this may cause what is said to appear incomplete; but the plan is fully elaborated in other Theosophical writings, and its consistency can there be seen.

## HUMANS AND THE APES

A special case has to be noted as regards the two classes of simians, the anthropoids and the monkeys. As surmised by many scientists, these are *from* humanity and not toward it. But they differ from the other mammals in the way in which they were derived from the human stem. The early Race of humanity spoken of above as being ‘mindless’ allied themselves with certain of the animals existing at that time, and from this union sprang a hybrid Race which is the ancestry of the present monkeys (as distinguished from anthropoid apes). It is not right to call this miscegenation a crime, as such an act would be regarded today, because neither the humans nor the animals concerned in it were like the humans and animals of today. They were much more like each other; the distance between human and animal was not so great. Hence a fertile union was possible, and also a fertile offspring able to perpetuate its own race. Moreover, the humans being mindless were incapable of sin, and their acts were instinctual. This took place during the Mesozoic Age.

As to the manlike apes, their history is as follows. At a later date, during the Miocene period, when the Fourth great Root-Race of Humanity had passed its climax, certain degraded remnants thereof repeated the act of the ‘mindless’ (as just mentioned), by allying themselves with the then existing simian stock; and thus sprang the anthropoid apes. This act was, however, one of bestiality, a sin, because these humans were not mindless but endowed with self-consciousness. It is still to be observed, however, that human and animals were even then not far enough apart to prevent a fertile and self-productive union. Neither man nor monkey were the same as now, both having since evolved along their respective lines.

Such is the story of the origin of the apes and monkeys; and proofs of its truth are to be found in a study of the anatomical features of man and the anthropoids, which will be seen to confirm the above teaching rather than the view that man has developed from the ape, or that both have developed from a common animal stock.

## SPIRITUAL URGE IN EVOLUTION

It is clear, then, that we can accept evolution without disparaging our human nature; all we need to do is to get the doctrine straight and complete, not twisted and partial. It is materialism, not evolution, that denies the divinity of man. Man is not his body; the latter may be a product of evolution from below, but man himself is a self-conscious being, with

infinite untapped resources within him. It is this infinite part which has come from above; this is the fire which has kindled in the animal body the fire of genius.

We stated that, in one sense, man is from the animals; which means that the body which man has is the result of ages of evolution through lower kingdoms. But such evolution upward could never have been accomplished without a simultaneous involution of spirit into matter from above. It is the universal Life, Consciousness, Spirit (an exact term is hard to find) which is the cause of evolution, in seeking to build for itself new and better mansions on Earth. But Life, Consciousness, and Spirit are mere abstractions in themselves, they are the attributes of living beings, and these living beings are the Monads, of various classes and degrees.

Monads are sparks or atoms of the universal Life. They are Spiritual Beings, and may be regarded as the ultimate seed or germ of every living thing, down to the smallest atom or particle. Each of these germs starts its own line of evolution; in it lies stored up and latent the potentiality of all that will develop from it. Thus the whole Universe is the scene of a host of such living, evolving beings. They are at varying stages of their evolution. When spirit first begins to involve itself in matter, the evolution is very slow, so that long ages are passed in the lower kingdoms of Nature — the mineral, and before that the three elemental kingdoms, then the vegetable, and so on.

Individualization begins in the plants, develops farther in the animals, and is completed in man. But observe, it is not the organic forms that change one into another, but the indwelling Monads, which inhabit one form after another, as their evolution requires. Thus the forms may remain stationary or nearly so for long periods, while all the time evolution is proceeding.

## EVOLUTIONARY WAVES

It is interesting to note here that some scientists have noticed that new varieties of plants or animals appear *suddenly*; this is in response to a particular urge from within, requiring the production of that kind of a body for the expression of what is within the Monad.

All this has an important bearing on past evolution, as recorded in the paleontological record, and clears up many puzzles which that record has presented. While it is true on the whole that the types get lowlier as we recede into the past, yet the development has been by no means uniform. There have been great bursts of some particular type, like that of the reptiles in the Mesozoic Age, which attained such enormous development and gigantic size, and has dwindled until the little sun lizard represents the once gigantic saurian. At one time there was an immense development of tree ferns, at another of ammonites, and so on. Concurrently with this

evolution of the plants and animals, there were changes in the structure of the Earth, the distribution of the land and water, the nature of the atmosphere, the temperature and pressure, and other geophysical conditions; all of which makes the plan of evolution much more variegated than that of simple lineal descent.

Theosophy agrees with Darwinism in the belief that there is a law of gradual and extremely slow evolution embracing many million years. But it is necessary to distinguish between the fact of evolution and the manner of it; and in this latter point Theosophy may find itself in disagreement. And yet again there is the question of the cause of evolution, another moot question subject to diverse opinions.

One evolutionist is quoted as holding that evolution is accomplished by the agency of the ‘energies which are intrinsic in the evolving matter, and without interference from agencies external to matter.’ Here we find a good example of the method of evading a prime difficulty by the use of an undefined word — in this case ‘intrinsic’ — which really begs the whole question to be solved. The word was probably used to exclude the action of a divine creator and thus to distinguish the evolutionary theory from that of special creation. But it really replaces one difficulty by another of equal or greater magnitude. In the first place, it might prove hard to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic, to say just what is within matter and what is without. Is an ‘agency intrinsic in matter’ itself material? If this agency is itself material, then we have not solved the problem but merely moved it one stage farther. If the said intrinsic energy is not material, then what is it? The whole materialistic theory seems to be given away at once. Again, if the energy is not material, but is immaterial and separate from matter, then what becomes of the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic? The author of the above remark, however, goes on to say that intrinsic energies are a ‘property of the physical basis of tridimensional matter.’ This seems to imply that there can be something beyond matter, something which is not tridimensional; but the idea is spoiled by calling it ‘physical.’ It is evident, on any logical reasoning, that matter is either actuated by some agency which is not material (or not material in the same sense), or else this matter is the *primum mobile*, the primary element, the self-created or uncreate ultimate cause of all things — in a word, ‘God.’

Logically speaking, mind is prior to matter; for all we can know of matter is what we find in our own mind. That is, we must *assume* mind before the question can be argued at all. The result of defying this fundamental rule of logic is the hopeless confusion described above. There seem to have been people actually capable of arguing that consciousness has been evolved from a matter which did not already possess it. Anything from which the human mind has evolved must be greater than that mind, whether we call it matter or an atom or a Monad or a ‘God.’ In this sense

it may be true to say that evolution is caused by the powers intrinsic in matter; but this would then be only another way of saying that in every smallest atom there resides in potency the whole of whatever may afterwards be evolved from it. That is, this atom is a spark of the universal Spirit — which is pure Theosophical teaching.

## THE ANTIQUITY OF MAN

Theosophy has to hold the balance between religious dogmatism and scientific dogmatism, and between materialism in both camps. The scientific teachings as to evolution (or in so far at least as they have not corrected themselves in recent years) may lie open to the charge of promoting a derogatory view of human nature, as tending to concentrate our attention on the animal side of our nature, to the neglect of our spiritual endowments. But this charge has also been laid at the door of religion. In many of its forms it has encouraged the belief that man is by nature corrupt and born in sin; that he does not possess the power of saving himself, but needs a propitiatory sacrifice and the help of a church. Both these views are destructive to human interests, and the religious opponents of evolution would have better success against the materialism of their opponents if they stood on surer ground themselves. But there is nothing in evolution, rightly understood, to disparage our human nature; on the contrary the faith in his own essential divinity and perfectibility is greatly increased. Neither science nor religion can be wrong in themselves, but materialism may creep into either of them.

Something needs to be said about the antiquity of man on Earth. Science seems unconsciously to have inherited a prejudice from religion to the effect that man is a recent product; and there can be little doubt that the scientific interpretation of the available evidence has been largely colored by this prejudice. The notion has been furthered by the crude idea of the evolutionary scale, which is represented as a single-track ascent from primitive forms up to the most complex; which requires that we shall regard the most complex as the most recent arrivals upon Earth. The theory also requires that we shall find an evolution in civilization, that the man of today shall be the most civilized, and the most progressed intellectually and morally, while preceding peoples shall be less and less cultivated as we get back farther.

Unfortunately for this view, it has not been confirmed by facts; and with every day the evidence against it is accumulating. It is a feather in the cap of science that it hunts industriously for the facts in archaeology, thereby discovering things that confute its own theories; but it is not a feather in the cap when anyone tries to hide or distort the evidence to fit the theory; and both things happen. It has become a commonplace nowadays to say that we find ancient cultures, like that of the Egyptian,

already attained to a degree which presupposes an extremely long past behind them; or to point to the evident fact that civilizations decay as well as develop. In short, a candid study of the archaeological record gives no support to the idea that there has been any such upward development of civilization in recent times. As we go farther back we do not seem to get any nearer to a beginning. Civilizations seem to have arisen in the far past, gone through their phases, and passed away, to be succeeded by others, which have in turn gone through the stages of birth, growth, and dissolution.

The human stem is the main trunk from which other organic forms have at one time or another sprung. Such is the thesis of Theosophy, and this need not be accepted as a dogma, for the facts which come to light will tend ever more and more to confirm it. But though we may not swallow a doctrine on blind faith, but must always seek confirmation by our own judgment, still it helps very much and saves infinite time spent in wayward wandering, if we can have the key in our mind from the start. All teachers lay down their propositions in advance of the demonstration, thus making reasonable demands on the confidence of their pupils, who are willing to accept statements provisionally until such time as they can be justified. Theosophists therefore feel no compunction in stating boldly their fundamental propositions.

The results of archaeology therefore tend rather in favor of the Theosophical doctrine of man's origin than in favor of the current theories. The evolution is cyclical rather than progressive in a straight line. The traces of peoples of a primitive type and culture, which are unearthed, differ not from the type and culture of peoples that exist on Earth today; and side by side with these primitive types, in the past as in the present, dwelt mighty civilizations. Humanity is divided into Races {human life-waves}, and subdivided indefinitely into lesser divisions, and each one of these divisions is in some particular phase of its own racial evolution. Some are on the upgrade, some on the down; and so we find on Earth today Races that are rising, others that have passed their zenith, and some that are dying out. So it has been in the past; but the remnants of cultured peoples are more perishable than those of the uncultured. Even so, the attempt to find confirmation of the theories has not met with success. Nor is there satisfactory evidence that the type of the human organism has changed, except in minor details, and these fluctuating, since the earliest periods we can contact.

The whole story of cosmic evolution is too complex to be delineated here, and would only serve to confuse the reader even if we attempted it; so we will repeat what was said above — namely that in this *manvantara* there are seven great periods known as Globe-Rounds, of which we are at present in the Fourth; and that in each Globe-round there are seven Root-Races of Humanity, of which we are now in the Fifth. It is millions of years

ago since this Fifth Root-Race began, and the First Root-Race was coeval with the Paleozoic Age in geology. It is some 18,000,000 years since man first appeared on Earth in physical form; but before that he existed on Earth in finer forms of matter, sometimes called astral or ethereal. The time scale with which we have to deal is therefore large; but this should raise no objection when we consider the vast ages demanded by paleontologists, geologists, and astronomers.

Many people must have been struck by the disparity between these vast periods and the shortness of history as usually visioned. A similar remark applies to the vastness of the spatial scale contemplated in astronomy. In view of this it would seem that Theosophy is merely introducing proportion where before there was disproportion. These root-Races are subdivided into smaller divisions, and these again into yet smaller, so that the racial cultures at present on Earth represent very small offshoots. Further, as every racial division splits up and gives rise to branches, each pursuing its own separate history, it can be seen that what we find now on Earth is a very miscellaneous assortment, some of them being remote descendants of the Fourth Root-Race, and a few even of the Third. The mixture of racial remnants in Africa is very remarkable.

In view of this, what can we think of the timid attempts of historians and ethnologists to trace the origin of one little division of humanity from another, and to piece together a consistent picture out of such a scrap heap? The decaying remnants of some mighty Race that flourished millions of years ago are represented as a primitive stock from which our present civilized humanity has evolved; and attempts are made to find still more lowly types leading back by gradations into the animal kingdom. The result is that theory after theory has to be given up as new facts come to light. Another important point is that much is lost by studying things piecemeal and in departmentalizing science too much. One result of this is that one branch of science may devise theories which do not suit other branches. But today expansion is taking place in all directions and the spirit of devotion to truth is bound to prevail over parochialism and obscurantism and to bring the facts to light.

## HEREDITY AND EVOLUTION

The scientific study of evolution is interwoven with the study of genetics and with that of cytology. The former deals with the observed facts concerning heredity, as ascertained by statistical investigations into human heredity and experimental breeding with plants and animals; the latter means the study of cells and their development, as seen under the microscope. To go into details on these subjects would require volumes, but the leading points, in their bearing on our present topic, may be summarized. The story, historically considered, is one of theory

succeeding theory; a drama which is itself an example of evolution, since it represents the growth of ideas under the modifying influence of facts. Earlier theories, based on imperfect knowledge, have been successively changed, as new facts came to light; and it is a well-known circumstance in most investigations, that the new facts, instead of confirming the old theories and thus simplifying the inquiry, open out new vistas, so that the problem becomes more and more complex.

The main problems to be solved are:

(1) How do these investigations affect the theories of evolution? Do they support it or conflict with it? The general answer can be surmised: the investigations call for modifications of the theory, but it is still held to, so far as the facts will permit.

(2) To what extent does heredity tend towards permanence of type, and to what extent does it tend to produce variation? The general answer to this is that both phenomena coexist, and that there are certain factors within the cell which tend to pass on hereditaments from generation to generation, and certain other factors which tend to produce variations.

(3) To what extent are characters acquired by an individual transmissible to offspring? This question is closely involved with —

(4) Is variation due to the hereditary transmission of acquired characters, or is it produced within the germinal cell by some other means?

Let us consider the earlier views on evolution and ask what effect has been produced on them by later studies. The idea was that new varieties were produced from old by the slow accumulation of small variations, which were transmitted by heredity; and that this slow process, continued through ages, has resulted in a gradual progressive evolution from the simplest forms up to the most complex. This has been found to be too simple and crude a theory; and in this respect the work of Bateson may be regarded as of historical importance. He was president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, at its annual meeting for 1914, which was held at Toronto; and gave on that occasion a remarkable address from which we may quote. He makes a distinction between a connecting link and a mere mongrel. He instances the case of two allied species of plants, called *Lychnis diurna* and *Lychnis vespertina*, which are found in the same area, accompanied by many plants which show a number of variations between the two. These used to be regarded as transitional steps, but they are merely mongrels between the two species. He says:

Knowledge of heredity has so reacted on our conceptions of variation that very competent men are even denying that variation in the old sense is a genuine occurrence at all. Variation is postulated as the basis of all evolutionary change. Do we then as a matter of fact find in the world about us variations occurring of such a kind as to warrant faith in a contemporary

progressive evolution? Till lately, most of us would have answered “Yes” without misgiving.

Variation is found wherever a number of varieties of the same species are crossing freely. But these variations are ‘factorial’ — that is, the various individuals possess in various relative proportions certain constituents of the original breed from which they have all diverged. This is the same result as is produced by experimental breeding. The important point is that the varieties are not brought about by the addition of new factors but by the loss of certain factors, the totality of which factors were present in the original parent. He also considers the case of the numerous breeds of domestic fowls, all derived from an original ‘jungle fowl.’ These domestic fowls are not transition forms leading from one species to another, as the original theory would require; but they are factorial products of the original wild hen, each containing some of the factors present in that bird, and all containing the factors in varying proportions. In other words, the domestic breeds are divergent offshoots from the original type. To quote again:

We have no longer the smallest doubt that in all these examples [domestic animals and various wild animals and plants] the varieties stand in a regular descending order, and that they are simple terms in a series of combinations of factors separately transmitted, of which each may be present or absent.

The name of De Vries is associated with the Mutation Theory; he was led by his experiments in plant heredity to the conclusion that changes might take place much more suddenly than had been supposed. The earlier evolutionists had supposed that variations were slight and cumulative; but he found that from seedlings of the same plant may come individual plants differing from each other not only slightly but sometimes very radically; and in exceptional cases the deviation may be so marked that one of the plants may fairly be regarded as constituting a new elementary species. Such a sudden variation De Vries called a mutation.

Weismann and his Germ-Plasm theory next calls for mention. His main idea still holds ground, though subsequent studies in cytology have modified the views of biologists as to details. He held that, in many-celled organisms, certain of the cells die as individual cells, and build up the structure and substance of the body, being concerned with nutrition and other vital functions; but that certain other cells do not thus die but perpetuate themselves by the method of fission, as occurs in single-cell organisms; and that these latter cells are handed on from generation to generation. This would account for the perpetuation of ancestral features throughout all generations, and explain why breeding takes place true to type. It leaves open the question whether these perpetual cells are or are



not influenced by environmental influence, or whether any changes they may undergo originate from some cause within the cell itself. The deeper study of the cell under powerful microscopes has now resolved it into a number of genetic elements, the description of which belongs to the study of biology; and it is sufficient for present purposes to say that it is recognized that some of these elements are concerned with the building and nutrition of the body, and others are concerned with reproduction.

Professor Bateson in more recent utterances has said that to watch the marvelous actions of the cell and its constituents is like watching an act of creation at work; and others have said that there is nothing in the appearance of these elements which can give us the least idea of what they will do. And the polar structure observable at some stages, and the radiating lines like those proceeding from a magnet, suggest the presence of *electric* forces, and point to the strong evidences of *purposive* action. It is thus that scientists are finding themselves forced by the facts ever nearer and nearer to the inevitable truth — that mere mechanism can explain nothing, but that life and living beings prevail throughout. (See Note 2 at the end of this section.)

These studies in heredity and cytology, then, show us that changes of type are produced with comparative rareness and suddenness, and that as a general rule each type reproduces its own kind, subject to temporary variations produced by crossing and environment. This agrees with what was said above about the various types of organic beings having been produced originally from seeds thrown off by the human stock at a primitive stage in the evolution of the latter. Each of these seeds, thus thrown off, then proceeds to follow its own independent evolution, true to its own particular type. But within every one of these evolving organisms there dwells the 'Monad,' or animal or vegetable soul, so to speak. It is all the while developing and garnering experience from its contact with the outer world. By this means it gradually gains new capacities; but these lie latent and unexpressed, until such time as outer circumstances may permit them to find expression. And then there takes place one of these 'mutations' or sudden variations. This is the invisible cause which brings them about. Thus too it is easily seen why, at certain periods when the conditions of the Earth permitted, some species developed into monstrous and gigantic forms, which are no longer found. Lizards are still produced, and vary in form and size according to conditions; but we no longer find the gigantic saurians of the Jurassic Period.

## **ARE HUMANS THE SUMMIT OF EVOLUTION?**

It is a familiar criticism that there is nothing in the evolution theory to show that man is its ultimate product: he might be its latest, but not necessarily its last. If we assume that man has been developed from lowlier

types by a certain process or by some unspecified cause, we may justly infer that the same agency can produce beings more highly evolved than man. And if we assume that human intelligence has been evolved from very rudimentary beginnings, what limits can be set to the possibilities for the future? What sublime heights may not the human intellect attain? What marvelous powers may not some future being, evolved from ourselves, not be able to wield? If speculations of this kind should strike some minds as nonsense, and very capital nonsense, we decline to take the blame. We are merely trying to provide a logical sequence to the argument with which we are furnished; and if the whole existing animate creation has come forth from a jelly speck in a primeval sea, we see no particular reason why a great deal more should not come forth by the same method as the ages roll.

And it is indeed true that higher stages of evolution await the Spiritual Being who is now manifesting itself through the vehicle which we know as the ordinary man of today. To such higher stages we can only apply such names as Adepts, Masters of Wisdom, Initiates, Gods, Planetary Spirits; our language was not constructed with this in view, so the words may sound vague.

When we study our own consciousness, we realize that there is much more in us than has yet been unfolded; there is no reason for assigning limits to the possibilities of our attainment along these lines. As there comes to the very young child a moment when self-consciousness, the feeling of being a separate being, the power of contemplation of his own existence, dawns for the first time; so there may be in store for us another awakening to a still fuller self-realization. We shall then have passed the portals of initiation, and be no longer as other men. We shall have entered the 'kingdom of heaven.' Those forces in our own nature to which we are now subject will no longer have sway; and having thus become master in our own house, we shall become able to dispose of the forces of outside nature in a way in which the ordinary man of today cannot. We shall have what are called 'occult powers.' Here is one step in higher evolution. Our conscious perception will not be limited to the bounds set by the physical senses; our thoughts will not be centered on self, for the delusion of separateness will have been overcome. We may no longer need a physical body, but may use as our vehicle bodies of higher grades of matter.

But it is important to observe that this higher evolution is not confined to the future, except in the case of those beings who have not yet attained to it. For the evolution of past cycles has already carried beings to these higher stages, and these may be called our elder brothers. Nor is it true that there has been a time when only lowly animals existed, followed by a time when higher animals appeared, and still later by man in its first appearance. There always have been all these grades, existing synchronously, each at its own particular stage of evolution. Such a statement may arouse questions as to whether there ever was a beginning

or will ever be an end, and so forth; but such questions beset every inquiry, no matter what our theory may be, and should not be regarded as invalidating the position. Problems of infinity are beyond the scope of the intellect, at least in its present state, and it is not fair for a critic to oppose a theory on grounds of objection to which his own theory is at least equally liable.

## ATAVISM

Students of heredity have observed the phenomenon known as atavism, which means the sudden reappearance in one generation of traits belonging to a remote generation and which have not shown themselves in the intermediate generations. Sometimes this is called reversion, and advocates of the evolutionary theories are fond of pointing to what they regard as traits of our savage ancestors, or even of our arboreal ape ancestors, which crop out in civilized specimens of humanity. The facts are undeniable, but it does not follow that the explanation is right. Biology, with its materialistic interpretation, points to the existence, in the germinal cells, of elements which are passed on from generation to generation; and here we have at all events a physical interpretation of the phenomenon. But how much more significant does the matter become when viewed from the standpoint of Theosophy. That which is now man has existed in every lower form of organism, whether animal, vegetable, or what not; and consequently preserves rudiments of every one of those types. The mechanical explanation is ludicrously inadequate, for all this vast potentiality has to be loaded onto one microscopic physical speck. That speck is microscopic on the physical plane only; on the physical plane it is reduced to vanishing point; but on other planes of matter, not less real because imperceptible to the physical senses, it is no microscopic speck. Let science explain on mechanical and physical principles how it is that memories of sixty years ago are still so fresh and vivid in my mind as to be at times almost real.

It is evident that the physical mechanism does not suffice for an explanation; we must accept the idea that there are other grades of matter of finer structure than physical matter, and with properties unknown to physical science, which can serve as the storehouses for these latent impressions, and bring them forth into manifestation at particular times.

... man's *outward* shell passed through every vegetable and animal body before it assumed the human shape.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 282

So atavism can be described as a form of memory; and somewhere in man's organism we carry all past experiences in the form of stored memory

which under suitable conditions can be reproduced. Is it more wonderful than the fact that the voice of a speaker can be preserved on a waxed disk for an indefinite period, and be reproduced in exact detail for the benefit of auditors yet unborn?

What is known as ‘recapitulation’ means that the human fetus in the womb passes through a number of stages which more or less resemble the different types of animals. The evolutionists say that the fetus recapitulates the history of evolutionary stages preceding the human. There is such a recapitulation, but not in the sense which the evolutionists suppose. The developing human Monad passes quickly through all the stages which that human Monad has passed through in other cycles of evolution. For this Monad, in far past ages, was accomplishing its evolution in the various kingdoms of Nature, as plant and animal; and by a universal law it has to pass through these stages again from the beginning rapidly.

Every Monad, whether in plant, animal, or even in the mineral atom, has originated in the human type and tends to revert to it.

... the human type is the repertory of all potential organic forms, and the central point from which these latter radiate.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. II, p. 683

*“Every form on earth, and every speck (atom) in Space, strives in its efforts towards self-formation to follow the model placed for it in the ‘HEAVENLY MAN.’... Its (the atom’s) involution and evolution, its external and internal growth and development, have all one and the same object — man.” — Ibid., Vol. I, p. 183*

Everything that *is*, *was*, and *will be*, eternally *is*, even the countless forms, which are finite and perishable only in their objective, not in their *ideal* Form. They existed as Ideas, in the Eternity, and, when they pass away, will exist as reflections. Neither the form of man, nor that of any animal, plant or stone has ever been *created*, and it is only on this plane of ours that it commenced “becoming,” *i.e.*, objectivizing into its present materiality, or expanding *from within outwards*, from the most sublimated and supersensuous essence into its grossest appearance. Therefore *our* human forms have existed in the Eternity as astral or ethereal prototypes; according to which models, the Spiritual Beings (or Gods) whose duty it was to bring them into objective being and terrestrial Life, evolved the protoplasmic forms of the future *Egos* from *their own essence*. After which, when this human *Upâdhi*, or basic mold was ready, the natural terrestrial Forces began to work on those supersensuous molds *which contained, besides their own, the elements of all the past vegetable and future animal forms of this globe in them.* — *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 282

## INVOLUTION AND EVOLUTION

As has been shown, evolution is necessarily a double process, for it means that a spirit or life-force is entering into something and causing that something to grow. The growing of the something is called evolution, and the passing of the spirit or life-force into it is called involution. The involution of spirit into matter causes the evolution of matter. The involution of mind into body causes the growth of body. The involution of life into an organism causes the evolution of the organism.

It will be observed that the word 'evolution' is unfortunately used in two different senses: (1) to denote the entire process; (2) to denote one phase of the process, involution being the other phase. As this ambiguous use of the word 'evolution' has become fixed, it is necessary to be on our guard against it.

It is evident that, if spirit involves into matter, so as to cause matter to evolve more and more, so that the matter expresses more and more of the qualities of the spirit, the process will eventually result in bringing things back to much the same state as they were in at first. Thus we can imagine steam being passed into water until at last all the water becomes steam. Thus the evolution is a continuous process, but cyclic, returning to a similar point. It is clear too that there must be a midway point at which spirit and matter are equally balanced.

The process can thus be represented in the diagram of a circle, in which we consider the highest point as the beginning and the end. The lowest point, which is the midway point and is at the bottom, opposite to the beginning and end, represents a stage of evolution when the involution of spirit into matter has proceeded until the qualities of each are in equal proportions. In this diagram the course of evolution is supposed to proceed down the left side and up the right side. The left side of the circle is known as the downward arc, the right side as the upward arc. During the progress of evolution along the downward arc, there is passage from spirituality to materiality, until the limit of materiality is reached at the lowest point; after which the ascending arc begins and there is progress from materiality towards spirituality. But it is to be noted that the whole process is a continual progress, and that the same power which causes spirit to descend into matter causes matter also to ascend into spirit; the one stage is a continuation of the other.

In the history of evolution it is taught that one great period of manifestation is called a Manvantara, and that this is divided into seven Rounds, and each of these is subdivided into seven Root-Races. The above diagram can be applied to the seven Rounds or to the seven Root-Races. We are at present in the Fifth Root-Race of the Fourth Round. As 4 is the midway point of 7 stages, it is seen that we stand a little beyond the lowest point of materiality, and are on the ascending arc of evolution. We are

aspiring away from materiality towards spirituality. While humanity was following the downward arc in the earlier Root-Races, it was descending into matter; its path of self-realization lay in expressing itself more and more in matter; but our path is different, as we have passed the midway point. So it is seen that what was right for humanity at one time may be wrong at another; if we were to strive towards greater materiality, we should be turning backward against the course of evolution.

Thus far we have spoken of the involution of spirit into matter, and of the consequent evolution of matter into more spiritual forms. But this statement was only provisional, and was made for the sake of clarity. It needs modification; for it suggests that spirit and matter are two different and independent things, which is not the case. There is one universal Life, which manifests itself under the two aspects which we call spirit and matter, but these two aspects exist only by contrast with each other. A familiar illustration from physical science will make this point clear: suppose we were to compare the qualities of a liquid and a solid; we might call the liquid 'spirit,' and the solid 'matter;' but then, if we took a gas and a liquid, the gas would be spirit by contrast with the liquid, which would be matter. So what is spirit on one plane may be matter on the next higher plane; and spirit and matter, instead of being two distinct things, are merely different grades of one thing. And so, in speaking of evolution, instead of saying that spirit descends into matter, it is more accurate to say that the one essence becomes gradually more material, and then again becomes more and more spiritual, until the cycle of evolution is accomplished.

## CONCLUSION

Thus we have given some account of the leading features in our vast subject, and what we have tried to show is the laws that regulate change and growth throughout the Universe — not merely the material Universe — but also all those invisible realms that concern mind and spirit. Evolution *is* a conscious, purposive purpose, and it is the work of living beings. The Universe, in the last analysis, consists exclusively of living beings, and each and all of these are growing and evolving. Such a view necessarily makes the entire process exceedingly complex, and a complete understanding of it is not to be contemplated; but there is no limit to the advances which we can make in our knowledge of it by study and experience of life. The wise student will be willing to recognize the limitations of human faculty and the necessary degrees in its unfoldment, so that he will not suffer himself to be discouraged by impatience because he cannot grasp the whole subject at once.

## NOTES

### NOTE 1.

Anatomical evidence of the primitiveness of the human stock, condensed from *Theosophy and Modern Science*, ch. viii, {now *Man in Evolution*, ch. 7,} and largely taken from Dr. Wood Jones, Professor of Anatomy in the University of Manchester:

(1) The bones of the human skull articulate both at the base of the skull and on the sides of the brain-case in a manner characteristic of primitive mammalian animals; thus forming a marked contrast with the same articulations as found in the anthropoid apes and monkeys.

(2) The extreme primitive simplicity of the human nasal bones, in contrast with the case of the anthropoid and other simian stocks.

(3) In five respects in particular the skull is built on primitive mammalian lines, which have been departed from in some degree in all monkeys and apes: the back wall of the orbit, the metopic suture, the form of the jugal bone, the condition of the internal pterygoid plate, and the teeth.

(4) The human skeleton, especially in its variations, shows the same condition of primitive mammalian simplicity.

(5) As to the muscular system, man also retains many primitive features which have been lost in the rest of the Primates; among which are specially noted the pectoralis minor, whose attachment to the coracoid process is the original and primitive attachment, very different from that of the apes and monkeys, and still more so from that of many of the quadrupeds.

(6) The human tongue is primitive, and no ape or monkey has a tongue like the human.

(7) The vermiform appendix is strangely like that of some of the marsupials of Australia; it is very different in the apes and monkeys.

(8) The great arteries which arise from the arch of the aorta in man have the same number, are of the same kind, and are arranged in the same order as in the *ornithorhynchus anatinus* or duck-billed platypus of Australia. The apes and monkeys have not this arrangement.

(9) In man the premaxilla, the front part of the upper jawbone carrying the incisor teeth, does not exist as a separate element. But in apes, monkeys, and all other mammals, the premaxillary element is shown on the face by suture lines, outlining its junction with the maxillary bones.

## NOTE 2.

Quotations from Professor Bateson's address at the Toronto meeting of the British Association, 1914.

"We have done with the notion that Darwin came latterly to favor, that large differences can arise from the accumulation of small differences. Such small differences are often mere ephemeral effects of conditions of life, and as such are not transmissible; but small differences, even when truly genetic, are factorial like the larger ones, and there is not the smallest reason for supposing that they are capable of summation."

"Examine any two thoroughly distinct species which meet each other in their distribution, as for instance *Lychnis diurna* and *vespertina* do. In areas of overlap are many intermediate forms. These used to be taken to be transitional steps, and the specific distinctness of *vespertina* and *diurna* was on that account questioned. Once it is known that these supposed intergrades are merely mongrels between the two species, the transition from one to the other is practically beyond our powers of imagination to conceive."

"Knowledge of heredity has so reacted on our conception of variation that very competent men are even denying that variation in the old sense is a genuine occurrence at all. Variation is postulated as the basis of all evolutionary change. Do we then as a matter of fact find in the world about us variations occurring of such a kind as to warrant faith in a contemporary progressive evolution? Till lately, most of us would have said 'Yes' without misgiving."

"Distinct types once arisen, no doubt a profusion of the forms called species have been derived from them by simple crossing and subsequent recombination. New species may now be in process of creation by this means, but the limits of the process are obviously narrow. On the other hand we see no changes in progress around us in the contemporary world which we can imagine likely to culminate in the evolution of forms distinct in the larger sense. By intercrossing dogs, jackals, and wolves new forms of these types can be made, some of which may be species, but I see no reason to think that from such material a fox could be bred in indefinite time, or that dogs could be bred from foxes."

"As we have got to recognize that there has been an evolution, that somehow or other the forms of life have arisen from fewer forms, we may as well see whether we are limited to the old view that evolutionary progress is from the simple to the complex, and whether after all it is conceivable that the process was the other way about."



# 7

## **Rounds and Races** Our Divine Parentage and Destiny

Gertrude W. van Pelt, MD

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## THE COSMIC PATH OF EVOLUTION

The origin of man has heretofore been a mystery for this age, but Theosophy now breaks the silence of centuries and declares that man is inherently divine and that, from the time that he is equipped with mind, *he creates himself*. This new-old teaching hangs upon those of the actual oneness of all life and the doctrine of Hierarchies.

The mere belief in man's divine parentage is nothing new: on the contrary, it is almost universally accepted. Every religion presents it in some form. Man feels the necessity of accounting for his existence, and however much the pure religions may have been degraded or become split into innumerable sects over disputes regarding misunderstood or man-invented tenets, there remains in the minds of all, tutored or untutored, a belief in a Divine Being, a 'Creator' of the Universe.

The knowledge which Theosophy restores to this age pertains to the manner in which this so-called creation came about. Proceeding from universals to particulars, the philosophy of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion unfolds the broad outlines of evolution in such inevitable sequence, filling the gap in modern theories with such soul- and mind-satisfying reasoning, that doubt or blind belief gives place to assurance and knowledge.

It is, in very truth, to this Archaic Wisdom that we must turn to save us from ourselves; to guide us on our onward and upward march. The staggering questions as to the meaning and purpose of life, the origin and nature of sin, must be answered truly if the human race is to progress. The agony of doubt, the fear of the future, self-distrust, reckless indifference, the confusion of ignorance — all must be met, understood, and overcome by each one in himself, before we can rise to our essential dignity and move forward toward the transcendent glory of our destiny.

This great, superb, and comprehensive knowledge, restated in this age through the channel of the Theosophical Society, is not a compilation of the essences of the various schools of philosophy that have marked the pages of history. Rather are *they* the more or less clear echoes of *its* teachings. Its origin is archaic and different. This must be clearly understood. Theosophy makes the claim — one which by study in the right direction can be verified — that as soon as man on this planet was endowed with mind, Great Beings from other and previous cycles of evolution, far greater than this cycle of our Earth, came to instruct and to strike the keynote for the coming Races of men. It is they who communicated the knowledge — a small part of which the humanity of today is ready to receive — to the Chosen Ones destined to guide the children of Earth. Imperishable records of this Truth do indeed exist, and are well guarded by those worthy of the trust. All through the ages there have been those, known as Messengers, chosen by these Guardians to come among men at certain cyclic periods and restate as much of this Wisdom-Religion as

could be understood at the time, framed in language appropriate to the mental molds of that age. These so chosen are known as ‘Messengers of the Lodge.’ H. P. Blavatsky, one of these, was sent I the latter part of the last century. {Nineteenth century.} It was her duty, privilege, and grave responsibility to give out to the world at this time, more than has been possible heretofore in our recorded history. The Mystery-Schools of ancient Egypt and Greece gave profound teachings, but only to pledged neophytes; and all through the ages there have been advanced mystics who have had their pledged disciples. But on a printed page and openly taught, there has been nothing like H. P. Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine* in our known history. This fact, coincident with the increasing unification of all parts of the world in a physical way, presents matter for grave reflection. Speaking of her book, she says:

*The Secret Doctrine* merely asserts that a system, known as the WISDOM-RELIGION, the work of generations of adepts and seers, the sacred heirloom of prehistoric times — actually exists, though hitherto preserved in the greatest secrecy by the present Initiates; and it points to various corroborations of its existence to this very day, to be found in ancient and modern works.... No new philosophy is set up in *The Secret Doctrine*, only the hidden meaning of some of the religious allegories of antiquity is given, light being thrown on these by the esoteric sciences, and the common source is pointed out, whence all the world-religions and philosophies have sprung.... It is also maintained that its doctrines and sciences, which form an integral cycle of universal cosmic facts and metaphysical axioms and truths, represent a complete and unbroken system; and that he who is brave and persevering enough, ready to crush the *animal* in himself, and, forgetting the human *self*, sacrifices it to his Higher Ego, can always find his way to become initiated into these mysteries. — “The Babel of Modern Thought,” *Lucifer*, Vol. VII, 1891, pp. 442-443

There is another fact which might be noted as introductory to a study of our divine parentage and destiny. The average Eastern mind, colored, of course, by the exoteric religions of the time, thinks of the so-called creation or beginning of the being we now describe as man, as having taken place on this planet Earth. But life here, all-important as it seems, is yet but a passing incident in man’s eternal pilgrimage through space. A study of the Theosophical teachings regarding the life-atoms and universal evolution will make clear that every atom composing the Universe is a living being, engaged in the fulfillment of its own part in the universal scheme of evolution. It is the ultimate destiny of each such life-atom to become Man. Every atom, being a part of the universal omnipresent Reality — *i.e.*, of the Cosmos itself — contains within itself the potentialities of the whole. It is never ‘created,’ for it always was and always will be. Its nature is to unfold, little by little to bring forth these potentialities, which unfolding we call evolution. Imagine, or try to, the

incalculable worlds any atom must pass through before attaining the human stage. Solar systems, of infinite grades of development, must have afforded it shelter and opportunities for growth, as slowly through the eternities it steps from world to world, attaining in each one a fuller expression of itself. So up and up the ascending spiral of life, conscious beings of numberless grades, encased in forms of myriad types, mount to the human stage, then pass beyond, become gods, greater and greater — reaching ever nearer the Light, but never touching the Flame, the unknowable Source of All.

Man, then, being verily a fragment of the Whole, having the potentialities of the Whole, were never ‘created.’ His evolution consists in a fashioning of more and more perfect and complex vehicles or bodies, which allow of an ever-increasing power of self-understanding and expression. In this endeavor each slightest increase in complexity has been and forever will be coincident with aid from beings or other fragments of the Whole whose vehicles are in advance of *his* organism as we mount the eternally ascending spiral. And this notwithstanding the fact that as soon as mind is awakened, man creates himself.

The effort in this booklet is to describe in brief outline some of the changes which have taken place since the beings we now call man reached our planet Earth. Naturally only such facts are given in detail in the present restatement of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion as relate to us as inhabitants of this globe. Our consciousness is probably not tuned to comprehend much beyond that in either direction.

One difficulty always encountered in attempting to put into language any part of this philosophy is to decide what to state first. For it is an absolutely true presentation of the facts of Nature, every part of whose functioning is interrelated and interlocked with every other part. Wherever one starts, something else must be understood to make it clear. In other words, all the aspects of any subject must be seen at once before a true picture can appear before the mind’s eye. On the other hand, so perfect are the analogies in this living Whole — the Universe — that any part of the field firmly grasped, illumines every other part. Thus our present study of man’s origin and destiny gives certain universal keys which can be applied to any unit in Nature, great or small.

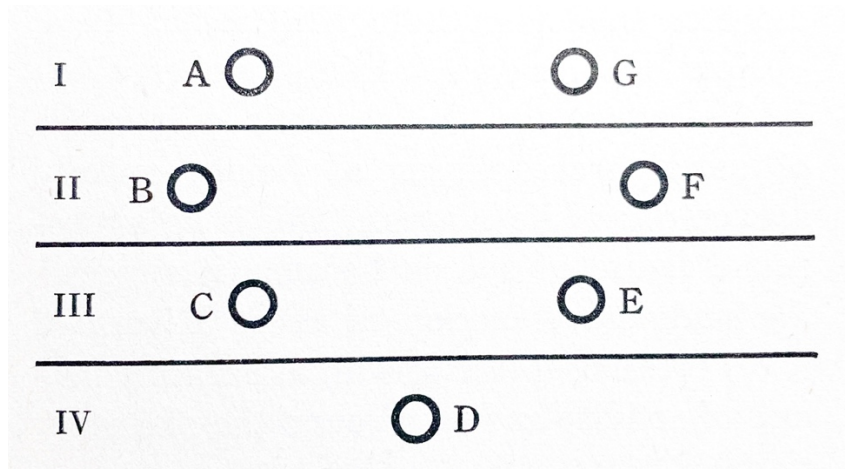
## THE EARTH-CHAIN AND ITS KINGDOMS

We cannot understand the true origin of man unless we know something about the Earth on which he dwells, for the life of the two is intermingled. Man does not merely live *on* the Earth; his life forms a part of the life of the planet, and more than that, even part of its consciousness. It is an ancient truth, disregarded as superstition by modern science, {at the time} that the Earth is a living being. It is born, lives, and dies, only to

be born again, after a period of rest — rest, that is, for the informing spirit of the Earth, its soul if you like.

Furthermore, this Earth is more than this visible rocky sphere. It is, so the Ancient Teaching runs, a group of seven Globes, technically called a Planetary Chain. We see only the Globe we are living on because the other six are composed of ascending degrees of finer substance than our own, too rarefied for our present sense perceptions. These different degrees or conditions of substance correspond to, and inevitably imply the existence of, different states of consciousness, forming what are called in Theosophy *planes*.

Thus it is that the Universe divides itself naturally into a number of such states of consciousness or planes; and each entity in the Universe, such as a planetary Chain, does likewise. The seven Globes of our Earth's planetary Chain group themselves naturally into four of such cosmic planes. The diagram below is a useful key in studying the relationship of these seven Globes.



It should be clearly borne in mind that the above is not a picture of the way the Globes of the Earth-chain are arranged in space, but is more like a symbol indicating certain basic facts about the planetary Chain.

On the plane marked I are Globes A and G (so lettered merely for our convenience). This means that there is a certain similarity between these two Globes — let us call it for easy understanding, a similarity of vibrational rate. This is likewise true of the pairs B and F, and C and E; while Globe D stands alone on the lowest or fourth Cosmic plane.

Now it is this entire Chain of Globes which is the arena for the majestic pilgrimage of seven great classes of beings, usually spoken of as Life-Waves. This is an appropriate figure of speech because it suggests the

undulatory motion of these Rivers of Lives pressing forward, with alternating periods of activity and rest, round the planetary circle.

These Life-Waves are made up of Spiritual Beings, sparks of the Divine Flame at the heart of the Universe, each group at a different stage of its evolutionary development, and finding on each Globe opportunity for the unfolding of certain characteristics from the treasury of its own inner being.

These seven classes may be enumerated by the descriptive terms we use today, namely:

Three Elemental Kingdoms

The Mineral Kingdom

The Plant Kingdom

The Beast Kingdom

The Human Kingdom

But if we use these names we must remember that we do so merely for the purpose of easy description; for the various classes have gone through an infinite variety of changes during the long ages of their Earth-journey (not yet completed by many millions of years), and have already taken many millions of years to differentiate into the distinct classes as we now know them.

Furthermore, we should think of the Kingdoms themselves as *Houses* which the various Spiritual Beings inhabit. Thus a very undeveloped being, just starting on its evolutionary journey, would live in an *Elemental* House of Life. Another, more advanced, would find a *Mineral* House of Life appropriate for its necessities for growth; and so on. But such Houses of Life are abandoned for more highly appointed ones, so to speak, when the old ones are found to be no longer adequate; just as there may be seven or more grades in a school, but the pupils themselves move on from grade to grade when they have learned all that each grade can teach them.

Let us for easier understanding confine ourselves to the circling of the *Human* Life-Wave around the Earth planetary Chain; remembering that we mean by this Human Life-Wave that group of essentially Spiritual Beings who, after many marvelous vicissitudes, unrecorded except in the secret records of initiated sages, find themselves at present inhabiting human bodies, endowed with human brains, human feelings, human spiritual and intellectual capacities — in short, members of the present great Human Family.

Turning again to our diagram, let us notice the circular manner in which the Globes are placed. This is a symbolic representation of the way in which the Life-Wave passes through the seven Globes. Starting with Globe A at the left, it circles down the left-hand arc through Globes B and C to D. This is called the Shadowy Arc or Arc of Descent, not indicating

that there is a fall through space — which would be absurd — but that the Life-Wave is plunging farther and farther into matter. It is building for itself bodies of increasingly grosser physical substance. Matter draws it like a lodestone, and the purity of its early state on Globe A becomes a dimmer and ever dimmer memory.

With the attainment of Globe D the lowest point is reached, the pivotal point where matter balances spirit and where a definite effort has to be made to generate the spiritual force to continue the evolutionary journey, this time *upwards* through Globes E, F, and G.

When G is attained, the Life-Wave has again reached Cosmic Plane No. I of our diagram, the same plane from which it started — but with a difference. The high spirituality of the beings on Globe A might be compared to the purity and innocence of a child. On Globe G their purity is caused by the fact that the dross of matter has been burned away by the pure flame of spirituality. It is purity plus wisdom and strength.

Our Human Life-Wave must pass around this Earth-chain seven times, each such passage being called a Round. When the seven Rounds are completed, we shall, with our Earth, have our ‘Sabbath’ or day of rest; and then re embody with it again to seek grander and nobler adventures in our Universe of inexhaustible opportunities.

The Earth-chain, when the ‘day of rest’ arrives, will decompose into cosmic dust, but its life-energies will be transferred to new centers in space, to re embody in time as a new Chain of Globes affording opportunity also for the less developed Life-Waves to unfold their infinite possibilities toward a perfect humanity.

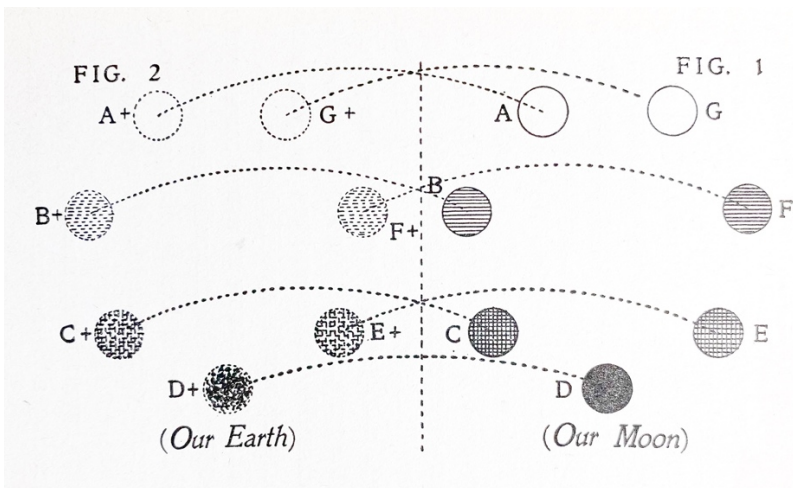
Our Human Family has at present completed three circlings of the planetary Chain. We are now in our Fourth Round, and on Globe D of that Round; but *we have passed the critical turning point on this lowest of the Globes*. This is of tremendous significance to the Race {humanity}. The understanding of this one teaching is like a guide pointing to the direction in which we should be moving. We then begin to acquire a truer sense of values. We learn, by applying the abstract teaching to actual life, what we can safely abandon, what hold on to as imperishable and therefore practicable to take with us. We begin to see that our attachment to matter has become, indeed, a habit with us, but is no longer a necessity; and that if we linger fondly among the sensations, excitements, and fascinations of the lower earthly life, we are throwing away precious opportunities now before us, and failing to recognize that the obstacles we find in our path are actually the means — when overcome — by which we may move on toward our divine destiny.

## FROM MOON TO EARTH

Just as the Earth-chain will eventually die when the Human Life-Wave leaves it at the end of the Seventh Round, and will be reborn after a period of rest, so it itself is but the reïmbodiment of a former planetary Chain of a lower type of evolution. Our Moon represents what is left of Globe D of that Chain, and so we speak of that former group of Globes as the Moon-chain. It is now, of course, but a wraith or ghost, but it was once as alive as Earth is today and bore upon its then vital chain of Globes seven Life-Waves even as now our Earth does.

When the Life-Waves had passed seven times around the seven Globes of the Lunar Chain and had assimilated all the experience possible there, that Chain began to die out; a complete dissolution of the cohesive forces of all the seven Globes set in, and after a long period of inactivity, these energies commenced to vivify new centers in cosmic space. These seven centers might be spoken of as seven *seeds of life*, destined to become the seven Globes of the Earth-chain when awakened aeons later by the cycling Life-Waves during the First Round of the new Chain.

H. P. Blavatsky, in her profound work, *The Secret Doctrine*, gives a conventionalized diagram to represent this transfer of the life-energies from one Chain to the other. We reproduce it herewith, but again it should be noted that such pictorial representation must not be taken literally, though there are many suggestive ideas to be gained by its study.



Note that Figure 1 represents the *dying* Moon-chain, while Figure 2 stands for *an as yet unmanifested* series of Globes — the Earth-chain to be.

The graded shadings of the Globes in each figure indicate their gradual coarsening in substance and consciousness from Plane I to Plane



IV. The diagram also indicates that there will be a marked etherealization of each Globe when it reimbodies, so that the whole of the new Chain will be somewhat finer in expression than the old one. This exemplifies Nature's law of *repetition combined with forward motion* — the principle of the spiral. This is no arbitrary law, but is caused by the inward urge of every entity to express what it is within itself.

The Moon is now an astral corpse, yet it is still sending Earthwards what one might call the dregs or lees of vital energies which powerfully affect the life of our planet. This fact helps to explain many of the phenomena which have puzzled scientists, the influence extending also in other ways not observed or guessed. The action of the tides is common knowledge, as well as the Moon's relation to human conception and gestation. The cycles of many diseases coincide with the phases of the Moon; its influence can be traced in the growth of plants; but little really is told at present regarding this interrelationship.

For long ages the Moon is destined to follow her 'offspring.' But before the Seventh Round of this Earth-chain, she will have been utterly dissolved, because the last remnants of her energies will have been assimilated by Earth and transmuted into regenerative forces playing their part in the gradual ascent of the whole Chain and the Life-Waves upon it toward their spiritual consummation. It is because of the age of Mercury and Venus, both far older than Earth, that their moons have disappeared.

The story of how the seven Life-Waves proceeded through the three and one half Rounds already completed is one of the most intricate and involved teachings of the Ancient Wisdom. But a few general ideas to be outlined here may serve as an introduction to the subject for those who may wish to study further in advanced Theosophical books.

First of all, we must remember that all the entities seeking a milieu in which to grow and evolve had to do two things. They had to fashion bodies, inner and outer, in which to work, and they had to build the Globes of the Chain itself. They started out as it were unclothed and unhoused. All the Kingdoms helped in the work of building, each class contributing the results of skill attained during the long sojourn on the Moon-chain. In this way during the *First Round* the route was marked and the tracks were laid for the sevenfold planetary circling.

But what complicates the process, and at the same time removes it from the realm of a merely mechanical arrangement to be learned by rote, is the fact that in the beginning each Kingdom, as for instance the class destined to become the humanity of this Earth-chain, had to recapitulate former experience by running through all the lower forms first. This is Nature's rule always, and a wise one too: that when a new life-period opens, the beings about to pick up the threads of life where they dropped them in the former period, must first make a quick review of those earlier states formerly attained. Thus they weave into the fabric of their present

consciousness all past knowledge; and likewise provide a means of assistance to Kingdoms not as advanced as they.

This means that those who were destined to belong to the Human Kingdom itself were not left unaided in their growth. Where, then, did superior beings come from to give them assistance?

When the life of the Moon came to its close, all its inhabitants were not equally evolved — just as is the case on the Earth today, and as it must necessarily be when this present planet has finished its life-term. Some must always represent in their development the full possibilities of any given Manvantara or period of activity. They have been the leaders, have shouldered the heaviest responsibilities, and at the end are the perfected beings for that stage of evolution.

Such perfected ones, the evolved Humanity of the Moon-chain, were the first to arrive on Globe A of the Earth-chain and took the lead in its evolution during three and one half Rounds, while the new Humanity was in process of development. They were the overseers of the builders of forms, these latter being those entities who, having completed their sojourn in the Beast Kingdom on the Moon-chain were now seeking to enter the Human Kingdom. It was they who passed through the Elemental Kingdoms, the Mineral, Plant, and Beast Kingdoms, so that knowledge of these lower forms became instinctual. But by the time they were ready in the Fourth Round (and especially by the time they reached Globe D thereof) to complete the building of the human vehicle, they found their capacities limited. They could furnish nothing better or higher than the astral, passionate self, for this was the extent of their legacy from the Moon-chain.

Growth for the human race would have come to a dead stop if it had not been for the intervention and help of that spiritual host of beings, the fine flowering of the Moon-chain, who lit, in the incomplete humanity, the fire of Mind. These made it possible for humanity to bridge the gap that existed between the lower vehicles and the Divine Spark within, the means by which it might lift itself out of the toils of matter into the radiant realms of spirit again.

But as yet we have not fully valued our divine gift. We have prostituted it too often to base uses. Only too often we limit ourselves in consciousness to the self who eats, personally loves and hates, who suffers and sins, who struggles to supply the needs of the body, and beyond whose short span of life all is mystery.

This lower nature is in itself marvelously complex, with illusive centers of force, leading those whose consciousness is chiefly centered in the brain-mind into a maze of confusion when they try to study it. Strange powers which come to the front in sleepwalking, hypnosis, clairvoyance of a certain order; mysterious uncoverings of different layers of consciousness, such as double personality and other abnormal phenomena,

all belong to the unevolved, growing lower part of human nature — our Moon-nature.

It is this nature that, with the aid of the higher Beings within-above us, is in training during this present Earth cycle and is destined to be refined, strengthened, and purified, and finally united to the spiritual Sun within the human constitution, thus producing the perfected humanity of the Seventh Round of this Earth-chain.

## EARLY LIFE ON THE PLANET EARTH

It has been said that all the Life-Waves from the Moon pass seven times around the seven Globes of the Earth-chain, but these journeys cover in time what would seem to us many eternities. In studying this philosophy one is deeply impressed with the thoroughness and exactitude of Nature's working. Everything is repeated until there is no possibility of mistake, yet every repetition, as said, involves some slight difference from the last, some new conditions and opportunities. The life-period on any one Globe is enormous and between any two Globes there is also a period of rest. It is evident therefore that we have lived on all these Globes in the past, that we shall do so again, and that in each the work of the creation of man is slowly proceeding.

There are seven great Root-Races on every Globe in every Round, their average life being about nine million years. Every Root-Race has seven sub-races; every sub-race, seven family races, each of which branches into nations, tribes, etc. We are now in the Fourth Round, on Globe D, in the fourth sub-race of the Fifth Root-Race, and have therefore begun the ascending arc toward spirituality in this Round. At the midway point of this planet's life, *viz.*, in the middle of the Fourth Root-Race of this Round, the door was closed for entrance into the human stage, with one exception, to be mentioned later. Therefore the human family is nearly complete for this manvantara or cycle of evolution.

All through these changes it must be remembered that it is the god-spark of divine origin which clothes itself in garments of mineral or vegetable or whatever it may be. It learns by this close association to use more and more complicated vehicles. And this constant adaptation never ceases. Nothing remains *in statu quo* for two consecutive seconds anywhere in the Universe. To resist the onward impulse means backward motion. And two factors are always at work in the incessant mutation, true forever from the lowest to the highest. There is always an inner urge and always an outer intelligent force guiding and directing the unfoldment.

The least entity is a life clothed in matter, and matter itself is but the other pole of spirit, encasing less evolved lives. It is indeed a spiritual universe we live in, piloted throughout its infinite realms by an infinite series of lower and higher intelligences. At the upper rung of the ladder

for this Globe is a Wondrous Being, sitting at the Threshold of LIGHT, which he will not enter while any of Earth's children may yet lose their way. He is known as the Silent Watcher, though in truth He is nameless. Earth can teach him no more, but from his self-chosen post he guides the Great Ones below him, who descend in an unbroken scale, through lesser Divinities, Rulers, Teachers, Divine Dynasties, down to our half-awakened humanity. Absolute harmony throughout the uncountable hierarchies of Nature must inevitably exist, and man's work is to find and fill to perfection our place in this Universe of which we are an intrinsic part.

Every Round has its special Over-lord, below whom come those guiding every Globe of that Round. Every Race, every nation, has its own guardian down to every person who has his own inner god. Thus every human being is the result of hosts of creators, some for his body, others for his psychic, his mental, and his spiritual nature respectively. And the work of perfecting him runs through the life of this planet, many, many millions of years. Thus we see how immature man is as yet — a mere child, knowing practically nothing of his own real nature, and so little realizing his relation to others that he even wars with and would destroy his fellows, parts of our own being.

In the First Round, the Globes of the Earth-chain and all that they contained were very ethereal. There was no solidity in the beginning, only a cold brightness, which developed towards the close of the First Round the essence of what in our Round we know as fire. Gradually, as Rounds Two and Three were in progress, consolidation took place, the element air developing in the Second, and water in the Third Round. But it was not until our present Round that our Globe D actually settled and hardened, thus developing the element we know as Earth.

Only a very general picture can be drawn of the early cyclings of the Life-Wave. Indeed it is not until we come to Globe D of our present Round that we can receive any sort of image of what actually took place. This does not mean that the long aeons of preparation consumed in the building of humanity were in themselves characterized by a vague passivity with nothing worthwhile happening; but merely that descriptions are useless because we have nothing to compare the processes to in our experience.

When in our study we come to Globe D of this present Round, our picture begins to assume clearer outlines, and details become progressively more numerous. It was at this period that the work of forming the human body *as we now know it* was seriously undertaken. This in itself was no mean task, as we realize when we consider the exquisite precision with which it is built, coordinating as it does in a perfect harmony the innumerable hierarchies of lesser lives of which it is composed.

This era of “preparing the vehicle” is poetically described in the *Stanzas of Dzyan*, an archaic manuscript quoted by H. P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*. Earth is represented as being impatient and undertaking herself the work of peopling her Globe, and as producing thereby “water-men, terrible and bad,” which had to be destroyed by higher Dhyânis or Planetary Spirits who guide the evolution of Earth.

Fantastic as this tale may appear to some, it refers to an actual event in an unformed, early transition period, when nondescript monsters grew out of the superabundant energy of Mother Earth, before things were quite ready.

But gradually when the Earth was cleared, the design for the future human bodies was worked upon, improving upon the pattern of the ape-like, ethereal forms that the ‘men’ of the Third Round had evolved. This was the First Root-Race on Globe D of this Round, known as the ‘self-born’ because they produced their kind by a process which might be described as ‘oozing out’ their astral doubles.

Their continent was in the region of the North Pole, the Imperishable Sacred Land, which lasts from the beginning to the end of this Earth cycle or manvantara, and which is to be also the home of the last perfected Race. It is difficult for us to have any conception of these First Root-Race beings, who were boneless, almost formless. They are known as the Chhâyâ Race, which means ‘Astral Image.’ It did not die, but disappeared in the second by a process of budding. Simple as the form was in comparison with the present one, yet to bring it about many classes of higher beings had already been called into service.

The continent of the Second Root-Race was further south, embracing parts of Greenland, and during the course of their evolution the method of procreation changed to what is known as the ‘Sweat-born.’ Large drops oozed from the bodies and developed into the human embryo. All these changes consumed aeons of time, but time was nothing to these dreaming creatures, to whom “a thousand years were but as a day.” They created the Third Root-Race and perished, leaving no external evidence of their existence.

## THE THIRD ROOT-RACE

The Third Root-Race saw great changes. First, the ‘Sweat-drops’ of the Second developed into huge eggs, which were warmed and matured by the Sun — a process analogous to that of the fowls of today. In these the fetus gestated for several years. The human form also passed through a series of transformations. During this hermaphrodite period, there was a time when it was four-armed and three-eyed. But these variations of type came about very gradually, of course, covering millions of years. Finally,

in the last part of this Root-Race, there occurred the division into the two sexes.

The wonderful event, the turning point which was to change the whole face of history, the great epoch in humanity's life toward which an infinite series of hierarchical beings had been working for eternities, was now at hand. Three Rounds and nearly one half of the Fourth had passed in preparation for the glorious awakening. Relatively speaking, it came suddenly. Those who have advanced the theory that mind evolved from the animals have not taken into account the eternities needed simply to develop the human body and lower principles.

Up to this time there had been evident but two of the streams of evolution which work through Nature, viz., the physical and spiritual, the latter represented by the Monadic Essence, the god-spark. This is too far above the former to establish communication with it without the connecting link of Mind. It is stated in *The Secret Doctrine* that were the Spiritual Monad of a Newton grafted on that of the greatest saint on Earth, to be incarnated in a perfect physical body without the middle principle of Mind to unite the two, the result would be *intellectually disabled* on this plane. Everything is *latent* even in the atom, and so was Mind at this stage in the human animal; to awaken it higher gods and time were needed.

That which was due involved the destiny of those others from the preceding great Manvantara — beings who, compared with the lower man, were gods. The lower beings from the Moon-chain had done their part. They and their host of helpers had given all they had. Mind they never had. But there were now others, known as Mānasaputras or 'Sons of Mind,' ready to enter the temples prepared for them. And this fact implies that they belonged to them, that they were karmically related to them. Thus, beings who on the Moon-chain had fully developed the principle of Mind, entered the lower humanity to quicken its latent spark; and after this incarnation, seemingly miraculous changes took place.

The event has been symbolized in the myth of Prometheus. He brought the spiritual fire to mortals and was chained to the rock of matter, our human bodies, where he will remain through the ages until man himself rises to his level and liberates him. The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden has the same basis, in which, to the popular fancy, Lucifer the Light-bringer masquerades as Satan, an evil force.

This incarnation of the Sons of Mind brought pain and suffering to the lower Ego, but also the possibility of attaining to godhood. It is stated by H. P. Blavatsky that without this help from the higher beings, we should still be but little above the beasts. From this time forward there must be two voices in man forever claiming to be heard, until the day when one absolutely dominates the other. The lower man {lower self}, however, is never helpless. It is endowed with free-will and conscience, the voice of the god within can always be heard by it if listened for.

It is impossible to understand this philosophy without realizing that the Universe consists of consciousnesses of infinite degrees and that all growth is a growth in consciousness; also that unity in diversity exists in every part of Cosmos. There is no such thing as one part being independent of any other part. All entities carry a responsibility for those below them and, after reaching the self-conscious stage, to those above them. It has often been recognized by historians that no one can transcend his Race {human life-wave} beyond a certain degree. As it is on Earth, so it is in heaven. As above, so below. The great ones feel the weight of those who play with their opportunities and refuse to rise.

Not all of the Races of men were equally evolved, some, of course, being far behind the others. Stanza VII of *The Secret Doctrine* refers to this part of the history as follows:

24. THE SONS OF WISDOM, THE SONS OF NIGHT (*issued from the body of Brahmâ when it became Night*), READY FOR RE-BIRTH, CAME DOWN. THEY SAW THE (*intellectually*) VILE FORMS OF THE FIRST THIRD (*still senseless Race*). "WE CAN CHOOSE," SAID THE LORDS, "WE HAVE WISDOM." SOME ENTERED THE CHHÂYAS. SOME PROJECTED A SPARK. SOME DEFERRED TILL THE FOURTH (*Race*). FROM THEIR OWN ESSENCE THEY FILLED (*intensified*) THE KÂMA (*the vehicle of desire*). THOSE WHO RECEIVED BUT A SPARK REMAINED DESTITUTE OF (*higher*) KNOWLEDGE. THE SPARK BURNT LOW. THE THIRD REMAINED MINDLESS. THEIR JÎVAS (*Monads*) WERE NOT READY. THESE WERE SET APART AMONG THE SEVEN (*primitive human species*). THEY (*became the*) NARROW-HEADED. THE THIRD WERE READY. IN THESE SHALL WE DWELL, SAID THE LORDS OF THE FLAME AND OF THE DARK WISDOM.

— Vol. II, p. 161

These events explain the inequalities in our human kind, the relatively high and low capacities of different peoples. H. P. Blavatsky says also that they contain the whole key to the mystery of evil. {Note that whether high or low, we are only each going through our individual experiences, and in the end we are all the same.}

The entrance of the Mânasaputras into the drama of our human life perfects the human being as to his constitution. He is now equipped to move forward to his destiny. He has in his nature, ready for development, all the principles of the Cosmos. This is the real meaning of the words in the Christian Bible, "Man was made in the image of his Maker." This incarnation also initiates in humanity the third stream of evolution, the intellectual; and it is at this point that the streams from above and below meet in humanity.

In the great Circulations of the Cosmos, spirit is eternally descending into matter, and matter is eternally ascending toward spirit. They mutually aid each other. Neither could accomplish its purpose without the other. The lower lives can expand their consciousness only by breaking shell after

shell of their encasements and reaching progressively into wider realms of thought and spirit. The Great Spirits and Gods can express the compassion which is verily their essence only by aiding their younger brothers, and they can gain in strength and power only by overcoming the resistance of matter and mental molds and assuming greater and greater responsibilities. These universal sweeping currents of life are manifest not only in the grand channels but are present everywhere — in every ebb and flow. No drop of the ocean of being but feels the sway of them both. From this time forth appear the relative tendencies in human nature known as good and evil. Out of the complicated interaction of these streams of evolution there has arisen in young and misguided humanity mistaken notions of itself. And in recent centuries, with the Ancient Teachings obscured, the delusion that man is ‘born in sin’ has been taught, bringing a long trail of degrading results. Lost in the clouds of ignorance, portions of humanity have also forgotten their divinity.

## **THE MYSTERY OF SIN**

Nothing but the Wisdom-Religion can throw light upon this mystery, which has confounded the children of Earth whenever they have lost the knowledge of their ancient teachings, their divine heritage. The man-made theories which have been built up to explain it have verily tossed the divine soul into the dust-heap. Man, the potential god without, the actual god within, has hypnotized himself into the belief that he is a worm of the dust. What sacrilege! Instead of turning their eyes within, the children of Earth have looked without and beheld but the dancing shadows of illusion. They have lost their way in the labyrinth of matter and dropped the thread which might have guided them home.

Did a God create men evil? Are they indeed doomed irrevocably and helplessly to punishment? The humanity of today in increasing numbers is refusing to believe such blasphemy; and yet the mystery is not solved. Some trust to intuition, abandon a solution, and look to their god within unconsciously. Others toss consequences to the winds and live as their moods direct. Listen to the answer Theosophy has to give!:

That which is in line with the grand trend of evolution; that which furthers the unfolding of divine possibilities; that which is working toward greater and greater perfection, is right. The whole Universe is behind effort in this direction. But that which opposes, which seeks to obstruct Nature’s design, is wrong and is bound, sooner or later, to be crushed. These opposing forces, however, are necessary to develop power and knowledge, but the counterforce in Nature’s scheme belongs normally to ignorance. In stumbling thus against obstructions, which we must find within ourselves because of our dual constitution, we learn and grow. When, however, the personal Ego consciously allies itself with the lower material side of the



nature, the results become more and more serious with growth and must, if persisted in, end finally in the annihilation of that *personality*.

Before the Mānasaputras incarnated in humanity, there could be no sin, no *moral* mistakes, but the moment mind was awakened, there was knowledge of right and wrong, there was free-will, and, further, there were inexperience and ignorance. The right and easy way, as said, is to work in harmony with the grand currents of evolution. One who does this has the Universe behind him and meets with no obstructions in himself. The wrong is to pull the other way.

But the question must be answered as to why anyone should desire to act contrary to moral law. It is due primarily to ignorance, which belongs to an undeveloped state, and which has moreover been increased by wrong teachings. The average person at the present stage does not clearly and convincingly perceive the moral law, or definitely understand why he should follow it. When the Theosophical teaching of Karma has firmly gripped the human consciousness, there will be fewer transgressions of it. It is necessary here to remove the stigma of evil which has lain on the shoulders of man's divine parentage.

Further, the teaching is that no beings below or above the plane on which human consciousness is now functioning have a sense of separateness. Those perfected beings who have risen above the human stage recognize in their *individuality* their oneness with all life. The average human being, however, lives mostly in his *personality*, and it is this limited and undeveloped personality that is deluded, thinking that it can seize and hold for itself alone. Selfishness is sin and folly and verily the root of so-called evil. If carried far enough, it contracts the channels through which flow to man his life-energies, and finally he drops like a withered leaf when the sap no longer reaches it. And yet, without the strength to be gained in removing this delusion, there could not be moral progress. After certain gross forms of selfishness have been outgrown or overcome, they are transformed into aspirations widening with the scale of growth, until with full understanding and the Spiritual Will sufficiently awakened, we cross over into the greater circle and see ourselves as part of the Whole.

The complexity of human nature is no mere figure of speech. There actually are different selves within man's breast, of different stages of growth and of different desires, claiming recognition — a mystery indeed and yet one which can be unraveled. The evolving soul in its amazing world within can and must find its place and assume lordship over the riotous forces that would usurp authority and cause chaos in the human temple. In achieving this, man becomes indeed a god.

But until that day it is this lower mind, in process of being created or unfolded, that sins. It uses itself in a wrong way before it has learned to work in harmony with the Universal Mind, of which it is a part. Pain,

disease, and suffering are the offspring of this growing mind, *i.e.*, are due to its mistakes, from which filters down into the body inharmony, which works out as disease. Physical mistakes alone cause physical trouble. Mental perversions cause mental and later physical torment. Through pain and suffering we learn. But it is possible to learn a little faster. Many, alas! encourage, hold, and repeat wrong thoughts until the force of them becomes terrific. Fortunate indeed is he who awakens and resolves to work with his higher nature before these become overwhelming. In *Theosophy: The Path of the Mystic* by Katherine Tingley, pp. 22-25, are the following words, pregnant with inspiration, encouragement, and — warning:

These two forces: the physical dominated by the spiritual, the mind illuminated by treasures of truth and inspiration from the Higher Self, these two, working together, will bring about results that are unbelievable. Nor will it take all eternity to bring about these things. The very atoms of our body can be touched by the fire of divine life and brought into harmony with the mind and soul, controlled as the master musician controls his instrument by the Higher Self.

For life is Light and Light is life, and the Christos-spirit is in everything in degree. Could we sit at the feet of the Law like little children, could we free our minds from misconceptions and learn from nature and listen to the Christos-voice within, oh what revelations would come to us! We should then be able to say: *this is immortal and that is mortal; this belongs to the animal nature of man, and that to the spiritual*. The power to do this is the power that we need, arousing us from the dead, so to speak, and bringing to us light and illumination.

From the time that a vow [this vow is to one's Higher Self] is taken the disciple has ever with him two forces: two invisible companions formed of his own essence, one evil, one divine; the secretion or objectivation of the opposite poles of his own self-consciousness, they represent his good and evil angels, the Augoeides and its counterpart, each seeking to absorb his being. One of these in the end must prevail over the other, and one or the other is strengthened by every act and thought of his life. They are his higher and lower potentialities passing slowly into potency, as the energies (both good and evil, note)... are awakened....

Our problem is to transfer more and more of ourselves to the real battlefield. That field is one that consists of the feelings and thoughts of men; therefore, by right feeling and thought is the battle maintained. Our strength lies in keeping positive; in holding a steady joy in our hearts; in a momentary meditation on all floating great ideas till we have seized them and made them ours; in a meditation with the imagination on the life of humanity in the future, and its grandeur; in dwelling on the conception of Brotherhood....

Yet never can we reach that point of spiritual discernment until we have found within our own hearts something new: a larger sympathy for all that lives, and a broader, deeper, grander conception of human life and the superb laws that govern it.

I think each is a focalization to a point of all the good and all the evil elements to which we have given conscious life in the past. At each moment,

as we consciously incline toward good or evil, one or the other feeds into and fills the mind. And it is obvious that the point of connection with either is that failing or virtue to which we are most inclined. However small a point, it must, if encouraged, lead to and involve all the rest on that side of the stores of our nature and the universe. If this is true, it follows that to give our *conscious* volitional encouragement and backing to any fault or any failing, is an *immensely pregnant move downward*.

But if effort be continual, if no failures or falls discourage the aspirant and are always followed “by as many undaunted struggles upward,” he has always the help and counsel of the Divine ‘Daimon,’ the ‘Warrior’; and victory, however far away, is certain. For this is an unconquerable power, “eternal and sure,” an actual presence and inspiration, if we will but recognize it, having faith and faith and faith.

### THE THIRD ROOT-RACE (*CONTINUED*)

In regard to the different degrees of incarnation into the human host stated in the Stanza quoted in another chapter, those who received but a ‘spark’ are our average humanity. Those who were not ready, who had not evolved to the desired point, remained mindless and are now represented by some tribes around the globe.

Out of this last omission grew a horrible history. During the long transition periods when men and animals were separating into two sexes and before the lines had been tightly drawn between them, the mindless men crossed with the beasts and produced the ancestors of the simian Races. They are described as crooked, hair-covered monsters — “a dumb Race, to keep the shame untold.” These are the exceptions previously referred to in another chapter who were to enter the human family at some period *after* the critical midway point of this Fourth Round. Being partly human, it is possible that some may become wholly so in the Seventh Root-Race on this Globe D, but the majority must wait for the Fifth Round. The Sons of Mind, seeing the terrible mistake and feeling responsible, incarnated then in those mindless. Unfortunately the trouble did not end here. In certain classes the animal tendencies became intensified, the Third Root-Race merged into the Fourth, and these again, while the forms were still mobile, repeated the sin of the mindless, this time with full responsibility. As a result of their crime, we have the Race of anthropoids. Then the Sons of Wisdom established sterility between the two kingdoms.

But there were those among the human host in whom the incarnation of the Mânasaputras was complete, and they became the leaders and instructors of Third Race Humanity. No words can adequately describe the transformation which took place in human life after this happened. It burst forth in glory. The dull, dreamy, half-conscious world was being awakened — to know itself. The sleeping germ of mind was stirred by a mighty force.

The spark touched that to which it was akin, and lo! the animal became a man.

This Race of Arhats created not by union of the sexes as did those who received but a spark, but by the power of Will. This is said to be a power latent in all, but not to be developed in humanity for many ages to come. The progeny of this Race are known as the ‘Sons of Will and Yoga.’ They still live, are still watching over their humanity, and they form the nursery for future human Adepts on this Earth. They are also called the ‘Undying Race.’ It is said they could live with equal ease in water, air, or fire, for they had absolute control over the forces of Nature. They were a holy Race of godly strength and beauty. They became the Teachers, the Inspirers of nascent humanity, and are truly the spiritual parents of humanity. It is they who taught the early Races, as they grew, the Ancient Wisdom-Religion, which has appeared and re-appeared at cyclic periods all down the ages, and which now has come again under the name of Theosophy.

In this Undying Race was planted also the sign and evidence of its divine origin and parentage — the Third Eye. Before its vision the book of Life lay open. The mighty past, the glorious future were as the Eternal Now. It was the Golden Age in those days when the gods, the spiritual fathers of humanity, dwelt with their children. They had no sense of separateness at first. They felt in harmony with all that is. Love, reverence, joy filled their hearts. Strife had not entered human life. But this could not last. Gods are not made in such ways. This heaven on Earth must be taken by violence, in order to become a permanent possession. Man must, through a long and weary pilgrimage, reach again the lost state of purity and bliss bringing with their spiritual power, a rich and full understanding of life in all its kingdoms, and boundless compassion for all that lives.

Little by little the clouds gathered, the Sun of Life was darkened. As these children of innocence and joy began to feel their power, as their latent minds were awakened by the beings above them, the animal in them grew apace. The war was on. The Third Eye grew dim and, in the course of ages, from being objectively one-eyed, then three-eyed, man became possessed of two physical eyes, while the third was withdrawn into the brain. Its witness is the Pineal Gland. In the great ones it still functions though not seen, and in the aeons to come it will again become active in the {human} Race at large. Legends of all Races, which are the memory tablets of the past, have carried in their various ways the story of the Third Eye. The three “one-eyed” Cyclopes, recorded by Hesiod, symbolize the last three sub-races of the Third Root-Race or Lemurians. And in the myths we find one now and then whose vision knew no limits.

The gods withdrew and the Golden Age passed. Eternal spring was no more. The climate grew cold. Animals, who had been the friends of humanity, became ferocious. By degrees pain and suffering turned the

current of human thoughts and an appeal for help went up from their hearts. Their Spiritual Parents responded. Divine dynasties were established and then followed a glorious civilization.

The continent of the Third Root-Race, known as Lemuria, now lies beneath the Pacific Ocean, whose islands dotting its surface were once the mountain-peaks of this ancient land. It stretched from the two Americas to the shores of our present Asia and beyond. The first cities were of stone and lava, but before the life-cycle of this Root-Race closed there arose cities of great proportions. Under their Divine Rulers the arts and sciences became known. Astronomy, architecture, and mathematics were learned to perfection. Indeed, so glorious, exuberant, splendid, was the civilization which commenced with this Third Root-Race, that Greek, Roman, and even Egyptian civilizations sink into insignificance in comparison. Though rapid, even sudden, when compared with the long ages preceding it, it yet came about gradually and extended over many thousands of years and into the Fourth Root-Race. But there were, of course, inequalities then as now. Savages and geniuses marked the extremes.

Before the close of this Root-Race the majority of humanity had lost their spiritual purity and had sunk into sin of one form or other; yet there were always those who followed the Light within and thus formed the seed for the future. When the Root-Races have run their course, they are destroyed alternately by fire and by water. Not suddenly, except in localities, but slowly, stretching over hundreds of thousands of years, the work of destruction proceeds, while gradually the successor is being established. The Third Root-Race met its fate through subterranean fires.

## **THE FOURTH ROOT-RACE**

About eighteen million years ago, on the road to development, the human Egos slowly passed from the Third to the Fourth Root-Race, the great Atlanteans, whose gigantic continent extended over the surface of what is now our Atlantic Ocean. This is the Race whose middle point marked half of the life-term of this planet, and also the closing of the door between the animal and human kingdoms. At this time, too, matter reached its fullest development, since which period all life has been on the ascending arc toward spirit. Manifestation was on a grand scale then. Both men and beasts were enormous, the former being from twenty to twenty-seven feet in height. Their minds were as giant-like as their bodies, a hint of which greatness is given in the statement that it was their degraded descendants who built the first pyramids.

Further, the Third Eye was active during a part of their history, and they were thus in command of many of the finer forces in Nature, which are still secrets for us. Their civilization was dazzling in its splendor. The startling discoveries of our recent times are but faint reminiscences from

the memory-storehouse of the Race-mind of the marvels and intellectual grandeur of the Fourth Root-Race. And these are but foreshadowings of what is to come, for, as our present Fifth Root-Race matures, it will recover what it lost as Atlanteans, with added spiritual development and insight. H. P. Blavatsky in an article entitled “The New Cycle” writes:

We are face to face with all the glorious possibilities of the future. This is again the hour of the great cyclic return of the tide of mystical thought in Europe. On every side we are surrounded by the ocean of the universal science — the science of Life Eternal — bearing on its waves the forgotten and submerged treasures of generations now passed away, treasures still unknown to the modern civilized races. The strong current which rises from the submarine abysses, from the depths where lie the prehistoric learning and arts swallowed up with the antediluvian Giants — demigods, though with but little of mortality — that current strikes us in the face and murmurs: “That which has been exists again; that which has been forgotten, buried for aeons in the depths of the Jurassic strata may reappear to view once again. Prepare yourselves.”... The strife will be terrible in any case between brutal materialism and blind fanaticism on the one hand, and philosophy and mysticism on the other — mysticism, that veil of more or less translucency which hides the Eternal Truth. [From the magazine, *La Revue Theosophique*, reprinted in *The Theosophical Path*, September 1911 (in translation)]

All these transformations, which present themselves as the drama of life unfolds, show that, during the revolving of the cyclic wheels of destiny, man is in the process of being created. Every turn of the wheel adds something. For instance, one element, as has been said, is evolved for each Round, and humanity is physiologically developed in adaptation to it. Every Root-Race evolves a new sense — being in the Fifth at present, we have five senses. Over and over again on a higher scale every Round repeats the experiences of the one before it, as does every Root-Race and every sub-race, *e.g.*, the Fourth Round has a correspondence with every fourth Race and fourth sub-race on every Round.

Men had by this time attained sufficient knowledge and understanding to choose their course, and unhappily for themselves and the coming Root-Races, a large majority deliberately elected to put their power to unholy use. It is said that we are still suffering, and shall continue to do so long ages hence, for the misuse of faculties which took place in Atlantean bodies. By degrees the Race {humanity} separated into parts with two distinct tendencies — those who sought to obtain self-mastery and who joined the ‘Sons of Light,’ and the others who became the slaves of lower forces and developed into sorcerers and evil magicians.

While these tendencies were shaping themselves, something occurred in their history which illustrates the fact that cause and effect connect not only individualities, Races, different Globes of the same Chain, but planets, universes or, as we say, great manvantaras. In fact, any force set

in motion will never cease to act until neutralized. We have spoken of the ‘Sons of Light’ from the Holy Race, ever guarding and guiding humanity, so far as humanity permits; but there were other rulers perfected, we might say, in evil. One, King Thevetat, was of this order, evidently linked to this planet from the past and biding his time. When his disciples appeared — that is, when the large body of Atlanteans turned to evil, lived in their lower natures — he was ready to guide them. Had they chosen otherwise, he would have been helpless, but this not being the case, he succeeded in producing a Race of sorcerers.

When at last the time came for this Race to pass, a colossal cataclysm wiped the bodies of these evildoers from off the face of the Earth. The first great deluge occurred in the Miocene Age, but minor deluges, extending over 150,000 years, ended the sad history. The last island, Poseidonis, referred to by Plato, sank about 11,000 years ago. It is upon the Atlantean cataclysms that traditions of the floods in Biblical records and elsewhere are built.

The Spiritual Parents of Humanity, however, secured the seed for the coming Fifth Root-Race from destruction. There is a legend of a ‘Sacred Island’ situated in middle Asia, north of the Himālayan mountains, where now are barren wastes. It was said to be of surpassing beauty, and was known as the Garden of Eden (of which there has been one for every Race). It was the home of the ‘Undying Race,’ who escaped from the agony of Atlantis. And it was through them and their agents that the Elect of the Atlanteans were started safely and wisely on their journey as {the new Root-Race called} Âryans.

We are now in the fourth sub-race of the Fifth Root-Race, and still descending toward the midway or crucial point of this Race. But, as the center of the *Round* was passed in the Fourth Great Race, we are on the ascending arc toward spirituality, still weighted, however, with a heavy karma, which each and every one should seek to lighten through pure thought and act.

The Fifth Root-Race as a whole will, before its close, develop the Mind-principle beyond the Atlantean highest point. But it is not until the Fifth Round that the ‘Manas’ or Mind will be fully evolved. When this time arrives, will come the great moment of choice — a choice which has been prepared for through the ages — verily a judgment day — only man himself will be his own judge. That is to say, a time must come to all to choose finally and decisively whether they will follow on the path of spirituality, upwards into their own higher natures — or whether they will turn toward the other pole, which must end in final extinction, after ages of slow disintegration; for such is the fate of Nature’s failures in evolution.

The brief history here given is to be found fully elaborated in *The Secret Doctrine* by H. P. Blavatsky, and represents one phase of the effort made in this age by the Masters of Wisdom, who are agents of the

‘Undying Race,’ to awaken the children of Earth to a knowledge of their divine parentage and destiny. This history could not be known without their aid, as our own records, besides being often untrustworthy and incomplete, extend back only a few thousand years into a *family* race whose life-period is about 30,000 years.

## DIVINE HUMAN DESTINY

Our glance into the past makes more possible a look into the future. We can perceive that our journey is endless; that it stretches back and forward into eternity; that we become by degrees and in turn, as the deathless cycles roll, all that the universes hold, ever expanding in consciousness and ever in company with the gods. They are within, about, above us. As the veil woven by our personalities hides the glory, so it is only by rising above them that we find the clouds vanish. But there *is* a narrow path, which every religion has more or less completely described, which is recognized by all mystics, and upon which the Light shines eternally.

“When this Path is beheld... whether one sets out to the bloom of the east or to the chambers of the west, *without moving*, O holder of the bow, *is the traveling in this road*. In this path, to whatever place one would go, *that place one’s own self* becomes.” — *The Voice of the Silence*, Note No. I:32

It is indeed the path leading to one’s own inner god; always open, easy of access, though so seldom entered. Down its luminous way speeds the voice of conscience more rapidly than the lightning traverses space, quicker than thought, to one who listens for it.

The journey through Earth’s winding roads is but a traveling toward one’s inner god; a casting aside of the soiled garments as they are outgrown; a reaching up into an ever purer atmosphere, bringing a constantly clearer understanding, a broader and richer sympathy, and a growing capacity for real service to all that lives. We speak of traveling toward one’s inner god, and yet, paradox as it seems, this is in reality one’s self. When we reach its splendor, we find ourselves. *How* shall we reach it? This is for each one to discover after his own manner. Katherine Tingley says:

Man’s only way to win his great hope and to know the Truth is to seize hold on himself, assert and realize his potentially all-dominating soul-existence. Making his mind and memory register beyond all future cavil or doubt what he then knows to be true, holding himself at his true dignity, guiding into right conduct all the elements of his nature — his body, mind, and emotions — he will maintain from that moment strength and joy in life. That once done, could he but stand in that attitude for a few weeks or months,



he would have made of his mind a willing instrument of service, harnessed it to the chariot of the soul, and dissolved away its limitations.

— *Theosophy: The Path of the Mystic*, pp. 39-40

Dr. G. de Purucker, in *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, v, asks:

Would you like to find the pathway to your own inner god — your spiritual Self? There is a preliminary preparation, however, required of all — a preparation for this sublimest of adventures in the journey of the human soul. Do you know what it is? It will sound so familiar to you: Learn to forgive your fellows, for this means developing strength, the exercise of the spiritual part of you, and it is bringing into manifestation your higher manhood. Learn to love, for this is the voice of divinity within you; and when you can learn to love, the sun within is already beginning to break through the clouds of your lower surrounding selfhood. To love is divine; because it is a universal energy in your heart. The very sun which shines in the heavens is compact of that divinest of energies.

Be self-forgetful, because when you are self-forgetful the veils of personality and selfishness fall from your eyes. You are then no longer blinded by selfishness. You then see. Become impersonal; for then you are no longer gripped by personal desires, held in bondage as serfs and slaves by your own lower being.

There is the truth — the beginning of truth; and if ye follow faithfully this pathway, ancient, familiar to your hearts, ye will have put your feet on that Road which leads to the Heart of the Universe.

It would be folly to deceive oneself — the task before humanity, individually and collectively, is not light. But the courageous soul rejoices in difficulties. And these increase; for as the higher elements grow in power, so do the lower, as they are all a part of the same Nature. There must be antagonism until, by a mighty grip, the master of the temple holds himself at his true dignity and uses his servants honorably instead of being used by them. In doing this and in leading his host with him to the glorious destiny in store, he becomes a veritable Titan. When he completes the seventh turn on the planet which has mothered him, his Earth will hold no longer a secret he may not know. His mind will transcend any problem she can offer and his compassion will embrace the world. With the crown of victory upon his brow:

He standeth now like a white pillar to the west, upon whose face the rising Sun of thought eternal poureth forth its first most glorious waves. His mind, like a becalmed and boundless ocean, spreadeth out in shoreless space. He holdeth life and death in his strong hand.

— *The Voice of the Silence*, p. 65, orig. ed.

Will ye go to the moon, my brothers, or is your pathway set towards the Sun? Children of the Sun, Sons of the Sun as ye all are, I call upon you

to come to your spiritual parent! Be great! Ascend, take, be! Be the god within each one of you — which god is your own impersonal, immanent Christos, your own inner god, the inner Buddha within you, the root and fountainhead of your own spiritual individuality. Becoming allied with this, then all powers will be yours; all inner faculties will open and blossom. All spiritual and intellectual energy will become your servant; and when this is achieved then the psychic faculties and powers will develop naturally and safely within you, will open naturally and safely, like the enclosing petals of the unblown bud. This is the spiritual road, the road of safety, because your heart will have previously recognized its kinship with the sun-god within you: your inner light itself will be strengthened by the streams of the irradiating splendor within, and ye shall then stand a Master of Life because consciously linked with the very heart of the Universe. Being such as this, you will obtain and control successfully all psychical powers and faculties whatsoever. — *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, vi

Such is our divine destiny on Earth. But shall it end here? The curtain drops but to rise again. After sleep there is waking. The celestial hosts in space, the Rulers of the Suns, have in the eternities past been human.

The world is filled full with gods, with gods and demigods, and beings who are even higher than what men call gods — all of them spiritual beings, cosmic entities, call them by what name you may like; and we human beings are but one class of them, at the present time passing through this section or phase of a long evolutionary journey from inferior to better, from better to still better, and so on forever on the ascending arc of growth and development; and our temporary sojourn in this our physical world occurs only because we have reached here as we pass along that ascending arc. Further, this evolutionary path, said the Teachers of this Ancient Wisdom, proceeds in cycles, spirals, each turn of the spiral bringing out new manifestations of the inherent life of the evolving entity.

— *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, xiv

Yet must one wait for the seventh turn of the wheel of destiny to reach the plateau disclosing new horizons; to gain the power of saving the many who might otherwise weaken or lose their way? Can a mountainside be scaled without following the spiral path leading to the summit? Yes, there is a shorter road, revealed by a light within the heart and opened up by following the injunction given to the aspirant:

Love is the cement of the Universe. Learn to forgive. Learn to love. Each one of you is an incarnate god. Be it!

Then this road, when revealed, leads to the pathway of initiations, for:

Truth is for all men. All men have a power within them which can be self-consciously attained only by each man for himself. This is a power of consciousness; and as ye open yourself to this consciousness and pass the

threshold of it into a more secret chamber of your inner being, you will see there a beauty, a vision of truth; and then after a time you will see another portal and you will realize that that other portal that now you begin to see is also within you, within your consciousness; and you will move towards it and open the new door, giving entrance into a world still more beautiful, still more sublime; and thus you can follow the path of the spiritual Self, of the essential selfhood, of the divine selfhood within, ever more and more inwards. And that path of beauty and peace and achievement is endless; for it is *you* and you are the Universe — each one of you.

— *Questions We All Ask*, XV



# 8

## The Doctrine of Cycles

Lydia Ross, M.D.

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## INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of Cycles is a most important, fascinating, and illuminating subject as it is presented in Theosophical teachings. In studying it, we find that here is a logical and comprehensive law which not only bears an intimate relation to our daily lives, but also has a universal range of operation. It not only concerns the details of our whole life, but it applies to everything and to every being in the Universe. In short, the law of cyclic recurrences proves to be the principle or regulator for timing the events and operations of everything, visible and invisible, in mind and in matter, in time and in space. We find in it, at last, a reason why things happen when they do. The Ancients well understood the vast sweep of the natural law of periodicity, and they included it in the cosmic scheme of unity when they said: “as it is above, so it is below.”

H. P. Blavatsky, one of the great teachers who periodically bring back some of the Ancient Wisdom to men, pointed out that it taught

the absolute universality of that law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow, which physical science has observed and recorded in all departments of nature. An alternation such as that of Day and Night, Life and Death, Sleeping and Waking, is a fact so common, so perfectly universal and without exception, that it is easy to comprehend that in it we see one of the absolutely fundamental laws of the universe.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 17

Cycles are so common that we take them for granted as much as we do the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the solid Earth under our feet. We cannot imagine what our world would be like without the familiar repetition of light and darkness every twenty-four hours, of the year's regular seasons — these things that keep pace with the planet's daily rotation and its yearly course around the Sun. We, too, follow the same rhythmic course of action, going to sleep at night and awakening next morning for another turn of activity. Likewise, on a larger scale, we round out a lifetime. We begin with the misty dawn of infancy which, merging into childhood's awakening, expands into youth's bright morning, and so on to the noonday meridian of mature years. Next comes the turn on the arc of that one life, and we gradually slow down, to sink to rest with the lengthening shadows of old age. But the pulsations of the Spiritual Self deep within us never cease, whether we are embodied here or are freed from Earth. When death releases us from the body, then a new cycle of rebirth begins in the soul's homeland.

After death, our better Self awakens in higher realms of being where it is infilled with beautiful visions and blissful, refreshing rest that give strength and courage for another term of Earth-life lessons. Thus we come back, again and again, with a newborn infant's fresh body and brain, ready

for another round in working out our splendid destiny. Meanwhile, our uncounted lives are like small epicycles on the majestic arc of the solar system's lifetime. Thus, likewise, do countless universes come into being. After their vast cosmic sweep of a manifested life-period reaches its apex, the movement is set toward the end of that wheeling. Finally, the imbodiment of the whole Universe dissolves in the ocean of space for a cosmic rest wherein all prepare for another grander Round of manifesting life. "As it is below, so it is above."

In the passing moments we see the time-atoms, so to say, the revolving units of time-measure. Their rhythmic recurrences are like pulsations of time flowing steadily during the life-period of a universe with all its interrelated wheels within wheels of Time, Space, and Consciousness. The human Pilgrim is a spark of the Divine Flame, descending through all realms of matter, to reascend through a perfected humanhood to godhood, cycling back to Divinity.

A cycle means a ring or 'turning.' It is not a closed ring, but a continuous rounding course, expanding and advancing, so that the path of its previous Round is covered with a broader sweep of progress. The form of a cycle is somewhat like a circular stairway whereon, in going up or down, we are always above or below the level of the preceding step, or of the several steps that are covered in one Round. Another form of a cycle's course is seen in the way the thread of a screw winds around and up from its small starting point. A typical example of cyclic growth is found in the expanding curves of the chambered nautilus, and even in the shape of the common snail shell. A craftsman will find suggestive lines in a spiral spring, or will see a more perfect symbol in the progressive curves of a helix spring.

However, no symbolic form can begin to picture the intricate movement and complex character of the countless wheels within wheels of time, of conditions, and of conscious unfolding life, that are always operating together. Universal motion follows a spiral course upon all planes of being, physical and superphysical. The same evolutionary pathway is continued through the material, mental, and spiritual realms. Does not the run of everyday life show the interplay of the activity of the human body, mind and spirit?

The greater cycles include numerous lesser ones of various sizes, characters, and interacting influences, as we shall see. There is nothing haphazard in all this, because everything moves with the coordinate precision of intelligent guidance. We are in a universe of natural law and order. We know that Nature does not move by disorderly and causeless leaps and bounds. The child does not grow up in a day, nor does winter change to summer overnight. Each thing and each event plays its part in some greater Round, by proceeding along its own course which is karmically adjusted to the whole.

The general overlapping and intermingling of cycles stands out clearly in the history of the great Root-Races. Here, as elsewhere, the rule holds good. The close of one great racial cycle merges into the beginning of a new racial career; and this change occurs at the climax or greatest Round of activity of a Third Race's period of existence. Thus, the later Egos of the disappearing Third Root-Race mingled with the few forerunners of the Fifth Root-Race at the middle period of the Fourth Root-Race. It is all as natural as the familiar overlapping changes and events of daily life. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow all run along in a continued story. Our own sense of our identity, at its full in the present, is also the meeting point of a receding past self, and of an oncoming future selfhood.

As the racial cycles will be discussed later, we have a more familiar example of overlapping and intermingling spheres of influence here and now. The periodic recurrence of karmic conditions from past lives explains much of the puzzling state of our world's conditions. While our modern civilization has reached a certain climax of a brilliant intellectual and materialistic evolution, the old order of things generally, in government, science, religion, business, etc., is passing away. The struggles of the outgoing cycle mingle with the birth-pangs of a new one which will open the way for a saner and better balanced progress. Those who are wise may read an open challenge in the signs of the times. There is danger in holding back and clinging to the outgrown standards of individual and collective life. Those who invoke the finer forces of their own nature will go forward, sharing in the mighty urge of the current of universal life flowing onward through everything and every creature.

In many ways, present conditions seem like repetitions of those which prevailed in the heyday of Roman power and knowledge, preceding the decline and fall of the empire. There is the same lack of that equalizing spiritual growth which is essential for the natural balance of great mental and material gains. Evidently, we have also reached the safe limits in our control of the forces of mind and matter. These forces, neutral in themselves, are potent for good or evil. Used for the benefit of humanity, they work for the welfare of all; used selfishly, they react in disintegration and destruction. We need not repeat the mistakes of the past. The time has come for humanity to become more wholly human by bringing forth the finer and nobler qualities and powers from within its own nature.

Without question, the present time is a critical one. But if we face the responsibility of it, open-eyed and honestly, it is seen as a time of unusual opportunity. Men are essentially Spiritual Beings who *can* control the energies which their selfishness operates for their own undoing. We can transfer the same power into vitalizing a better and more timely order of world affairs. For a new cycle of inner light and peace and progress is already dawning behind the obscuring storm clouds which darken the outlook.



The Masters of Wisdom foresaw the present chaotic world conditions, basing their knowledge on, and timing their work with, the law of cycles. They sent their Messenger, H. P. Blavatsky, to prepare men for the inevitable confusion of a transition period. She founded the Theosophical Society through which to bring back to us the forgotten truth of our divine birthright which unites all in a Universal Oneness. In the light of humanity's common origin, mutual interests, and final destiny, it is time to leave childish things behind, and to go forward with the new cycle, working with the Great Scheme.

While the twentieth century has been speeding up its pace, astronomers tell us that our planetary home — the 'good earth' — is also entering into a new region on its journey through space. Mother Earth is bringing us where the influence of Aquarius reigns in that twelve-spoked wheel called the Zodiac. In fact, everything is moving on a conical, spiral pathway onward. That is why it is impossible for anything, however tiny or however vast its pathway may be, to return into itself like a closed ring. Think of our Moon in its monthly pathway around the Earth, which, in its turn, is moving along its yearly cycle around the glorious Sun whose orbit encircles a greater center of a galaxy that is wheeling its majestic way through illimitable space. Every heavenly body is following the broader sweep of some other progressing center. In this eternal motion of a divine mechanism, there are endless wheels within wheels within wheels, all moving with a universal plan of purpose. The picture is too vast for the mind to grasp it. But it is evident that at any point reached by a celestial sphere, its orbit is somewhat further along in the Cosmos than it was on its preceding Round. "End there is none, nor was there beginning."

It is a stimulating and liberating thought that we are all journeying through the Universe in such good company, for every planet and sun and star is the body or dwelling of some bright celestial being. 'A friendly universe' is no mere figure of speech, but is literal truth. The whole scheme of things is so perfect, so just, and so natural, that the only question is: How could it be otherwise?

## **HUMANS AND NATURE ALLIED IN CYCLIC PROGRESS**

There is a purpose in every important act of Nature, whose acts are all cyclic and periodical. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 640

Nature repeats herself everywhere. She follows grooves of action that have already been made; she follows the line of least resistance in all cases and everywhere. And it is upon this repetitive action of our great mother — Universal Nature — that is founded the Theosophical doctrine of the law of cycles, which is the enacting of things that have been before, although each such repetition, as said, is at each new manifestation on a higher plane and with a larger sweep or field of action. — *Man in Evolution*, p. 217

Nature moves like a great wheel, ever turning round and round, so that as it goes forward in time and space, each of its spokes takes its regular turn in moving upward, forward, downward and backward. As the whole wheel of the Universe rolls onward, every atom of it gains ground and experience, and also adds its impulse to the common urge forward. This evolutionary urge in man is naturally quickened, in greater or less degree, by mind and self-consciousness. Thus we are able to help things below him, as he in turn is helped by wiser, greater beings.

At first thought, this sweeping picture of progress may seem too vague and unfamiliar to interest or concern us, even if we could understand it. Of course, the details of our Universe are beyond human comprehension. Nevertheless, the Law of Cycles is so evident in its universal operation that it proves the *unity of man and Nature*, both evolving with a common purpose. The evidence of an ever recurring movement stands out clearly in the flow of everyday affairs. We have only to recognize the cyclic law operating before our eyes, to understand how it works likewise in vast horizons beyond our vision. Does not the periodical recurrence of night and day — a time for sleeping and waking — prove itself? This familiar example, so simple to us, involves the working of the whole Earth turning once — an enormous move which is timed to the minute. It goes without saying that no one could begin to understand how that one turn of the Earth affected everything upon it. Of all the lands and waters, plants, beasts, and men, nothing is *exactly* the same as it was on the previous morning. The point is, that *all moved together*, each of the countless things moving in its own cycle of experience within that one turning of the Earth wheel. By analogy, we may grasp the idea that this working of the universal rule of spiral pathways is as simple and as comprehensive as the child's ABC's and the multiplication table. The same letters learned in the primer are used by wise men to spell out the profoundest truths; while the digits we use in petty personal accounts work accurately in enormous mathematical calculations.

Today, Science is moving with the new cycle, in careful studies of the recurring conditions, not only in the various departments of Nature forces and phenomena, but likewise in the course of human affairs. Science is becoming keenly conscious of the close relation of all its researches to everyday life and to the present and future welfare of humanity. Furthermore, there is a growing move to verify the findings of a periodicity in one field of study by comparison with the reported evidence of cycles in other lines of investigation. The deeper these researches go, the more clearly there is revealed an underlying *unity of Man and Nature*. For instance, those strange sunspots are being studied in relation to the weather, growth of vegetation, wars, business fluctuations, radio reception, etc., etc.

Periodicity is being observed and recorded in the occurrence of floods, droughts, famines, diseases, calamities, magnetic storms, auroras, earthquakes; also in the appearance of great men, and in eras of advances and recessions in the arts and sciences; in the rise and fall of nations and of whole civilizations; in the change of continental coastlines and mountains slowly rising or sinking; in ice ages that came and went, leaving evidence of past eras of tropical climates in high latitudes; in the seasonal habits of animals, and what not. This scientific interest is echoed by the popular press. This opens the way for more knowledge of the ancient law of cycles which is the natural key-motion everywhere.

No scientific training is needed, or even much imagination, to see that recurring changes in the Earth itself are inevitably reflected upon the life of its inhabitants. This fact comes home to us as being interesting enough. And the evidence that Man and Nature are interrelated, and are evolving under the same law, is as simple as it is comprehensive. The working of the periodic law may be followed either way, from small to large issues and *vice versa*.

Consider the recurrent ‘events’ of time, of matter, and of conscious life. First, take the revolving atoms making the molecules which, united in cells, form the organs making man’s whole body which lasts a lifetime; at death, the atoms disperse, revolve through other forms of Earth matter, and when man is due to begin another Round of incarnation, they come together to help build his new body. Next, take the conscious life-spark — the inner Self — evolving through the unfolding body of the embryo, the infant, the child, the youth, the adult, then leaving the aged body, and passing from life here to begin a cycle of existence in ethereal realms. Meanwhile, the passing moments have become hours, days, weeks, years, which, in turn, go on to become centuries, solar lifetimes, complete Rounds of a universe, and so on.

These minute cycles of the ‘atoms’ of time, of conscious, unfolding Life, and of Matter, are the working in the small of what is summed up scientifically as Time-Space Continuum. From this unity at the summit of a universal circuit, the units begin to separate and to cycle down the progressive series of levels to the place of minutest Rounds. Considered in the large or in the small, all follow the one plan of progress: matter becomes more perfect material; small time cycles become vast periods; and re embodying man brings forth more of his real, his immortal self. A living force circulating everywhere vitalizes everything into ‘becoming’ more of itself.

It is the One Life itself which is ever coming and going in all the different forms of substances. It is destined to an endless Round of creation, preservation, and destruction *of its forms*. In recognizing this fact, some deep thinkers have summed up the secrets of Nature as Motion. To this, Theosophy adds that this universal movement is responsive to the

*rhythm of a cosmic heartbeat.* Each entity's response to this vital central impulse is its own key number of pulsations. Some rate of vibration is present in all the inner and outer spheres of life above, below, around, and within us. Science defines the subtle forces of x-rays, infrared and ultraviolet light, radio waves, etc., in the special vibratory rates of each. We all know that the different vibratory rates of light waves take the form of prismatic colors, and that we hear a series of sound waves in the musical scale. Do not we ourselves have an individual rate of vibration which is variously in tune or out of tune with conditions and people around us?

There is cosmic intelligence back of a sublime purpose which keys human destiny with that of universal Mother Nature. The wise ancients understood this mystic truth, both in its simple and in its expanded meanings. They saw a universal law working in everything and in every creature. A living test of its reality was spread abroad for all who had eyes to see — as it still is. It was taught of old that, because man was an inseparable part of the Universe, he was involved in, and concerned with, all natural processes. This knowledge of 'things as they are' freed man from the dread of death, and from all fear of a hereafter of suffering, or of final oblivion. He had no fear of the Unknown while feeling his oneness with the Sun and stars, as well as with the whole unfolding panorama of his Earth home. That untroubled time was in the Golden Age when the world was young. Now it sounds like a fairy story. Well, the fairy stories and legends that our children love, are based upon realities that surrounded our racial {human life-wave} childhood. If those ideals had never been real to us, how could we respond to them as we do at heart, and thus keep them alive from age to age in myth and legend?

A few of our most intuitive philosophers and scientists are beginning to realize that there must be a unity, even a conscious oneness, underlying all things. This recognition of natural truth was anticipated in the Theosophical teachings some fifty odd years ago. {Now one hundred and fifty.} Then H. P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* repeated the forgotten story of the origin and destiny of man, of the planet, and of the Universe. She came because the time was ripe for us to regain something of our forgotten birthright of the larger truth. In this period — our Iron Age — we have lost sight of a wonderful heritage from a far-off past. *Man has become divorced from Nature.* This has stunted his finer growth, and has blurred his outlook on all life. Mentally, he has withdrawn from his place as the being who were to play the human part in this planetary drama. He seemingly stands apart from non-human things, regarding them as somehow alien, if not often hostile to him. Yet everything below him on the Ladder of Life is on its way to become man, just as he will outgrow the human stage, finally, and will reach the level of the men-gods who preceded him. All are moving together, on some round of a grand spiral

pathway. All share in a common welfare, so that everything is helped by moving in unison with the whole. It is a friendly universe at heart.

It was in the primeval plan that, at first, man and his Earth-home were cared for by divine instructors. It was a spiritual parentage starting everything aright for infant humanity. Then, when man became self-conscious, and had knowledge of good and evil, he was made morally responsible for the way he affected his good home. He was given charge of all, because only in him were the fires of mind lighted, giving him insight and reason. His body was made of the same stuff as that of Mother Earth which was always to feed, clothe, and shelter him. Also, the electromagnetic and other Nature forces operated in him, and put him in touch on inner lines with all around him.

Nature's work was to upbuild every form of use and beauty needed to embody the invisible current of Life cycling through all the kingdoms. Gradually, Earth's primeval forces and materials operated to condense and bring out the ethereal model forms which were ideals provided from higher creative levels. These astral models of everything were — as they still are — links between the mental and the material planes, and caused reactions between the two realms. Thus, the material of Earth was subtly affected by the potent energies of conscious human thought and will and feeling.

From the first, because of man's intimate relation to, and his dominion over, the sub-human kingdoms, Nature, perforce, has reacted to the influence and the quality of its stewardship. Thus, his early childlike state was reflected in a happy 'Garden of Eden' atmosphere. Later, when he gave rein to selfish thoughts and passions, the air around him was charged with the disordered forces of storms, disease, and enmity. The reality of this forgotten kinship between the human master and the sub-human kingdoms stands out in the history of the enormous cycles of the Rounds and Races on successive continents. Our recorded history also has its suitably timed examples. Was it not man's unsanitary dealings with the materials embodied in him and those of their surroundings, which reacted in the mediaeval plagues? Does not the present increase of mental and nervous diseases show the typical reaction of highly-organized brain and nervous tissues to the exhausting tension of modern life? Are not today's upheavals in world politics, etc., reflected in unusually disturbed Nature forces?

Each new Root-Race began with a freshened Earth, a favorable climate, peace among men and between them and the beasts. When a Race, *en masse*, grew selfish, harsh, and warring, the climate became austere, fertile lands became deserts, and beasts turned hostile. Each Root-Race, in serial order descending into material life, imprinted its own quality upon the Earth. The dominant quality of the First Root-Race was that of the Golden Age; the Second that of the Silver Age; the Third that of the Bronze

Age; and the Fourth that of the Iron Age; but each individual Root-Race evolved through the entire series of four periods.

Scientific students of the striking climatic and geologic changes of past eras, naturally regard them as the factors which compelled man to move with them. The larger truth, however, is that whether the change was on an upward or a downward cycle, the men affected were reaping what they had sowed in their relations with each other and with Nature. The record might go back many lives. The karmic law which used natural forces of Earth to start the period that was due for more or for less favorable conditions, also led men to when and where they belonged. The Egos were born in fitting time and place, whether with an advancing or a retreating Ice Age, or during geologic ups and downs. Man is not a helpless pawn of the elements. He is relatively free to mold things after his desires of mind and heart; and, broadly speaking, he makes his world what it is. Thus, his creations, in karmically reflecting his general character, give us a *key to self-knowledge* which is also the *key to Nature's secrets*.

H. P. Blavatsky struck a forgotten note of unity for our discordant times when she said:

Humanity is the child of cyclic Destiny, and not one of its Units can escape its unconscious mission, or get rid of the burden of its co-operative work with Nature. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 446

Even when this splendid truth of our human part in a cosmic unity with all other things, is beyond the grasp of the brain-mind, it is not beyond the range of the intuition. The inner Self remembers all that has gone before in its other lives. It is of this store of knowledge that glimpses are caught at times by the artist and poet. These glimpses are not mere flights of fancy. Rather, they are the Nature lover's recognition that, veiled in forms other than human, there vibrates a permeating quality of kinship with something muted and unnamed within *himself*.

The poet longs for words that can tell others of his oneness with a Reality pervading earth, sea, and sky. But it is *beyond* speech. It is an inner sense of unity only to be felt by the man-child vibrating with the Mother Nature with whom he has cycled down the ages on this Earth. This love of Nature is rooted in the hoary past — a spiritual memory of a primeval alliance.

However, most of us are neither poets nor mystics. Logical minds want matter-of-fact evidence that cycles are operating everywhere. Well, it turns out that when we begin to look around at familiar things, they speak for themselves of recurring periodicity. Take fluid things first: the ocean tides ebb and flow with clocklike regularity all around the Earth, like a great breath; the waves break on the shore at about the rate that we breathe; this rhythm is fixed beyond human power to change it. The fresh waters

moistening the earth, and taken up by the transpiring plants to become cloud and rain and snow, return upon their path to help the growing things that feed and clothe and shelter us — Mother Nature caring for us always. The plant juices flow up from their busy roots, to work with sunlight in perfecting growth, and, directly or in outer Rounds, find their way back to Earth. The life-sap of orchard trees keeps time with the season for an annual display of new leaves and flowers and fruit; and then it flows down to rest before another period of outgo. Only a unity of purpose could regulate the harmonious flow of these steady waves and annual tides of life. The grass blade no less than the giant tree has its own rate of pulsation. These everyday mysteries are so common that we overlook the wonder of them.

Even the lowly form of life in the common caterpillar soon completes its period of crawling. Then it builds a little cocoon retreat wherein it dissolves into a mere protoplasmic jelly. Out of this shapeless mass it takes on the form of a dainty butterfly, to begin an airy life-round, sipping nectar from flowers. Its eggs are timed to repeat this triple cycle of changing forms. This little thing's rhythmic course is as wonderful, in its own way, as that of the trade winds and the ocean currents which steadily follow their own pathways of blow and flow.

We take it for granted that the returning seasons will reel off the Earth's picture of winter's cold merging into spring's awakening of things to ripen into summer's growth, and then the harvest home for the annual circuit of experience and progress. Meanwhile, the large wheel of the Earth itself has rolled around its orbit, regulated so as to pass the spring equinox with its exact fifty seconds' gain in time. This tiny fraction of time is the germ, so to say, of the Platonic great year, the cycle of 25,920 of our years. The natural course of minute wheels within mighty arcs, recalls the old Hermetic saying: "nothing is great, nothing is small in the divine economy." Astronomers tell of pulsating stars that dwarf our Sun in size and splendor. All the celestial bodies are timed with the cosmic clock that regulates the revolving Universe.

The so-called 'laws of Nature' are the rhythmic operation of combined wills of great celestial beings working in harmony with the divine Will and its ideal purpose. We are, literally, living cells in the organism of a great Being, much as we are the overlord and the law for the trillions of cells that are evolving within our body. The same pattern and purpose is working out everywhere.

This invisible but intelligent direction operating with such regularity in Nature, explains what is not accounted for by 'blind chance' or 'natural selection' or active chemical combinations. For example, the encyclopedia speaks of the migratory flight of birds as the 'mystery of mysteries.' The question is: How do these little creatures know when to start, or where to go? How can they survive to find their way across great distances without

chance to stop for rest? Sometimes the young broods, even on their first trip, go apart by themselves on a separate route to the distant nesting grounds. To say that these bird cycles are timed by 'instinct' does not explain so purposeful a thing. These *unself-conscious* creatures instinctively respond to an old impulse which was strongly impressed upon the species.

The idea that the Arctic region was the original home of the bird species that breed there, has been coupled with a pre-glacial period when the far north had a springtime climate. This theory refers to those advances and recessions of the last great Ice Ages which have left their mark upon the body of the Earth. The evidence of radical changes is found in the fossils of plants and animals. Of course, human life naturally flowed back and forth with the movements of desolate ice sheets. Perhaps that strange lure of the 'great white North,' felt by some Arctic explorers, is the stirring of an ancient memory of 'home' when the Race was young. As migrating birds follow an old 'habit of Nature,' something of an analogy lingers deep within some of us human 'birds of passage.' How many of us have felt that unreasoning lure to go back to the old homestead! Mature people, absorbed in handling large affairs, sometimes have a sudden urge to leave everything and revisit a lowly birth-place. They long to be where their infancy awoke in a warm home-nest, and their childhood dawned in the tender light of parental love and care. Of course, if they go back, they find everything changed — as they have changed. Their mood passes; but for the time, it made the past seem more real than the present. Somehow, they were stirred by a vagrant breeze from an early turn in their present life-cycle.

Another gesture of the sub-human creatures moving with the high tides of reproductive life currents is seen in the migration of some fishes and animals. The salmon that swim thousands of miles upstream, arrive at the spawning grounds thin and exhausted. They seem impelled to move with repetitive habits impressed upon the early species. They evidently retain the impress of a former habitat so old that, meanwhile, the Earth has changed its contours.

A similar Nature-puzzle is the migration of the Northern European lemming. At irregular intervals, multitudes of these small rodents swarm down the mountains into the lowlands in a straight course, devouring all vegetation in their path. Enormous numbers swim into the sea where they perish. This strange contradiction to the natural instinct of self-preservation is accounted for by H. P. Blavatsky who says:

Coming, as they do, from all parts of Norway, the powerful instinct which survives throughout ages as an inheritance from their progenitors impels them to seek a continent, once existing but now submerged beneath the ocean, and to court a watery grave.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 782



These sporadic gestures of animal life are hints of old ‘roads to yesterdays’ marked on the body of the Earth. Explorations of the ocean floors have revealed many old submerged river valleys. Our own bodies likewise carry remnants of organs now useless; but they are biological evidence of wholly different states of man’s imbodiment in early Races. Nature’s records all tell the consistent story of a wonderful Past that, deep within us, is linked with the Present, as islands are joined to the mainland under the seas.

## PROGRESSIVE ROUNDS AND RACES

Out of the ocean of time and forth from the ocean of life, goes the manifestation of the race of men unto Life and Light. Written it was of old, in the most ancient of books. But the understanding of it is concealed from the eye and the brain.

— From the Proem to the *Popol Vuh* (Ancient America)

According to the Ancient Teachings regarding the evolution of humanity, there are seven Root-Races, of which we are in the fifth. Our Root-Race, as such, began about 1,000,000 years ago, and we are now about midway along the course of its wheeling. Each Root-Race is divided into seven sub-races, which, again, are divided into family races of some 30,000 years’ duration.

Each Race and sub-race passes through its own Rounds of birth, active maturity, and decline. The same periods mark the course of the civilization of each sub-race, as well as the continued divisions of humanity into different nations, states, communities, and family groups. Keeping pace with these different cycles of human experience, there is an increasing number of the manifesting forms and forces in the realms of Nature, as the spiritual man descends into the matter of material life on Earth.

This descent is called the Shadowy Arc of an evolutionary cycle. At the midpoint or lowest level of this circuit, the earth matter begins to refine, and the human Egos start their progressive ascent of the upward arc toward a lofty state of spirituality. This is called a planetary Manvantara, which includes the entire forty-nine Rounds of the seven Races of that Humanity, and it marks the lifetime of the Earth itself. The ancient Hindûs called this planetary cycle a day of Brahmâ, a period of manifesting life of 4,320,000,000 years. This bare outline of a recurring cosmic time period shows the same rhythmic movement in the great wheel that runs throughout the whole Earth-series of ‘events,’ even down to Shakespeare’s “seven ages of man.” This universal law of progress, working through alternating periods of activity and rest, points out a unity of purpose in all evolution. H. P. Blavatsky says of the relation of humanity to the Earth:

... it is a case of descent into matter, the adjustment — in both the mystic and the physical senses — of the two, and their interblending for the great coming “struggle of life” that awaits both the *entities*. “Entity” may be thought a strange term to use in the case of a globe; but the ancient philosophers, who saw in the earth a huge “animal,” were wiser in their generation than our modern geologists are in theirs; and Pliny, who called the Earth our kind nurse and mother, the only element which is not inimical to man, spoke more truly than Watts, who fancied that he saw in her the footstool of God. For Earth is only the footstool of man in his ascension to higher regions;... — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 154

Our Earth has to live through seven Rounds.

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 say.

Its Humanity develops fully only in the Fourth — our present Round. Up to this fourth Life-Cycle, it is referred to as “humanity” only for lack of a more appropriate term. Like the grub which becomes chrysalis and butterfly, Man, or rather that which becomes man, passes through all the forms and kingdoms during the first Round and through all the human shapes during the two following Rounds. Arrived on our Earth at the commencement of the Fourth in the present series of life-cycles and races, MAN is the first form that appears thereon, being preceded only by the mineral and vegetable kingdoms — even the latter *having to develop and continue its further evolution through man*. — *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 159

Though the Absolute from which universes come forth must ever remain the unknown for the finite mind, yet we can know somewhat of the periodical beginnings of manifestation in the case of Man and the Earth. That, naturally, is what concerns and interests us the most. The Earth, then, is the reïmbodiment of the life-atoms, the forces, and the conscious entities which animated the planetary Chain of the now dead Moon. The life-waves of every kind, from minerals to man, left the Moon-chain of Globes when the time came for its long interplanetary rest in space. This planet’s sleeping period was not unlike our regular nightly habit of putting out the light and retiring into restful darkness.

When the cosmic clock struck at the dawn of another period of manifestation, the atoms and forces of mind and matter and spirit of the sleeping Universe, all felt the urge to come together again for a new ‘Day’ of planetary life. As always, Nature and Humanity work together for the grand new cycle. Just as the earth-to-be was at first “without form and void,” so the earliest forms of humans-to-be were vague and ethereal. Then, when the inner Self, cycling down through ever denser grades of substance, became clothed in a physical body, it was the Earth that

provided its 'coats of skin.' These physical 'coats' are what we wear today, with the invisible astral model body within, cell for cell.

The material atoms that circulate through a human body take on something of its conscious quality, which they retain as they go forth with the outgoing cell. A pure and noble life thus squares the account with Nature for the stream of atoms that unite to form the body. The plan in the Universal Mind is to teach everything to work together. The wise who have learned this, say:

Help Nature and work on with her; and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance. — *The Voice of the Silence*, p. 14

In keeping with the general plan, the Earth is a sevenfold entity. Therefore, with its seven different gradations of substance and of character, the visible Earth has six other Globes which roll with it in space. These make up what is called the 'Earth Chain' of Globes. These correspond to the different states of human consciousness which is destined to function in our evolving sevenfold nature. Only our gross body is visible to us, because we are functioning on the solid Fourth Globe of the Earth which our body represents. The Globes interpenetrating each other, being "IN CO-ADUNITION *but not* IN CONSUBSTANTIALITY WITH OUR EARTH" (*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 166).

This subject is best regarded in its metaphysical and spiritual aspect, which corresponds to the inner realm of our being. Does not the invisible world of thought and feeling interpenetrate the Rounds of physical life? Also, in dreamland do we not see and think and feel and act in a realm where time and space and gravity are all keyed to astral vibrations independent of known laws of physics? Again, in deep, dreamless sleep, and in the ecstatic visions of a saintly person, it is a spiritual world that is entered. Man is destined, eventually, to cycle consciously through all these 'Globes' adapted to the different states of its own composite nature. Then, at the end of the great planetary cycle, the perfected man's horizon will consciously include all his previous Rounds of experience.

The threefold evolutionary urge which manifests in man as physical, mental, and spiritual unfolding, comes from that divine-spiritual Monadic influence or ray which is at the heart of every thing and creature. The stream or mass of human Egos evolving on our planetary Chain is limited, though the actual quantity is incalculable for us. These Egos came from the Moon-chain as a 'life-wave' in successive streams. The first river of 'lives' began on the first Globe, A, and there went through seven long Rounds of evolution in bodies suited to that Globe's state of matter. As this stream passed on to Globe B, or the second one, another 'river' of less progressed Egos began their course around A. In orderly sequence, all

made the circuit of Globes which are usually called for convenience A B C D E F and G.

Everything fits into its own time and place and conditions in the cosmic drama which each humanity enacts in its turn. W. Q. Judge gives a thumbnail sketch in saying:

This journey went on for four cyclings round the whole, and then the whole stream or army of Egos from the old Moon Chain had arrived, and being complete, no more entered after the middle of the Fourth Round. The same circling process of these differently arrived classes goes on for seven complete Rounds of the whole seven planetary centers of consciousness, and when the seven are ended as much perfection as is possible in the immense period occupied will have been attained, and then this chain or mass of “globes” will die in its turn to give birth to still another series.

Each one of the globes is used by evolutionary law for the development of seven races, and of senses, faculties and powers appropriate to that state of matter: the experience of the whole seven globes being needed to make a perfect development. Hence we have the Rounds and Races. The Round is a circling of the seven centers of planetary consciousness; the Race the racial development on one of those seven. There are seven races for each globe, but the total of forty-nine races only makes up seven great races, the special septenate of races on each globe or planetary center composing in reality one race of seven constituents or special peculiarities of function and power.

— *The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 28-29

It is useless to attempt any account of the earlier conditions of man and the Globe. The life and the matter of that time were wholly unlike anything we know of now. H. P. Blavatsky states that only when we come to consider our {human} Race on our present fourth Globe D, in our Fourth Round, do the conditions become fairly comprehensible to us.

A separate continent is described as being connected with the long career of each of the great Root-Races. The first continent has been called the Imperishable Sacred Land. This is geographically at the North Pole, and is destined to last to the end of the planetary Manvantara. Of this mysterious cradle of the first humanity, very little is said.

The name chosen for the Second Continent was the Hyperborean. It was “the land which stretched out its promontories southward and westward from the North Pole to receive the Second Race, and comprised the whole of what is now known as Northern Asia.” The oldest Greeks spoke of the ‘Hyperboreans’ dwelling somewhere far north, and visited yearly by Apollo which, astronomically, was the Sun, the god of light.

‘Lemuria’ was the immense Third Continent which “once reigned supreme over the Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans,” and was the home of the Third Root-Race. The Lemurians were the successors or progeny of the Second Root-Race. They were the same embodying Egos who had begun to cycle down into Earth-matter together. They had spent vast

periods of time in arriving at the stage where their gigantic astral bodies were becoming 'physicalized' in forms which were progressively to consolidate and diminish in the evolutionary course which led to the present conditions of humanity. The continents were destroyed alternately by fire and water. Lemuria's fate came through volcanic fires, from a series of subterranean convulsions and the breaking asunder of the ocean floors. For surviving remnants of Lemuria we are referred to part of California, Australia with its aborigines and primitive fauna and flora, and to some of the islands "sown hither and thither on the face of the Pacific."

Atlantis is the Fourth Continent, historically recorded in the ancient traditions of all peoples. Its fate is told in the Bible story of Noah and the Flood. Plato's famous island of Atlantis was but the last fragment of it to be submerged.

The Fifth Continent was America; but, as it is situated at the Antipodes, it is Europe and Asia Minor, almost coeval with it, which are generally referred to by the Indo-Âryan Occultists as the fifth. If their teaching followed the appearance of the Continents in their geological and geographical order, then this classification would have to be altered. But as the sequence of the Continents is made to follow the order of evolution of the Races, from the first to the fifth, our Âryan Root-race, Europe must be called the fifth great Continent. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 8

The great Racial cycles overlapped, so that the history of the first two really human races, that is, the last of the Lemurians and the first of the future Atlanteans, is more or less blended. The early Third Root-Race was androgynous, and 'mindless' in the sense that its consciousness was more intuitional than mental and physical. But, as the ages of development passed by, the fires of mind were lighted by Mânasaputras, lofty beings from higher spheres. The sexes were separated; and the bodies acquired a bony framework, the astral body becoming the inner model body — the seat of the five senses today. These evolutionary changes explain the allegory of the 'mental' sleep of Adam, preceding the 'separation' of the *rib bone* which became Eve.

The later Lemurians were ruled over by divine Dynasties, and these lofty Rulers taught them the arts and sciences, so that they "knew astronomy, architecture and mathematics to perfection."

This primeval civilization did not, as one may think, immediately follow their physiological transformation. Between the final evolution and the first city built, many hundred thousands of years had passed. Yet, we find the Lemurians in their sixth sub-race building their first rock-cities out of stone and lava. One of such great cities of primitive structure was built entirely of lava, some thirty miles west from where Easter Island now stretches its narrow piece of sterile ground, and was entirely destroyed by a series of volcanic eruptions. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 317

As evidence of the knowledge and skill of these gigantic builders, *The Secret Doctrine* points to the cyclopean ruins and monuments scattered around the world. These archaeological exhibits not only testify to extraordinary strength and engineering skill in their builders, but hint at more knowledge of potent, invisible forces than modern man controls as yet. The further researches of archaeology, geology, ethnology and of Nature's finer forces, will unite in confirming the ancient history of the human race, which is handed down in universal traditions.

It was the "Golden Age" in those days of old, the age when the "gods walked the earth, and mixed freely with the mortals." Since then, the gods departed (*i.e.*, became invisible), and later generations ended by worshipping their kingdoms — the Elements.

Thus the first Atlantean races, born on the Lemurian Continent, separated from their earliest tribes into the righteous and the unrighteous; into those who worshipped the one unseen Spirit of Nature, the ray of which man feels within himself — or the Pantheists, and those who offered fanatical worship to the Spirits of the Earth, the dark Cosmic, anthropomorphic Powers, with whom they made alliance. These were the earliest *Gibborim*, "the mighty men of renown in those days" (Gen. vi); who become with the Fifth Race the *Kabirim*: Kabiri with the Egyptians and the Phoenicians, Titans with the Greeks, and Rākshasas and Daityas with the Indian races.

Such was the secret and mysterious origin of all the subsequent and modern religions.... — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, pp. 273-274

Here, in a word, is the explanation of how men *brought* evil into the world. When their 'eyes were opened' by spiritual guides, they were gifted with the light of Mind which gave them a knowledge of good and evil. Even in the Third Root-Race, a number used their free-will in choosing to follow the right-hand path of Light. Some of their brothers turned and followed the left-hand path of shadows. These latter consistently misused their power and knowledge, life after life. They were the Lemuro-Atlanteans who "became tall with pride." They used their control over Nature forces for selfish ambition and evil ends. They became a mighty Race of sorcerers, ever at war with their righteous brothers. The conflict continued, age after age, as humanity descended into denser levels of matter, up to the middle of the Atlantean cycle. By that time the Root-Race had developed a brilliant civilization very largely of Black Magicians.

In the end, after minor submersions extending for several million years, the evildoers went down with the last watery cataclysm. Meanwhile, their wiser brothers had separated from them, and, under spiritual guides, had migrated to distant lands that escaped the deluge. From these migrants came the beginnings of the present Fifth or so-called Âryan Root-Race

{which includes virtually all the human beings living on Earth today}. The germ of this Root-Race dates back to the middle of the Atlantean cycle. Likewise, the germ of the sub-race of the Sixth Root-Race is even now stirring among us.

The unfortunate evil Atlantean Egos were self-doomed to pass ages of repeated incarnations suffering the effects of their past evildoings. Bereft by Karma of the mental and spiritual gifts they had betrayed, many of them were reduced to abject ignorance and degradation. Degraded remnants of this Race are found among some few barbarous tribes on Earth, whose perversions are the opposite of the childlike simplicity of a truly primitive people. Traces of others appear, as in the bare homes of the unknown cave-dwellers, found in France and Spain. These Paleolithic people, reduced to a primitive state, left evidence of a strain of high culture. Their drawings and engravings on the rocky walls of their cave-homes, show a developed technique and an artistic power wholly absent in childish scrawls. Other archeological finds of an inferior type of culture in far later levels, are best explained by the recurring ups and downs in the cyclic course of racial evolution. Natural progress does not go straight forward, like a train on a track.

Another hint of an antique background is found among certain degraded tribes and in some groups. Aside from undoubted superstition and trickery connected with many of their performances, their priests and medicine men often do possess control over certain Nature forces of psychic character. Europeans neither possess this power, nor can they explain it in others. The ignorant performers themselves do not understand the rationale of the phenomena which they evoke. But the usual low methods they follow in training to develop their will and imagination, and their selfish or evil motives in operating, suggest a degradation of mystical knowledge. Their feats seem like miserable echoes of the Atlantean Black Magicians who misused spiritual and intellectual knowledge and forces to their own undoing.

Happily some of the younger human Egos have no ancient record of evil Karma to work out of.

On every hand, the united working of Karma, Reincarnation, and Cycles points to the original purpose of bringing everything up to a balanced state of perfection. In the lower kingdoms, under Nature's direction, things run more true to type than do men as the ideal of human possibilities. As a rule, our best traits and our worst ones are inconsistent with a balanced character. However, a day of reckoning is inevitable — the sooner the better for our own progress. How often people of ability and worth seem held to limited and distasteful conditions of life! Presumably, they are reviewing some unbalanced account from previous lives. W. Q. Judge explains that

... in one life one may be in an advanced sub-race in accordance with predominating qualities, but in that incarnation may bring up certain defects or generate certain causes requiring him to pass over next life to some other less progressed sub-race for the purpose of extirpating the defects or working off of causes.

In this way accurate adjustment, perfect development, regularity and roundness are all amply provided for. — *The Path*, Vol. VII, p. 257

Would not the issues of such an experience be more easily, contentedly and rapidly worked out if one knew the meaning of the laws of his own being? Suppose we were aware that *something* within us which does know, will rest at nothing less than perfect work?

## HUMAN BODY A VAST SOUNDING BOARD

Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you? — 1 Cor., vi. 19

Every human organ and each cell in the latter has a keyboard of its own, like that of a piano, only that it registers and emits sensations instead of sounds. Every key contains the potentiality of good or bad, of producing harmony or disharmony. This depends on the impulse given and the combinations produced; on the force of the touch of the artist at work, a “double-faced Unity,” indeed. — H. P. Blavatsky, *Lucifer*, Vol. VII, p. 181

Verily that body, so desecrated by Materialism and man himself, is the temple of the Holy Grail, the *Adytum* of the grandest, nay, of all, the mysteries of nature in our solar universe. That body is an Aeolian harp, chorded with two sets of strings, one made of pure silver, the other of catgut.

— *Ibid.*

H. P. Blavatsky further explains how the body responds to the vital touch of its indwelling creator, the dual man. His *quality* of thought and feeling sets the harp’s pure silver, or its animal strings, vibrating with the operations of his better, or of his lower self. The imbodied ‘artist’ is playing continually on one or another set of strings, thereby arousing in them a habit of responsive vibrations. The influence of his habitual trend of playing, being registered upon the instrument, naturally reverberates back upon his mind and heart. Too often our body habits get the upper hand of our will to change them for our own good. There is practical wisdom in keeping the “heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life,” as Solomon advised.

Fortunately, Nature, who supplies the material of man’s Earth-body, has more to do with operating it than he understands or controls. His silent partner, Nature, manages his wonderful body so well that he rather take it for granted that it runs itself. It is equipped with two nervous systems.



First, there is the cerebro-spinal nervous system which functions with the brain, the senses, and the voluntary activities. Its vibrations being associated with his human nature, they are not usually as orderly as the rhythmic operations of the second or sympathetic nervous system which Nature controls. However, both systems being intimately connected, they constantly react upon each other, in reflecting the conscious, the sub-, and the super-conscious life-forces.

It is Nature which keeps us going, before birth and afterwards, when we are asleep or awake, conscious or unconscious, sane or insane, sick or well, vigorous or paralyzed. Nature works through the automatic nervous system to bring us back to smooth running order when we are either mentally or physically disordered. All the physiological functions are rhythmic. Their activities are timed in accord with the natural pulsation of the cosmic heartbeat.

Medical researches show that in the functions of respiration, circulation, digestion, secretion, excretion, gestation, etc., each organ has its own rate of vibratory motion, its *recurring ebb and flow of vital purpose*. Tiny ciliated cells, as in the bronchial lining, move the moisture in an outgoing current by their own rate of waving their delicate hairlets back and forth. The heart repeats its cycle of systole, diastole, and rest about four times as fast as the tide of air rises and falls in the lungs. Yet both are timed together so that the blood is received, purified, and passed on its rounds. There is a wonderful balanced relation of all the organs' pulsations to each other, and to the whole body. The coordinate system of continuous cycles within us, in its orderly precision, is regulated like a solar system. To say the least, the body is a marvelous living mechanism of interacting wheels.

Mathematics, so exact in astronomical calculations, shows that ratios of periodicity in the solar system are repeated in our body. Our organs pulsate in multiples of the solar heartbeat. For example, the Sun is the heart of the solar system. At the beginning of the eleven-year sunspot period, there is something akin to contraction, and an outpouring of the Sun's life force, similar to our circulation of life-blood. The solar vital currents reach the outermost limits of its system, to return progressively for another eleven-year Round.

The Sun has been vitalizing our humanity during the coming and going of its past four Root-Races. Each Root-Race in its turn evolved through a regular series of four periods of differing character and duration. Our present Fifth Root-Race repeats this typical cyclic series. Its first period lasted 1,728,000 years; its second, 1,296,000 years; its third, 864,000 years; while the fourth period, our present age, will take 432,000 years — a total of 4,320,000 years. [See also *Occult Glossary* by G. de Purucker, {"Yugas."}] This sequence of the digits 4 3 2 turns out to be a key number in certain recurring Rounds, 'above and below.' In popular language, the

‘precession of the equinoxes’ is a gain, so to say, of approximately fifty seconds on the arc of 360 degrees which the Sun completes in its yearly circuit in moving around among the constellations. This yearly fraction of one-seventy-second of a degree accumulates until it totals the complete arc of 360 degrees. The Sun then has arrived at the same place among the constellations in a cycle of 25,920 years — the ‘Platonic year.’

This cycle among the celestial bodies has its miniature copy in our own bodies. That is, we breathe in and out, completing one respiration about eighteen times a minute. In twenty-four hours we breathe 25,920 times. Our little day has a respiratory round on a similar scale of the Sun’s precessional movement. Meanwhile, our heartbeat averages seventy-two times a minute; and the Sun takes seventy-two years to pass one degree along its zodiacal Round. Our heartbeats in an hour total 4,320 times, repeating the digits of the ancient key number. The mathematical analogy can be carried further in showing the universality of periodicity. The significant point is the intermingling of active physical and super-physical forces. Through our sympathetic nervous system, the intelligent ‘laws of Nature’ time our organic rhythms with the superconscious heart of the Universe.

The different body cells not only have their functional rhythm, but they are timed to come and go, by dividing into new cells. This simple division into new entities is now seen in lowest forms of animal and vegetable life; it repeats the way in which the ethereal, spherical First Root-Race reproduced itself. Our body cells are reborn, so to say, like miniature copies of the primeval method of the Race. Some of our cells divide rapidly, as in young creatures; others change slowly, as in old age and in bone, but the ebb and flow is continuous. The whole body is changed in seven-year cycles; so that the man of seventy years has reembodied, relatively speaking, ten times in one lifetime. He passes away but to return for another circuit on Earth.

Life and death, then, are only the systole and diastole of the cosmic heartbeat which, for us, keeps the Spiritual Self coming and going, here and elsewhere. Occult physiology explains that

There is in nature a law that operates in every department whether moral or physical, and which may now be called that of undulation and then that of inhibition; while at other times it reappears as vibration, and still again as attraction and repulsion, but all these changes are only apparent because at bottom it is the same.... In our own blood circulation we find the blood propelled from the heart, and that nature has provided little valves which will not permit it to return to the heart by the way it came.... the Occultist... declares that the impulse *is* from the heart and that that organ receives its impulse from the great astral heart of the Âkâśa, which has been said by all mystics to have a double motion, or alternate vibration — the systole and diastole of nature.

So in this sense the valve in the circulation represents the abyss behind us that we cannot repress. We are in the great general circulation, and compelled whether we like it or not, to obey its forward impulse.

— W. Q. Judge, *The Path*, Vol. II, pp. 292-293

We are related consciously as well as mathematically to the Sun and Moon and the planets. Their orbital and interrelated positions at the time of our birth affect the trend of that incarnation. From this family of celestial bodies ebb and flow currents of the several spiritual, mental, psychic, astral, and physical life forces which circulate through us and everything else. The periodicity of the disintegrating Moon has a marked dual influence which is both constructive and disorganizing. Its recurring phases are related to the periodicity of all reproductive physiology, to changes in diseases, and to growth of vegetation, etc. Its psychic and astral emanations are reflected in mental and emotional disorders. All these forces were so well understood by the ancients that they could benefit by the good and could minimize the ill effects of their influence. We human units contribute our share of the disorderly elements in the solar family. But we gain in power for good, and square our account, in proportion to our individual balance of right or wrong.

The vibrating *quality* of our conscious life is imprinted on the texture of our bodies, like mental and emotional fossils indicating their place in finer or coarser grades of Earth-stuff. Even the physical contrast between a noble, clean-minded person and a selfish, bestial type is evident. The bodies of the evil Atlanteans were coarse and sensual. The Earth, too, then had reached its lowest level of materiality. From their mid-Fourth Round, the planetary wheel began to revolve on the upward arc and matter began to refine. In line with this is the process of radioactivity which Science is studying in rocks and minerals. Some interesting examples are reported, showing a cyclic course of ‘events’ running through matter as well as in mind. Moreover, in both, the cycles run concurrently, because moving with a common purpose. We read that

... the process of radioactivity will in future ages take place in all the chemical elements and compounds, beginning with the heaviest and grossest, and running up the scale towards the lightest and simplest.

— *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 326

Thus it comes about that in the etherealizing process which our earth-globe is now undergoing, the heaviest of the chemical elements and compounds will first become radioactive, radiating their substance away with increasing speed, and will be followed by the next or less heavy and gross, the process continuing until the end of the present fourth round in particular, and with intervals of the reverse process during the downward arcs of the succeeding rounds, proceeding until the seventh round will have reached its climax or end. By that time, the globe and all on it will have

returned to the highly ethereal state or condition of matter that prevailed through the first round. — *Ibid.*, p. 327, fn

The picture of man evolving step by step with the matter of his body and in the body of the Earth, shows a scientific phase of “universal oneness as a fact in Nature.” This is no mere metaphysical concept or human platitude. It is a natural fact, consistent with the essentials of science, philosophy, and ethics — the three phases of the one truth. The material of the Earth’s body was with us when we were cycling round the Moon-chain. The lunar life-atoms reembodied again with our humanity here, bearing the quality of our former impress, both helpful and harmful influences. Likewise, our individual life-atoms from former incarnations come back each time, drawn to us by psychomagnetic attraction. This is Nature’s provision of the harvest field in which the unexpended causes of our past sowing may work out their effects. For example, the seeds of a karmic disease find a ready culture medium in one man’s body conditions, while they will not grow in his neighbor’s tissues because he is karmically exempt. Again, we see the musical, inventive, or other genius — or the ‘infant prodigies’ — with the physical organism with which each can express the mental ability they have severally attained in previous life-cycles. There is the same repetitive ‘coming home’ of our astral model-body atoms, and of the ethereal mental and emotional substances which belong to us. The same rigid justice that rules in the Universe, operates upon all planes of our being.

The chemical elements that are combined in our body organs, the musical notes that satisfy our sense of harmony, and the colors that appeal to our eyes, each have their mathematical rates of vibration. Of their progressive octaves, it is said:

To demonstrate more clearly the seven in Nature, it may be added that not only does the number seven govern the periodicity of the phenomena of life, but that it is also found dominating the series of chemical elements, and equally paramount in the world of sound and in that of colour as revealed to us by the spectroscope. This number is the factor, *sine qua non*, in the production of occult astral phenomena.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 627

Since the above was published, in 1888, marked scientific advances have shown how the different rates of vibratory forces appear as different phenomena. The popularity of the radio has even made people ‘wave-length’ conscious. *The Secret Doctrine* anticipated outstanding scientific advances of all kinds which show the intimate relation, if not the evident unity, of matter and force. This gives a scientific basis for a unity between conscious human forces and matter, which latter now is recognized as

electronic in nature. For instance, our present five senses are responsive to vibratory rates which also manifest in tangible forms of sound, color, etc.

The five senses and their several sense organs were not evolved simultaneously in humanity, but came in serial order as regards time and sequence. Briefly, then, each Root-Race, toward the close of its great cycle, had developed one of the seven senses in full functional activity. The First Root-Race evolved hearing; the Second Root-Race added to this the sense of touch; the Third added sight; the Fourth, taste. Our present Fifth Root-Race has smell with the other senses, and also the potentiality of two more that will evolve during the future Sixth and Seventh Root-Races.

That hearing was the first sense acquired, is the oldest in point of time and of experience, agrees with our ability to hear eleven octaves of sound, while our eyes see but one octave of light. It is pointed out in *The Esoteric Tradition* (pp. 466, 467.) that the wireless wavelengths thus far known covering some eleven or twelve octaves, manifest as *sound*, and correspond to our sense of hearing. Passing along the scale through octaves of shorter wave-lengths, we pass through waves producing a sense of heat, *i.e.*, *touch*. Continuing through octaves of still shorter waves, we reach the range of visible radiation; here the sevenfold colors of light correspond to *sight*. Passing through still more rapid wave-lengths, we enter the ultraviolet range of the scale, which is related to our sense of *taste*. Next, come the extremely short wave-lengths of x-rays which correspond to the sense of *smell*.

Our latent sixth and seventh senses will evolve progressively as they are called forth by the unfolding of our higher mental and spiritual nature. Then we shall radiate the constructive and inspiring forces of mind and heart as spontaneously as we now use our other senses. At that far distant period, the body will have become formed of more refined, flexible, and enduring substance; the human being will have acquired the balance of positive and negative creative forces, as sex is but a passing phase of procreation. Sickness will be unknown, as the then enlightened humanity will have learned to work in unison with the finer forces of Nature.

In such future ideal conditions on the upward arc, man will be *self-consciously* evolving through realms of being through which, as an *unself-conscious* god-spark, he had slowly descended into matter on the downward arc. The Kabbalistic saying that “man becomes a stone, a plant, an animal, a man, a spirit, and finally God,” is true as to his *forms* of imbodiment. In the ethereal first three Rounds, he passed through the filmy ‘presentments’ of what became the stones, plants, and animals of the physical Fourth Round. He still uses the mineral and plant elements in his animal body. The human embryo now develops through a repetition of *forms* which hint at experience in the earlier Root-Races.

The diapason of type is run through in brief.... The potentiality of every organ useful to animal life is locked up in Man — the microcosm of the Macrocosm... — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 685

Because of vast ages of experience in all kinds and forms of matter, the embryonic body is evolved now in nine months. In its earliest months, its indistinct sex hints first at the a-sexual, and then at the androgynous early Root-Races. Another hint of the early Rounds is the early development and prominent position of the pineal gland which later is covered over by the embryonic brain. This small gland — to which physiology assigns no function — represents the once active ‘third eye.’ At present it is deeply ‘concealed within the hollow of the brain,’ where it is intimately related to all the intellectual, sensory, and psychic centers. It is pointed out that

it has once been active; for nature never creates the smallest, the most insignificant form without some definite purpose and use. It was an *active* organ, we say, at that stage of evolution when the spiritual element in man reigned supreme over the hardly nascent intellectual and psychic elements. And, as the cycle ran down toward that point when the physiological senses were developed by, and went *pari passu* with, the growth and consolidation of the physical man, the interminable and complex vicissitudes and tribulations of zoological development, that median “eye” ended by atrophying along with the early spiritual and purely psychic characteristics in man. . . .

In the beginning, every class and family of living species was hermaphrodite and objectively one-eyed.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, pp. 298, 299

It is further stated that in the ‘winding cyclic course’ of the great law, this ‘eye’ will again function when we shall have reached the spiritual levels on the upward arc. Then, as perfected human beings, we leave Earth-life to rest before beginning the next higher Rounds of existence as young gods. There is an analogy between the human Ego’s whole course of planetary unfoldment and the evolutionary circuit which it travels in one incarnation. The Ego begins each life as a little child, gains in experience, and in old age its outgoing pathway recrosses some of the incoming levels. The new-born brings with it a refreshing sense of other-worldliness and is little awake here at first; gradually the child walks along into an untried world — happy, irresponsible, trusting. In the so-called ‘second childhood,’ the Ego’s tide of vital force has turned. With the ebbing of conscious and vital currents, the aging body and brain are less awake here, are more detached, the person is forgetful but living in childlike memories, is careless, dependent. The life force ebbing here is beginning a cycle elsewhere. And the Ego, now ‘going home,’ recrosses

the inner levels by which it came. Senility often means an overlapping cycle of rebirth beyond the veil.

Space forbids discussion of the tuatara (*Hatteria* or *Sphenodon*), an ancient type of lizard with a third eye found in New Zealand (*Lucifer*, 1935). Also, the marsupials which dominate the fauna in Australia represent a transition stage between the monotremes or egg-layers and the placental mammals. What but the overlapping of ancient cycles accounts for these peculiar types? Evidently, they are subject to the same law of retardation which has held back some aborigines, living on this relic of old Lemuria.

Modern biological researches are following the physiological changes of the cell inwardly, so to say, to the borderland of immaterial forces. Occult physiology points to the cosmic intelligence of Nature as the causative agent directing the cell in bringing forth only its own kind of form and function. The invisible, re embodying life-germ of plant and animal even, ages old in its own kind of experience — is beyond the range of the microscope. Experimenters, in changing the natural order of the chromosomes or other elements of the fertilized cell, are only dealing with the natural vehicle or ‘body’ through which intelligence is manifesting. The results, however interesting, will be disordered because artificial, and therefore will confuse, rather than reveal the question of the ‘issues of life’ which are sought.

## CYCLES IMPRINTED ON THE EARTH

There must exist geological and physical cycles as well as intellectual and spiritual; globes and planets, as well as races and nations, are born to grow, progress, decline and — die. Great nations split, scatter into small tribes, lose all remembrance of their integrity, gradually fall into their primitive state and — disappear, one after the other, from the face of the earth. So do great continents. Ceylon must have formed, once upon a time, part of the Indian continent. So, to all appearance, was Spain once joined to Africa, the narrow channel between Gibraltar and the latter continent having been once upon a time dry land. — *The Theosophist*, “A Land of Mystery”

The geologists are well on their way towards finding additional and convincing evidence that this ‘good Earth’ of ours has preserved records of colossal events in her wonderful career as a man-bearing planet. In fact, our earthly home has been the shifting stage upon which the moving drama of humanity’s life has regularly come and gone, over and over again, for millions of years. This planetary stage-setting has been shifted to and fro, back and forth, up and down, but always in keeping with the human plot of the unfolding racial drama for which it was the background. It was an unusually responsive background, too, because the Earth being an entity itself — a magnet, scientists say — there was a constant electromagnetic

play of currents between its electronic matter and the busy creatures who swarmed over its surface. Their bodies were made of its same stuff; and they affected the Earth with what they thought, felt, and did. In return it affected them, so that they moved on together, progressing through every kind of small, intermediate, and great cycle.

The Earth tells its story — not in the language of any one time or people, but in the universal mother-tongue of Nature. Hence, he who understands his own composite nature may see how the career of humanity and of the globe have been keyed to the same great purpose throughout all the changes of Earth-life. Racial and planetary cycles have imprinted upon the Earth geological hallmarks of their common evolutionary periods of change and growth. Therefore, the geologist who interprets his fund of scientific data in the light of the planetary history as given in *The Secret Doctrine* will find evidences of cyclic periods of Mother Earth's growth as plainly recorded as the annual rings in cross-sections of gigantic trees. The detailed record has been kept from age to age by the White Lodge, and sacredly guarded in teachings of the Mystery-Schools. Enough is now given out to answer the moot questions of racial and planetary evolution.

Agassiz said that "The crust of our earth is a great cemetery where the rocks are the tombstones on which the buried dead have written their own epitaphs." This quaintly somber reading of the geological data of humanity's earlier Rounds of experience is enlivened by the Theosophical story of man's reïmbodiments. For the same deathless Egos who began their many Earth-lives in the 'garden of Eden' period have never 'ceased to be.' Even now some of them may be incarnated among the geologists who are studying the imprinted records which Mother Nature kept of their planetary childhood and youth.

There is an interesting analogy between the way the Earth cycled through its early imbodiment and our own physical beginning of each fresh incarnation. In *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, the Mahâtma K.H. writes:

As you may infer by analogy every globe before it reaches its adult period, has to pass through a formation period — also septenary. Law in Nature is uniform and the conception, formation, birth, progress and development of the child differs from those of the globe only in magnitude. The globe has two periods of teething and of capillature — its first rocks which it also sheds to make room for new — and its ferns and mosses before it gets forest. As the atoms in the body change [every] seven years, so does the globe renew its strata every seven cycles.... The correspondence between a mother globe and her child-man may be thus worked out. Both have their seven principles. — pp. 93-4

It is stated in *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 140, that the period of mineral and vegetable development was not less than 300,000,000 years



before man then present in its astral forms, acquired ‘coats of skin.’ At the time that the astral body became physicalized, the separation of the sexes occurred — some 18,000,000 years ago. Then, also, the latent fires of the human mind were lighted, and he began to revolve in experience as a self-conscious human being.

The most active cycle of development of the mineral and vegetable kingdoms occurred during the Earth’s earlier Rounds before man’s astral imbodiment became ‘physicalized.’ At present the combination of man’s mental and material nature is the dominant activity on the Globe, while the lower kingdoms are in a cycle of relative quiescence. The present convulsions of Nature, which to us are so disturbing, like earthquakes, volcanoes, etc., are mild compared with the periods of intense activity of the rocky earth in the Globe’s earlier stages. The Theosophical teaching is that while the bodies of the late Third Root-Race were physicalized enough to have left some fossilized remnants, yet the violent volcanic, seismic, and cataclysmic events that have occurred periodically since that time doubtless have ground any such records to pieces.

Moreover, continents have disappeared beneath the oceans, and new lands have arisen from beneath the waves in many parts of the Globe since its matter solidified from its primeval state. The Earth rounded out one of its continental birthdays, so to say, in the same time period of each one of the great Root-Races. The Globe itself has evolved through its successive cycles corresponding to the rounding out of several Root-Races, of which we are in the Fifth.

Of course, neither the Root-Races nor the continents which they specially inhabited were always sharply defined, any more than our birthdays mark sudden and complete changes in our body or in our character. There was the same intermingling and overlapping of human and continental cycles that is taking place today, although finally great cataclysms changed the surface of the Globe. These convulsions wiped out the degraded portion of a Root-Race. Meanwhile the worthy survivors had found refuge on lands which had been rising from the ocean as slowly as other parts of their former habitats had been sinking for ages.

A haunting memory of these momentous events in racial history is the basis of similar traditions among all peoples. H. P. Blavatsky points out:

That worlds (also Races) are periodically destroyed by fire (volcanoes and earthquakes) and water, in turn and renewed, is a doctrine as old as man. Manu, Hermes, the Chaldees, all antiquity believed in this. Twice already has the face of the globe been changed by fire, and twice by water, since man appeared on it. As land needs rest and renovation, new forces, and a change for its soil, so does water. Thence arises a periodical redistribution of land and water, change of climate, etc., all brought on by geological revolution, and ending in a final change in the axis.... there is a secular change in the

inclination of the earth's axis, and its appointed time is recorded in one of the great Secret Cycles. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, pp. 725-726

Naturally, the intimate relation between human nature and Mother Nature would make so important an event as the beginning and ending of great human cycles coincident with planetary changes. Always and everywhere there is the combined action of the laws of Karma (cause and effect), Reimbodiment, and Cycles. These laws rule not only in human life, but in the life-course of every atom of matter, as well. Thus it is that the whole mass of matter constantly changes at the same time and exhibits alterations analogous to changes through which man the thinker is passing.

These concurrent evolutionary changes of mind and matter are consistent with the fact that all matter is alive and, in some degree, is conscious, though humanity only is self-conscious. Matter is somehow intangibly affected by its association with conditions of human life. For tangible evidence of man's influence upon earth material, contrast the complicated equipment of twentieth century American life with the Native American's simple demand upon Nature's supplies in his day.

These two peoples, with similar bodies to feed, clothe, shelter, and transport, are ages apart in their viewpoints, both of which have been reflected upon the same country. Compare the light impress which the Native American made upon the Earth he occupied, with the same area as it appears today. Now the landscape has been tunneled through, bridged over, deforested here and reclaimed there, soil and even weather modified, oceans joined by an artificial canal, electric and water power harnessed, highways and skyways charted — the whole Nature picture changed to match a different cycle of human thought and feeling.

An interesting hint of the relation of man to Nature is given in *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, p. 395 where, in discussing human magnetic emanations, it is said:

Magnetic currents develop themselves into electricity upon their exit from the body.

In view of this interplay of forces, it is easily seen how a continued and unbalanced flow of certain magnetic human emanations would periodically reach a point of tension with a violent reaction upon the globe itself. The physical effects would result through electrical and other fluids acting with the gases on the solids of the globe. The exploding point, so to say, would coincide with the change of a great cycle, producing violent convulsions in the forms of earthquakes, floods, fire, and ice. William Q. Judge goes into this at some length in *The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 169-170, where he says:

At the intersection of the great cycles dynamic effects follow and alter the surface of the planet by reason of the shifting of the poles of the globe or other convulsions. This is not a theory generally acceptable, but we hold it to be true. Man is a great dynamo, making, storing and throwing out energy, and when masses of men composing a race thus make and distribute energy, there is a resulting dynamic effect on the material of the globe which will be powerful enough to be distinct and cataclysmic. That there have been vast and awful disturbances in the strata of the world is admitted on every hand and now needs no proof; these have been due to earthquakes and ice formation so far as concerns geology; but in respect to animal forms the cyclic law is that certain animal forms now extinct and also certain human ones not known but sometimes suspected will return again in their own cycle;...

Since Mr. Judge wrote this in 1893, evidence of ancient areas formerly covered with ice have been found in tropical sections of Africa and elsewhere, showing that these were once polar regions. Recently a theory of the shifting of the poles was cautiously advanced in a standard scientific publication, without, as yet, receiving favorable comment. {Now commonly accepted by scientists.} The Ancient Teaching is that, in addition to alternations of the warm ocean currents and the hot magnetic currents of the Earth, cataclysmic effects include alterations of the poles which have been inverted several times. Each time there was a complete change of the Earth's surface, alternately affected by fire and water, upon which event is based the Biblical story of the Noachian flood. Noah and all living things in the ark stand for the surviving men and things of the doomed Fourth Root-Race, which were the beginnings of the succeeding Root-Race. This story of *our* Deluge, recorded from the remotest antiquity, is a universal tradition. It is found in beliefs of so varied nations as the Peruvians, Aztecs, Chaldeans, Chinese, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Hindûs etc., as well as among primitive peoples.

Geology proves that the polar regions were once warm and flourishing countries; and Theosophy tells us that man was even then present and embodied. Both Arctic and Antarctic explorers have found fossils of subtropical plants in very high latitudes, coral that flourished on the shores of Greenland, etc., etc. There are many geological footprints of the migrations of the great ice sheets which, as one scientist graphically states, marked "a sliding scale of climatic values on the changing cycles of time."

Modern geology has a fairy-tale fascination for a student of Theosophy because, far from dealing with a dry-as-dust subject, one is studying a planetary entity which has kept a graphic sketch of vast cycles in our wonderful past. The evolutionary plan running through those periods of experience is prophetic of greater unfoldment in the future. Intuitive researchers will find that the phenomena of Earth and of Nature

forces are the natural language which matter speaks in its own behalf, in the universal drama of unfolding, imbodyed, cyclic life.

H. P. Blavatsky's knowledge of cycles enabled her to predict discoveries in the twentieth century that would prove many of the Ancient Teachings. Her explanations of the Rounds and Races and the continents they inhabited did not fit in with the current theories and, in her day, they were then thought to be wholly lacking in tangible proof. Now, however, science is providing conclusive evidence of submerged continents which seem like the original types of which the familiar surfaces of our Earth are smaller copies. Some of this data is furnished by Capt. Claude B. Mayo, U.S.N., who made a survey of the North Pacific from 10 to 50 degrees north latitude, and from the west coast of America to the coast of Asia. This great area was mapped with accuracy and relative speed, by means of a sonic depth finder. Capt. Mayo made a graphic model of a sub-oceanic continent. This hydrographic relief chart is a unique exhibit in the Museum of Natural History in Balboa Park, in San Diego, California. {Unknown if it is still there.}

This model shows, not a sloping oceanic floor, but the contours of a vast continent asleep in its watery bed. Here are such depths of canyons, heights of mountains, and such expanses of plateaus as are unknown above the surface of the seas. Some of the deeps are over six miles to the bottom. There are definite valleys 'marking the course of ancient rivers.' These old river-valleys — many are also being found elsewhere — show that they have been deeply cut by the water through rocks as resistant as granite. There are also volcanoes, still active. In the western part of this submerged continent, is a mammoth mountain ridge. Towering peaks are known as Hawaii, Guam, and other islands. It is surmised that further explorations may show the southern peaks of this great mountain range to be the scattered island groups of the South Seas. The vast scale of everything points to a primeval time in racial history when 'there were giants in those days.'

The very grandeur of this sleeping continent — one of our ancient homelands — lends a new sense of dignity to our human life which has cycled through so wonderfully varied a career. If and when continued soundings map out the rest of the ocean floors, the ethnologists will understand why so many similar customs, beliefs, words, traditions, etc., prevail among the various simple peoples living on Polynesian islands, who have been widely separated for ages. Evidently, they are, in general, rounding out a last lap of a racial cycle which began on an ancient continent, now submerged and forgotten. Hints of the original Lemurian homeland appear in those scattered mountain peaks which punctuate the watery map of the South Pacific — geologic dots symbolic of something deleted from the pages of our recorded history.

Submarine explorations reveal many changes in the elevation of the water line, which seems to be part of the universal ebb and flow of things. It is well known that such changes in elevation are going on now in many parts of the Earth. Some of the American coasts are slowly rising, while others are going down; the Himâlayas and the California mountains are steadily rising, etc., all of which is in keeping with the overlapping and intermingling of great and small cycles, both in the history of Root-Races and of continents. Even today, an overlapping geological cycle dating back to the Third Root-Race includes parts of California, Ceylon, and Australia.

These geologic evidences of conditions which we and Mother Earth have passed through together have something more than a scientific meaning. Looking backward, they give us a mountain-peak perspective of the soul's continued journey. The background of spiritual purpose of the whole picture dignifies and ennobles the pathway of our everyday life. The Past, Present, and Future are the eternal Now for the Inner Self who cycles beyond the limits of Time into limitless Eternity. Each man is told in *The Voice of the Silence*, page 31:

Thy shadows live and vanish; that which in thee shall live for ever, that which in thee *knows*, for it is knowledge, is not of fleeting life; it is the man that was, that is, and will be, for whom the hour shall never strike.

## RECURRING CIVILIZATIONS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

The revolution of the physical world, according to the ancient doctrine, is attended by a like revolution in the world of intellect — the spiritual evolution of the world proceeding in cycles, like the physical one.

Thus we see in history a regular alternation of ebb and flow in the tide of human progress. The great kingdoms and empires of the world, after reaching the culmination of their greatness, descend again, in accordance with the same law by which they ascended; till, having reached the lowest point, humanity reasserts itself and mounts up once more, the height of its attainment being, by this law of ascending progression by cycles, somewhat higher than the point from which it had before descended.

— *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, p. 34

But these cycles — wheels within wheels,... — *do not affect all humanity at one and the same time* — as explained in the *Racial division of Cycles*. Hence, as we see, the difficulty of comprehending and discriminating between them, with regard to their physical and spiritual effects, without having thoroughly mastered their relations with, and action upon the respective positions of nations and races, in their destiny and evolution. This system cannot be comprehended if the spiritual action of these periods — *pre-ordained*, so to say by Karmic law — is separated from their physical course. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, pp. 641-642

A volume might be written about the facts given in the above quotation. Indeed, many volumes would not suffice for the vitally interesting subject. The teachings in *The Secret Doctrine* are not theories or hypothetical half-truths. They are a matter of actual records which have been kept all down the ages by the most highly evolved and noble men {representatives} of the {human} Race. These records are safe in the secret annals of the great White Lodge of Mahâtmas who sent H. P. Blavatsky forth as the messenger to their fellow-men.

In these Ancient Records, the prehistoric part dwarfs all that is known historically about the life-story of man and the globe. In the vast perspective of the whole, all the confusing data of evolution, archaeology, geology, etc., fit into consistent times and places in the picture. A significant example in the picture is the fact that in the working out of human progress, the whole mass of humanity does not reach the same level of attainment at the same time. This accounts for the confusing archaeological finds of high and low grade civilizations in the same geological strata. The Ancient Record also explains the finding of superimposed cities, where the lower levels show that a higher degree of culture preceded later levels of more primitive conditions.

In different parts of the globe, at the same time, there have been cave-dwellers, lake-dwellers, tribes of wandering hunters, pastoral peoples, and flourishing civilizations, all rounding out their separate careers.

It is perfectly natural that certain larger or smaller numbers of the human race should be karmically grouped together according to their general status of evolution. Moreover, contemporary grouping of different grades is the general rule of life. For example, in educating a single generation, are not the students graded from the alphabet level on up to the university degrees? The analogy holds good with members of the whole human family who are revolving in different orbits of racial {life-waves of} childhood, youth, maturity, and old age, all at the same time. In fact, humanity has here and now, as always, its different age groups of evolutionary growth. Each group is rounding out its own rightful 'place in the sun' of mental and spiritual illumination. It is all as natural as that the day should be dawning at one place, while the Sun is at full meridian at another point, is setting at the third, and only faintly reflected by the midnight Moon at the fourth quarter of this one world.

Theosophically, evolution is but another word for cyclic law. The Race does not move *en masse* in an end-on evolution. That fact is evident in watching the same tide of human development which is both ebbing and flowing at different places of the modern world. The contrasting levels would speak for themselves to an observer, now that aviation and radio are bringing the ends of the Earth together. {And now cable and the internet.} Imagine the aviator filming a bird's-eye view of the human conditions which he flew over as he circled round and round Mother Earth. He would

find, between the most contrasted types, living pictures of all the mental, moral, and material strata from primitive to civilization. In fact, if this modern world were suddenly overwhelmed by a cataclysm and preserved *in statu quo*, like Pompeii, the far distant archaeologist would find a buried past as paradoxical as the present excavators do, in looking backward.

Just as our rotating Earth swings us around from one morning to the next, when we carry on further our yesterday's affairs, so the Rounds of whole civilizations come and go, flourish and fade away, again and again. Each Reincarnating Ego is attracted back to Earth karmically at the time, to the place, and in the conditions where it can take the next step on its journey of becoming humanly perfect. How rapidly and how far each one will go in one lifetime depends upon himself. Conditions which are stumbling blocks to a weak character may be used as stepping stones by another of strong will and courage. Each person is reborn with the character which he has made for himself, and each life holds opportunities for bringing out more of his own inner power and knowledge. The karmic law makes no mistakes in grouping individuals together in any stage of any kind of a culture. The greatest and the least of them, as well as the general average of individuals, are more or less closely linked by their personal, national, and racial karma.

The recent unexpected findings in various places of a series of superimposed cities of different grades of culture are evidences of the living ebb and flow of human affairs in one or another country. The puzzling situation points to the naturally cyclic course of our evolution. These 'finds' are the common homesites of men of different degrees of development, and they were separated, layer from layer, by the dust of ages. The question is not only, Who were these forgotten peoples, but Why were they all drawn to the same place to settle? It may be that it was a favorable site for the general interests of a community. Possibly, numbers of them reincarnated in several strata of the series. Most likely, each level was a lesser Round in some larger cycle of a purpose working in the whole series. In that case, the first city would leave behind it something of its influence which, unconsciously, attracted after-coming men, collectively, to settle there. Thinking man leaves his impression on something more than the material Earth. The vital impress of his own inner life of thought and feeling is reflected in the surrounding Astral Light which retains all these pictures. Thus, besides, the tangible relics which mark the levels of recurring habitations, the inhabitants must have impressed the locality with a certain psychomagnetic quality which had an intangible attraction for other minds and hearts.

Much has been done in discovering these old sites since H. P. Blavatsky wrote of them in 1888:

Tradition asserts, and archaeology accepts the truth of the legend that there is more than one city now flourishing in India, which is built on several other cities, making thus a subterranean city of six or seven stories high. Delhi is one of them; Allahabad another — examples of this being found even in Europe; *e.g.*, in Florence, which is built on several defunct Etruscan and other cities. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, pp. 220-221

Some of these buried cities are helping us to realize that much which has stood for traditional events and mythical figures was founded on actual history of an unrecorded past. For instance, it is reported that the oft-quoted Hill of Hissarlik where Troy stood is now revealing the site of the Homeric city, “the seventh from the bottom of a stack of nine cities that comprise the hill.”

The same author adds that there are ancient cities in the western world of the Americas which have not even a legendary history. She points out that

There, all along the coast of Peru, all over the Isthmus and North America, in the canyons of the Cordilleras, in the impassable gorges of the Andes, and, especially, beyond the valley of Mexico, lie, ruined and desolate, hundreds of once mighty cities, lost to the memory of men, and having themselves lost even a name.... As regards prehistoric buildings, both Peru and Mexico are rivals of Egypt. Equaling the latter in the immensity of her cyclopean structures, Peru surpasses her in their number;... Works of public utility, such as walls, fortifications, terraces, water-courses, aqueducts, bridges, temples, burial-grounds, whole cities and exquisitely paved roads, hundreds of miles in length, stretch in an unbroken line, almost covering the land as with a net.... Of the long generations of peoples who built them, history knows nothing, and even tradition is silent.... Whole forests have grown out of the cities’ broken hearts, and, with a few exceptions, everything is in ruin. But one may judge of what once was by that which yet remains.

— *The Theosophist*, “A Land of Mystery”

There is a pathos in that thought of the “cities’ broken hearts,” where once upon a time the vital currents of human life pulsated to and fro, moving with the ebb and flow of hopes and fears, aspirations and desires, joys and sorrows, even like our own. Archaeology is no dry-as-dust study when we begin to read the continued story of human Earth-life. These excavated homes and temples and battlefields — if we but knew it — are scattered chapters of the history of the past — of our own past.

Human nature ever plays the same dual role in the drama of a god living in an animal body. The usual archaeological ‘finds’ of both altars and weapons everywhere are symbols of the same contrasting impulses that move us today in our forms of worship and of conflict. Sometimes, merely the fragments of prehistoric pottery excavated from old kitchen middens give us glimpses of an artistic side to an unknown people’s life.



Thus art and archaeology are allied in passing on some evidence of our heritage of that strain of creative beauty which runs in the veins of the human family. How could many of us who are untaught in the arts so often thrill with the harmony expressed in color, or line, or sound, if we had not known and felt the like before? Why should our busy lives ever seem to be, at times, a mere round of drab and aimless days, if our inner Self had never revolved in some past period of a broader and brighter existence? Our innate ideals are often the spiritual aroma of rounds of experience which the real Self remembers. The new brain that is born with each recurring incarnation, cannot remember all the details of its own life-term. But the enduring Soul harvests and stores all that is best in every Round. There is both truth and poetry in Emerson's words:

What is excellent,  
As God lives is permanent;  
Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain;  
Heart's love will meet thee again.

A subject of perennial interest is the location of the cradleland of humanity. Of course, the continents of the first four Root-Races were gone, and new lands were ready when the time was ripe for the present Fifth Root-Race of evolving Egos to begin its wheeling. The scientific idea that civilization originated where now stretch the great plateaus of Central Asia, and the theological tradition of the Garden of Eden, both point to the cradleland of our Fifth Root-Race. The Ancient Records tell of a vast Central Asian homeland, with two widely separated epochs of racial history. The Fifth Root-Race, in germ, dates far back to some Egos then among Atlantean tribes. This early stock left the continent of the powerful sorcerers and migrated in serial surges, under spiritual guidance, to the then rising lands of Central Asia, now the region of the Gobi desert. Then, this vast continental tract was an aggregate of beautiful, fertile lands, with a mild and equable climate, and with outlying islands and countries in the surrounding seas. H.P.B. speaks of an inland sea, consecrated and called "the Abyss of Learning" (*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 502). The sacred records tell of the wonderful civilizations there which sprang up and flourished for ages.

Then, in the revolving cycles of time, the land rose, the seas receded, the fertile land turned barren, and the climate became impossible. The people migrated, in turn, to newly risen lands, and spread out to the west, the east, and the south. This diffusion of the old culture into new lands went on for thousands upon thousands of years. In time, knowledge of those early Asian civilizations receded into a far-off past, until even their history became legendary. The migrants were the people who far later became the Chinese, the Tartars, the Hindûs, the Assyrians, the

Babylonians, the Persian, the Greeks, the Romans, the Celts, and the Germanic and Scandinavian tribes.

The present archaeological urge to search these dim corridors of the past is timed with the new cycle of spiritual awakening, and of recovery of sacred knowledge of the sublime purpose that runs through unnumbered incarnations. Dr. de Purucker, in an interesting article from which the above data are culled, says:

Some day I believe that our archaeologists and other scientists, delving in the wind-swept deserts, sandy, arid plains of Turkestan, Persia, Baluchistan, will uncover remains showing that there was at least a civilization the equal of anything we have today....

There was a civilization, some few thousand years before the earliest history that we know about Greece and Crete and Asia Minor, in what is now the arid lands of Persia, that would have put to shame anything that ancient Greece or Rome or Egypt or Babylon could show — a civilization gentler, greater even than ours. That was the mother-land of the Greek and Roman and Italiot peoples....

Central Asia is not only the cradle of civilization of our Fifth Root-Race, but our motherland. To it, in the earliest beginnings when the Fifth Root-Race began to be itself as a stock separate from Atlantis, to it the earliest Fifth Race colonists went and settled there. It was then a land rising above the waters and from its lofty plains and plateau — through age after age, as age succeeded age — the germinal new races tried to work off the deviltry of their own Atlantean forefathers now rushing to their doom. Protected of karma, protected by the Lodge, the early Fifth lived there. Sub-race succeeded sub-race, as they slowly climbed from innocence to knowledge and from knowledge to a modicum of wisdom — and its abuses, until now we have reached our Kali Yuga and are beginning to pay. When will men learn that the only road to happiness and peace, to prosperity and increase in possessions, both spiritual and material, is obedience to the spiritual and moral law, and service.... Selfishness defeats its own ends.

— *The Theosophical Forum*, June, 1937

These glancing headlights on a wonderful past in Central Asia appeal to our intuition as events belonging to our individual history. The average You and I have been Egos in this human life-wave ‘from the beginning.’ Looking back, one’s mental horizon expands with thought of the endless revolving of wheels within wheels of our past lives. The many incarnations have been mere epicycles along the great spiral of this Fifth Root-Race which is still in its prime. Our imagination pictures this Asian focus of civilizations broadcasting its human life and light by way of those migrant groups whose cultures evolved into the characteristic types of different nations. In time, there must have been — must still be — recurring points of contact between the Egos who there took separating paths for one or many lives.

Consistent with the karmic repetition of old contacts would be the historical welter of converging influences during the decline of the Roman Empire. At that period, the fixed forms of belief and custom became fluidic and unsettled. The strange mixture of thought and character was, in its origin, Indian, Druidic, Germanic, Syrian, Persian, and from other strains, all typical expressions of some national trend of the human mind and emotions. Today, America is another 'melting-pot' of nationalities. Are not the age-old contacts being renewed again — this time with peculiar responsibility to profit by past mistakes, and to build more wisely for the common good? Especially in the New World, life in the precocious generations is fluidic, restless, dynamic, seeking — sensitive to impulses that go far, right or wrong.

Because present world conditions were foreseen, provision was made for spreading abroad such a light of liberating truth that, in the signs of the times, we may read of the real issues being worked out. The great White Lodge which sent guides to lead our young Race from doomed Atlantis to the Asian homelands, sent H. P. Blavatsky with the Ancient Knowledge by which we must 'find our way out' of our selfish mistakes. Our humanity has outgrown its irresponsible infancy, and it must round this turn of the cycle with self-conscious will and the right motives.

It was part of the great plan for Universal Oneness that the fresh land of the New World was to be the birthplace of the Theosophical Society. It was not chance that, a century earlier, the obverse side of the United States seal was subscribed: "*Annuït coeptis. Novus ordo seclorum.*" Then it was that a New Order of Ages was started on its grand Round upon the upward arc. It was part of the end-of-the-century work for humanity that is brought out from 'behind the scenes.' Timely efforts were also being made in Europe to warn those in power of impending disaster. The Messengers tried to awaken the many who pursued secret methods of gaining wealth and power and long life, that the real 'philosopher's stone' was the faculty within our own spiritual nature. But the warnings, and the noble and extraordinary work of Cagliostro, Mesmer, and Saint-Germain were understood only by 'the few.'

It is most significant that the *outer work* of the Great Lodge for the end of the nineteenth century has been carried over in the Theosophical Movement into the twentieth century. It is the first time since the fourteenth century that 'light from the East' has grown brighter and stronger in the West. It is being recognized by ever larger numbers of those who are willing to go forward. We find hints of the larger issues running deep in the changing current of affairs. For instance:

... Occult philosophy teaches that even now, under our very eyes, the new Race and Races are preparing to be formed, and that it is in America that the transformation will take place, and has already silently commenced.

Pure Anglo-Saxons hardly three hundred years ago, the Americans of the United States have already become a nation apart, and, owing to a strong admixture of various nationalities and inter-marriage, almost a race *sui generis*, not only mentally, but also physically....

Thus the Americans have become in only three centuries, a “primary race,” *pro tem.*, before becoming a race apart, and strongly separated from all other now existing races. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 444

## LANGUAGE CYCLES

... As languages have their cyclic evolution, their childhood, purity, growth, *fall into matter*, admixture with other languages, maturity, decay and finally death, so the primitive speech of the most civilized Atlantean races — that language, which is referred to as “Rākshasi Bhasa,” in old Sanskrit works — decayed and almost died out. While the “cream” of the Fourth Race gravitated more and more toward the apex of physical and intellectual evolution, thus leaving as an heirloom to the nascent Fifth (the Âryan) Race the inflectional highly developed languages, the agglutinative decayed and remained as a fragmentary fossil idiom, scattered now, and nearly limited to the aboriginal tribes of America. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 199

Hearing was the first of humanity’s five senses to be developed, and language was destined to play its important part in the recurring ‘events’ of unfolding life on Earth. As language is coeval with reason, the vocal sounds made by the earlier Root-Races, before solar deities had lighted their fires of Mind, were more copies of Nature sounds than articulate speech. However, the last sub-races of the Third Root-Race, under their divine instructors did build cities and begin civilizations while they were still limited to monosyllabic speech.

Naturally, the vocal medium of expressing human thought and feeling evolved *pari passu* with the cyclic expansion of consciousness. Thus, as human beings gradually rounded out more and more of their human nature, little by little, they gained the means of finding a wider range of vocal expression. By the time of the late Fourth Root-Race, there had been developed the first languages of inflectional speech. These languages, adopted by the overlapping early Fifth Root-Race, became the root of the Sanskrit. The Devanâgarî script was invented by the Kabiri. (See *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 364.)

H. P. Blavatsky says of her great work, *The Secret Doctrine*, that, in writing it,

The attempt to render in a European tongue the grand panorama of the ever periodically recurring Law — impressed upon the plastic minds of the first races endowed with Consciousness by those who reflected the same from the Universal Mind — is daring, for no human language, save the

Sanskrit — which is that *of the Gods* — can do so with any degree of adequacy. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 269

The ancient origin of Sanskrit is given in an article entitled “Was Writing Known Before Pânini?” and is found in *Five Years of Theosophy* (pp. 419-20, ed. 1885). This article, written by “A Chela,” explains that classical Sanskrit was only restored, if somewhat perfected, by the celebrated grammarian Pânini, who did not create it. It had existed throughout cycles and would pass through others still. The author continues:

Every one sees — cannot fail to see and to know — that for a language so old and so perfect as the Sanskrit to have survived alone, among all languages, it must have had its cycles of perfection and its cycles of degeneration. And, if one had any intuition, he might have seen that what they call a “dead language” being an anomaly, a useless thing in Nature, it would not have survived, even as a “dead” tongue, had it not its special purpose in the reign of immutable cyclic laws; and that Sanskrit, which came to be nearly lost to the world, is now slowly spreading in Europe, and will one day have the extension it had thousands upon thousands of years back — that of a *universal language*. The same as to the Greek and the Latin: there will be a time when the Greek of Aeschylus (and more perfect still in its future form) will be spoken by all in Southern Europe, while Sanskrit will be resting in its periodical *pralaya*; and the Attic will be followed later by the Latin of Virgil.

It is in keeping with the above data that the sacred language should have been preserved, and should have begun to reappear with the Ancient Wisdom which was brought from the introspective and philosophical East. When the Theosophical Society was founded in 1875, the teachings were so new to the matter-of-fact West that often no suitable English words could express them. It came about, in explaining finer shades of meaning or more universal concepts, that Sanskrit terms crept into the literature and lectures. For instance, the term ‘*karma*,’ (also known as ‘*karman*,’ though less used) meaning ‘action,’ ‘consequences,’ or ‘cause and effect,’ soon became common, especially as applying to human life. This one word covered the meaning of the Bible phrase that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Moreover, the logical process of such harvesting was explained by the periodical series of reincarnations — though the teaching of Cycles was less emphasized then than it is now when it is being recognized both in science and philosophy. At first, however, the strange words were sometimes objected to by critics like the reporter to whom W. Q. Judge replied prophetically that

the Sanskrit language will one day be again the language used by man upon this earth, first in science and metaphysics, and later on in common life. Even

in the lifetime of the *Sun's* witty writer, he will see the terms now preserved in that noblest of languages creeping into the literature and the press of the day, cropping up in reviews, appearing in various books and treatises.... So this new language... will be one which is scientific in all that makes a language, and has been enriched by ages of study of metaphysics and the true science. — *The Path*, Vol. I, p. 58

Mr. Judge's confidence in the adoption of Sanskrit terms by the West is already justified. Not only do they appear in the press and current literature, but university courses in Sanskrit find increasing enrollments. This is significant of something more than getting mere literary 'light from the East.' It shows a growing need of terms for voicing larger ideals and deeper feelings of people who are heart-hungry for truth and light. These seekers are such as will form the nucleus of a sub-race of the new cycle with its undercurrent of natural mysticism awakening their own muted sense of an inner reality.

The revivifying of this ancient tongue makes for a better understanding between the thinking world of the mystical, introspective East and that of the practical, intellectual West. The two have much of value to share with each other and reap mutual benefit thereby. It was H. P. Blavatsky's understanding of the inner treasures of truth possessed by India's learned pundits, which gave her and her work the support of some of their best native scholars and cultured citizens. She early helped to found schools for the Indian children, in which Sanskrit was taught — an innovation at the time. This work, recorded in early numbers of her *Theosophist*, is significant of her methods in founding a nucleus for a Universal Oneness. Instead of bringing a new religion or an alien philosophy to different peoples, her appeal to each was to awaken them to the hidden, liberating truths in their own teachings. The vibrations of her keynote of international understanding have been kept alive by her students ever since. This keynote rings stronger and clearer than ever today — a saving minority of harmonious vibrations in a chaotic world.

Words are living things. A language reflects the quality of the time, of the events, and of the character of the people, when and where it circulates as the medium of mental and emotional exchange. An everyday instance is noted in the way the restless, vivid, intensive strain in modern life is finding typical expression in newly-coined words and catch-phrases. Travelers from abroad note the quick coinage of so-called 'Americanisms' which keep pace with new elements entering into the flowing current of daily life in the western republic. Some of the hybrid terms are so apt as to find a place, finally, in standard dictionaries.

Language is one of the valued keys of the ethnologists. What puzzles some of them who hold to an end-on evolution for humanity, is to find many barbarous and savage peoples who speak, even imperfectly, languages which are elaborate in both vocabulary and syntax. If these

people were nearer a supposed ape-ancestry than Europeans, their language should be correspondingly crude and simple. However, this apparent contradiction proves to be a paradox which is explained by the Law of Cycles. These cases are good evidence of the spiral evolutionary course pursued through great Rounds and Races. These peoples are moving on the last turn of a wheel of untold antiquity.

It is noted that the Australian natives, for example, “use a complicated grammar with three genders.” Presumably, these Egos now incarnating in a disappearing Race are finishing the final curves of a downward cycle dating back to old Lemuria of which Australia is a remnant. The Karmic Law will begin their next round of Earth-life on the upward arc of another cycle of experience. Always, and for all, there is ‘another chance’ in the mercy of the just Karmic Law of adjustments. Each man is destined to attain final perfection; and Nature works with the Universal Plan to make the goal attained *self-consciously*.

These echoes of former greatness, point to the long ages which these Egos have spent in fulfilling the law of sowing and reaping. For us, too, they are words of warning. They are tragic evidence of the essential nature of Ethics in the fabric of the Universe. Right and wrong are not human inventions, but are part of the universal law of balance and harmony. The law of retardation slows the wheel of our progress when we break the moral law of our own being. Likewise, Nature, on her part, calls a halt by means of sickness — or even death — when we persistently break her laws of health. When she halts us with sickness where we are on the wrong course, the pain and limitation are her stop signals, lest a worse thing befall us.

An ethical sidelight on the hints of culture in the language of certain peoples, is found in *The Esoteric Tradition*. On page 403, Dr. G. de Purucker says:

The point in illustration here is not that the savage or barbarian having these terms in his language understands them, but that he does *not* understand them, since they are words or names retained from pre-history in his language, and which in his sight are either entirely inexplicable or are words used in tribal mystical ceremonies, or in tribal initiations, or in their mythology as signifying their divinities, or the powers or tools or instruments of the gods. The words remain, but their real significance has been utterly forgotten.

It is, however, to be remembered that such linguistic fossils are of extremely uncommon occurrence when dealing with things or events of a purely physical or material character; but such fossils are very numerous when dealing with more abstract things, such as pertain to philosophy, religion, mysticism, and the like. The reason is that words dealing with physical things are more likely to die and pass out of currency almost with the passing of the things themselves when no longer in use; whereas words of religion or mysticism remain.

These unfortunate fellow-beings provide unwitting evidence that something other than man's brain-mind does remember his past lives. No one, savage or other, can erase his experience in 'self-becoming' from the astral record on the Screen of Time. Nor can any one 'unbecome' what he has made himself to be. A crude or debased imagination alone could neither envision nor find words for the haunting presence of a mystic reality. The cultural echoes in the degraded life of these peoples hark back to their past experience both in cycles of growth in true wisdom and in periods given over to evil magic. In some degree, do we not all vaguely feel, at times, a sense of having attained to better and to worse things than belong to this life? Emerson points out in his essay on *History* that

Man is explicable by nothing less than all his history.

### SPIRAL PATHWAYS AMONG THE STARS

*"The Sun is the heart of the Solar World (System) and its brain is hidden behind the (visible) sun. From thence, sensation is radiated into every nerve-center of the great body, and the waves of the life-essence flow into each artery and vein.... The planets are its limbs and pulses...."*

... there is a regular circulation of the vital fluid throughout our system, of which the Sun is the heart — the same as the circulation of the blood in the human body — during the manvantaric solar period, or life; the Sun contracting as rhythmically at every return of it, as the human heart does.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 541

The italicized part of the above quotation is from the Archaic Records, here interpreted by commentaries 'compiled by generations of adepts.' As *The Secret Doctrine* is based upon these Records, the striking analogy between the solar and the human heart is presented therein as a logical part of the one universal evolution. When the book was published some seven years before the discovery of x-rays, H. P. Blavatsky predicted that if the living and throbbing heart could be made luminous and visible, one would see the sunspot phenomenon repeated every second. Today, the growing interest in, and the deep study of sunspots and of the electromagnetic and other influences of the celestial spheres, open the way for still other of the Ancient Teachings which relate man to universal Nature.

Our solar system is a big cosmic family with its Sun and Moon, and the older and younger planets, comets, nebulae, etc., visible and invisible. Each shining orb imbodyes an intelligent being, a deity of some grade, rounding out its own cycle of suitable experience and growth. Our Earth also imbodyes a planetary entity. Humanity, too, has its rightful place in the solar family, for



the “Serpents of Wisdom” have preserved their records well, and the history of the human evolution *is* traced in heaven as it is traced on underground walls. Humanity and the *stars* are bound together indissolubly, because of the *intelligences* that rule the latter.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 352

These ‘Serpents of Wisdom’ are the few most highly evolved spiritual and intellectual individuals of each succeeding Round and Race. Through initiation in the Mystery-Schools, they learned to verify the inner teachings about Man and the Universe. The Divine Instructors of early humanity had directed men’s minds to the invention of all the arts and sciences through which the creative impulse again comes forth and operates in recurring civilizations. These teachings included laws and legislation, architecture, metallurgy, agriculture, the medical use of plants, various modes of magic, astronomy, etc. Echoes of all these things have remained in the Earth’s inner atmosphere and are the source of the ‘innate ideas’ that haunt men’s minds. Each Ego must round this part of the cycle of constructive knowledge by becoming aware of it within himself. We are reminded that

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun.

— Eccles., i. 9

Every man has a background of infinity and a limitless future. To have reached the human stage means that we were all in that majestic procession which started with our Earth’s life-cycle. Then it was that “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Among those rejoicing at the birth of this infant humanity were our spiritual ancestors who had perfected their human cycle long, long ages before. They are aware of a karmic relation to us which calls for their help in following them on the destined way.

The unity of Man and Nature is given voice in “Locksley Hall” where Tennyson says:

Yet I doubt not thro’ the ages one increasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widen’d with the process of the suns.

In keeping with the Earth’s cycling onward, astronomers’ advance in knowledge and technique has enabled them to reach out into new regions of space. They are finding many extra-galactic systems all evidently revolving and evolving on their own pathways as we are on ours. This is added evidence of intelligent direction and common purpose everywhere. The very thought of it broadens the mind that can see here the working of universal law. Moreover, the harmonious and orderly interrelations of the

countless orbs point to the essential nature of cooperation and Ethics in the Universe itself.

The paths of the celestial bodies are spiral curves of the utmost complexity. Moreover, as our Sun moves around its orbit, it brings its whole family of revolving globes into new regions of space where they have never been before. Nor will they be there again. New conditions of mind and of matter, and of their influences, are met and intermingle with those of the receding past.

There is the cycle of 25,920 years during which the solar family travels around the zodiac of which each sign has a different influence upon the Earth and upon us. Speaking of this in 1887, H. P. Blavatsky said that when, in a few years, we entered the sign of Aquarius, “psychologists will have some extra work to do, and the psychic idiosyncrasies of humanity will enter on a great change” (*Lucifer*, Vol. I, p. 174). Her words are being fulfilled in the increase of mental and nervous diseases, the craze for psychism, the numbers of ‘sensitives’ and mediumistic types, phenomenal occurrences, etc. These conditions were far more rare fifty years ago.

When the twentieth century opened, the thought world was dominated by the opposing forces of a scientific materialism and those of an illogical theology. Neither was prepared to meet the problems of the unfolding nature of composite man who is essentially linked with all the Universe. Nor did both together make provision to meet the psychological phase of evolving humanity which is manifesting in the disorders now confronting physicians, statesmen, publicists, and, indeed, individuals and nations generally. In short, the selfish, egocentric view of men and nations today is logically and morally on a par with the mediaeval belief in a flat Earth as the center of attendant globes. The modern world sadly needs the practical help of the mysticism of the ancients. Our statesmen might change the course of history by understanding the deeper causes of recurring events. Such knowledge is as scientific as the foretelling of a coming comet or a star. For instance, looking back to the signs of the times in 1888, we read:

It is simply knowledge and mathematically correct computations which enable the WISE MEN OF THE EAST to foretell, for instance, that England is on the eve of such or another catastrophe; France, nearing such a point of her cycle, and Europe in general threatened with, or rather, on the eve of, a cataclysm, which her own cycle of racial *Karma* has led her to.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 646

The Masters of Wisdom do not meddle with politics. Their warning meant what is so slowly dawning on the disordered world. Its rapid progress having interwoven and intermingled its every material and mental interest, it can go no farther save with brotherly regard for humanity’s common welfare. The Masters, vitally alive to world conditions and to

sidereal influences, know the zodiacal periods calling for help. Of this we read:

This cycle of 2160 years is called the Messianic Cycle — a modern phrase due to the work of the Theosophical Society — because it is the recurrent time-period at the opening or closing of which a new and somewhat especial spiritual and intellectual effort is made and work undertaken by the Great Brotherhood publicly in the world; and it may as well be frankly stated that H. P. Blavatsky was a Messenger opening such a Messianic Cycle, and that a previous Messianic Cycle ended — or a new one began — some 2160 years ago, more or less, with the life and work of the Avatâra whom the West knows under the name of Jesus the Christ.

— *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 1058

This linking of the sidereal cycles with humanity was, with the Ancients, the esoteric or sacred part of astronomy. With them, Astrology was a science as infallible as Astronomy, and still is for its interpreters *who are equally infallible*. The secret records go back to those of the great Atlantean astronomer, Asuramaya. It is said that the Atlantean records cannot err, as they were compiled under the guidance of early man's Divine Instructors in astronomy. However, what has survived to our time, and is even publicly known, is but a fragment of the vast and noble science of ancient astrology. The Ancients considered the position and influence of all the heavenly orbs as the bodies of intelligent entities. This knowledge, manifestly, is beyond the attainment even of the many intelligent people who feel the appeal of the starry spaces and are looking there for more light on life here.

The modern horoscope, even if correct in some things, may be more of a detriment than a help. The person who depends upon its decrees as inevitable, is less inclined to use his spiritual will to meet and work through his difficulties impersonally. To regard unfavorable issues merely by their conflict with our personal desires and plans is to lose the benefit of the karmic experience as a means of gaining more self-knowledge and strength of character. We cannot change our past sowing of unhappy causes; but how we face and deal with the harvest of effects *is* in our power. "The stars impel but do not compel."

The Ancients knew how to regulate human life by the reckonings of the cosmic clock of Nature which is infallible.

That clock is the heavenly vault; and the sun, the moon, the seven planets (as the ancients reckoned them), and the stars, are the "hands" marking time cycles. — *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 206

All the esoteric anniversaries, like the four Sacred Seasons — the winter and summer solstices, and the spring and autumn equinoxes —

were based upon the science of relating the destiny of humanity to the timing of the celestial orbs. Man is a son of the spiritual Sun, and his body and all his life on Earth are sustained by solar vitality. Man is an embryo divinity, even as the divinities were once men in their aeonic evolutionary cycle of 'self-becoming.' The quickening spirit ensouls alike every manifesting form of matter from the least to the greatest on the One Grand Round.

From center to circumference, from the imperceptible vesicle to the uttermost conceivable bounds of the Kosmos, those glorious thinkers, the Occultists, trace cycle merging into cycle, containing and contained in an endless series. The embryo evolving in its pre-natal sphere, the individual in his family, the family in the state, the state in humanity, the Earth in our system, that system in its central universe, the universe in the Kosmos, and the Kosmos in the ONE CAUSE... thus runs *their* philosophy of evolution,...

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 189

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Doctrine of Cycles, as presented in this Manual for inquirers, is by no means complete. Further Theosophical study based upon the different aspects of the subject, will repay specialists in scientific and in other lines of research. For this doctrine imbodies a scientific, philosophic, and religious basis for a comprehensive philosophy of Life itself. And the deeper one goes in any and in all lines, the more evident becomes the mystic and vital unity between Man and great Nature. Thus, in the periodic recurrence of man's imbodiments, with such harvesting of its past conditions as may free the personal field for wiser sowing, the human soul evolves its innate powers, with the natural purpose of becoming more than merely human. All the currents of life — cosmic and terrestrial — are flowing towards realms of greater light and greater perfection of forms, of more intelligent ideas and of more spiritual ideals.

Each man as a self-conscious unit is in his own place in the general stream of the human Race which is moving on at an average speed to fulfill its planetary career during the seven ages of the Earth's life. However, each one is free to train himself to run ahead of the mean average pace. The results of such self-directed efforts appear among us, in different degrees, as superior individuals, geniuses, Masters, and Saviors. Somewhere, in our future, we shall reach the racial 'moment of choice,' the outcome of which will decide whether each will go on and complete the great planetary round on the Ascending Arc. Those who are unprepared to keep up with any grade of the trained climbers, will fall behind, stranded on some sandbank of Time. There they must await another Manvantara to continue their evolution with the slow unfolding of a new Race. The point is, that the Divine impetus manifesting throughout the Cosmos is keyed to progress;

each individual, being an integral part of the Universe, must go with it, however much he delays and thereby wrongs himself. The 'cycle of necessity' is inevitable. Thus, the origin of ethics is not a man-made ruling, but it is a reality woven into the very fabric of the Universe.

In the justice of the natural law the final 'moment of choice' is but the summing up and balancing of the daily choice of right and wrong through many lives of using free-will as a self-conscious being. At present, man is the human battlefield of his own dual mind which is fighting for selfish, personal ambitions and desires on the one hand, and for spiritual thought and impersonal feeling on the other. We all have our pet weaknesses which are so unworthy of our best traits. The general trend of our dual thoughts and impulses seems to play upon our minds and feelings automatically, because each one is a cyclic repetition of its own kind. They are the elements of our self-made character. Each one of them is vitalized with our own life force, and it gains strength each time it returns and is given play. If our thoughts and feelings are petty and selfish, their quality of jealousy, envy, anger, hatred, suspicion, deceit, etc., colors our reaction to both new and old associations and conditions. We instinctively express our character.

If we have vitalized the opposite traits of generosity, kindness, sympathy, love, trust, aspiration, sincerity, and the like, these also return to us on their ennobling rounds. Our dual impulses both use the brain-mind to 'make out a case' for right and wrong in the inner struggles between conscience and desire. When we decide aright, our lower nature loses the strength that is gained by our better side. In recognizing this power of creating a noble character, step by step, we find opportunities of winning point by point in meeting the routine affairs of daily life. These seemingly small victories unite their force and make us equal to the larger issues which try our souls severely. Even the failure to win at times may count as success, for the person who keeps on trying builds up his moral strength, and diffuses something helpful into the very air around him.

Every day is a new beginning for all, no matter what the past has been. To unfold, to advance, to 'become' is the natural and vital impulse of everything and every being. The most dreary and difficult life outwardly, may be a cycle of opportunity for the inner Self to show its heroic courage and impersonal power.

The Soul knows only the Soul; the web of events is the flowing robe in which she is clothed. — *Emerson*



# 9

## **Hierarchies**

The Ladder of Life

Gertrude W. Van Pelt, MD

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## INTRODUCTORY

The word Hierarchies has a very limited application in the English language, being confined almost entirely to church organization. The dictionary gives as the first meaning — a body of ecclesiastical rulers, and only in the third definition suggests a wider application, such as that of kingdoms, classes, orders, families, genera, and species. Practically, the word is of ecclesiastical association. The reason for this is no doubt due to the fact that during the dark ages it was only in the ancient Mystery-Schools that the real teaching of Hierarchies was given, as the fundamental, universal scheme of Nature. These secret schools dealt with the problems of life and death, and were known as the highest court of authority. But as they declined, due to the prevailing social conditions, and were finally closed in the sixth century, certain teachings in a limited and restricted form remained in the public mind associated with the religions, which were really the degraded shadows of the Mystery-Schools.

During the early centuries of this era, several religions were contending for general acceptance. When finally the Christians gained supremacy, their religion was naturally colored with the old beliefs and forms familiar to and loved by many of the people. The influence of the Stoics, the Neo-Pythagoreans, and Neo-Platonists was evident, but especially the last named left its mark. This was largely due to certain writings which appeared in the fifth or sixth century purporting to have been written by Dionysius the Areopagite — a man who, according to the Christian legend, was one of the first converts of Paul when he preached on Mars Hill in Athens. The real author was evidently a man of that later time who was in sympathy with the Neo-Platonists' teachings, but who for some reason, possibly social or financial, worked under the banner of the dominant Church. At heart he was a Greek pagan, and perhaps wishing to save Christianity from pure exotericism and to illuminate it, he seems to have adopted a method of introducing some of the old teachings in a modified form, which would influence the people in their favor. His effort was reinforced through the influence of schools of learning active at that time in Alexandria, the great center of Hellenistic culture. However this may be, these writings profoundly influenced the Christian Church about the fifth or sixth century, and to this day are found among the canonical works. Among them was a treatise on the Divine Hierarchies, which taught that God, being infinite, worked through lesser divinities of graded development, each lower being derived from the one above it, thus following in a general way the Kabbala and the Neo-Platonists — only instead of using their terms, he adopted names more congenial to Christian thought. These terms were: God, as the Summit; then Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, forming the first triad; then Dominations, Virtues, Powers, as the second triad; and Principalities, Archangels, Angels, as the



third triad; making ten stages or grades. And this, in substance, is the fifth definition in the dictionary.

The essence of the meaning of this teaching has long since passed out of the Christian religion, and probably was clearly grasped only in the very early years of our era by a relatively limited number of people. Esoterically the term has a special significance which we will try to develop. Exoterically it applies to any organized combination held together by a head, having under him a graded series of subordinates, each of them being responsible to the one directly above him. The army of a nation is an excellent example of a hierarchy, being organized generally in corps, divisions, brigades, regiments, battalions, companies, and other units, on a descending scale.

Human life even on this physical plane is only possible when it is organized after this fashion. Every country has its government, and whatever subordinate divisions of the country may exist, such as states, counties, or what not, all have their rulers and under-rulers. Within these are the cities, with a head manager controlling departments which are under the authority of one of still lower rank. Every business enterprise is carried on in a similar manner. Human activities cannot function otherwise, and there is peace, happiness, and harmony to the degree that the state or any other body is able to preserve these various relationships without friction. On the other hand, there is insecurity, confusion, unrest, social disease, exactly in proportion as the links weaken or become ineffective. In any combination or group of people there must be a central authority which has the confidence and respect of the units if life is to proceed normally. Let this weaken or cease to be present and, in the case of a country, the horror of a revolution is imminent. The climax of terror comes when human passions are let loose in a mob.

All these facts are so common that their deep significance is overlooked. Human beings direct their own lives along such grooves because they cannot do otherwise. Their minds are part of Kosmic mind and they must follow Nature's pattern or be torn to pieces. This is nothing which has to be learned any more than babes have to learn to breathe. Primitive people follow and keep to the pattern more perfectly than do their so-called civilized brothers. The necessity for organization is innate.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS FROM NATURE

We see the same thing in the lower kingdoms, especially developed in bees and ants. The bees have their queen with her enormous family of sons or drones and daughters or workers. The latter are divided further into nurses for the young, maids-of-honor to the queen, builders, gatherers of pollen and of nectar for honey-making, and still another group to air and heat or cool the hive, etc. All know and fulfill their various duties. Some

are watchers at the door to guide the timid young ones to their hive and to guard the door from enemies. All these together form a harmonious community working under the Great Law.

The ants represent another organized society. This principle of organization is universal throughout the kingdoms. Botanists see plainly the division of plants into families. Mineralogists see the mathematical precision of Nature in the marvelous formation of crystals. But in the ant and bee families we can see Nature's plan actually at work. In some ways the ants are even more wonderful than the bees. In the Alleghany Mountains there are 1700 ant mounds covering a space of fifty acres and they are all of one commonwealth. There is a similar division of labor as in the case of the bees: major and minor workers, sentinels for hostile approach, masons, builders, foragers, nurses, queen's bodyguard, and even harvesters and gardeners. These duties are mostly interchangeable, rather more so than in the bee communities. But in the case of the termites, perhaps the most wonderfully organized of all insect communities, there is a very definite division of duties and even a very great modification of the bodily structure into several classes. Yet there is never confusion, never disturbance unless an enemy appears in the fold. The citizens of this commonwealth seem to be so perfectly self-controlled, so absolutely free from any desire to violate law or swerve from duty, that this community of millions thread their ways through innumerable labyrinths as if dominated by some secret and occult guide, infallible and sure.

It is indeed the teaching that the lower kingdoms are informed by higher Beings — through remote control, we might say, to use modern language — and they reflect as in a clear surface the harmony above. In the human kingdom we find entirely different conditions. Mind has been awakened and self-consciousness has resulted. Man must learn to do for himself what higher beings are doing for the lower kingdoms. Moral responsibility follows the awakening of mind, and man must learn through mistakes and suffering to weave the pattern of the gods and make its fabric glow with its own inherent light.

But the human race is young, only a little more than half over its journey on this planet, and it must serve a long, long apprenticeship before it finds itself, and before the units themselves learn each one separately to put its own house in order. Collectively humanity is indeed a child, with all the conceit and self-confidence of childhood, yet instinctively, inevitably it knows that nothing can be carried out, that no project can begin to function, until it is framed in a suitable organization with its central authority.

The animal kingdom, being so closely connected with the human through its bodies of flesh, reflects more of human unrest than do the kingdoms below, but even here we find the hierarchical pattern more or less clearly marked in places. Humans not having overcome the "delusion

of separateness” are constantly fighting cooperation through their selfishness, and yet are inevitably drawn into it both by their selfish and their altruistic instincts. Nothing else works. Even criminals are well organized, and have their own codes of honor for self-protection.

These facts are so common that we fail to read their meaning; to see that the innate tendencies in people to shape their lives have their origin in the impulses from higher realms of consciousness, in the vital streams which flow through the natural channels in human nature to the lower planes where the human consciousness is at present functioning. The inevitable, irresistible tendency for human activities to shape themselves into hierarchical formation shows that this is Nature’s constitution. “As above, so below.” The physical plane is the reflection, the shadow, of that which has produced it. The essential difference, however, between the man-made hierarchies and those existing throughout Nature, is that the former are artificial and the latter real. The artificial ones are those upon which the undeveloped human beings are practicing, so to say. They are the means through which the undeveloped parts of the human constitution are being molded, thus fitting the human kingdom to take its place in the living tissue of the Universe. With these preliminary remarks, we can consider the most evident example of a *real* Hierarchy — the Human Body.

## THE HUMAN BODY

The Human Body is a hierarchy in manifestation before our eyes, a little universe in itself on our own physical plane which, could we fathom its meaning, would reveal the mysteries of Kosmos. For the human intellect its secrets are a sealed book which only an Adept of advanced degree could open. From one point of view it is but a mechanism, a vehicle for the use of higher forces. This is evident, for when these are withdrawn, as at death, it begins at once to crumble, the various entities which have been working together go their own ways, and the hierarchical combination temporarily rests.

When, however, the hierarchy of the body is active, it is the brain which is the dominant factor, the hierarch. But we must understand, of course, that the brain or any other organ is but a transmitter of the energies from entities of higher grades who make up the composite human constitution.

The basis of physical life is the cell, which in manifestation is a sevenfold entity, like Man, like the Earth, like the Sun, like the Universe; for every existing form is a reflection of the form above it. The cell contains, among other things, a nucleus, a nucleolus, and an enveloping membrane, which latter corresponds to the body of a human. It has also kosmic correspondences.

*“The Spheres of Being, or centers of life, which are isolated nuclei breeding their men and their animals, are numberless; not one has any resemblance to its sister-companion or to any other in its own special progeny.”*

*“All have a double physical and spiritual nature.”*

*“The nucleoles are eternal and everlasting; the nuclei periodical and finite. The nucleoles form part of the absolute. They are the embrasures of that black impenetrable fortress, which is for ever concealed from human or even Dhyânic sight. The nuclei are the light of eternity escaping therefrom.”*

*“It is that LIGHT which condenses into the forms of the ‘Lords of Being’...” — The Secret Doctrine, Vol. II, p. 33*

All the cells of the body are specialized to fulfill their various functions. For example, a muscle, liver, or blood cell is easily recognized as belonging to its own organ. But there is a further specialization for the different duties of any one organ: the liver, for example, has a variety of functions, and the cells grouped together for any one purpose are presided over and kept in order by their little brain, known as a ganglion. All of these ganglia are coordinated by the nervous apparatus of the liver as a whole, and all the organs of the body united by the central nervous system. There is instant and absolute communication between all the parts of this innumerable host; absolute obedience of each unit to its superior; and when in health, this little world moves in its orbit as serenely as the stars, without jar or friction, which might continue were it not for the discord injected into its ordered life by the unevolved intermediate nature of man, higher up on the scale. But the cells, basic units of the human body, are by no means the simple things they seem to be under the microscope. Smaller and smaller grows the pattern, but ever the *small* reflects the *great*.

Science teaches us that the living as well as the dead organism of both man and animal are swarming with bacteria of a hundred various kinds; that from without we are threatened with the invasion of microbes with every breath we draw, and from within by leucomaines, aerobes, anaerobes, and what not. But Science never yet went so far as to assert with the occult doctrine that our bodies, as well as those of animals, plants, and stones, are themselves altogether built up of such beings; which, except larger species, no microscope can detect.... Each particle — whether you call it organic or inorganic — *is a life*. Every atom and molecule in the Universe is both *life-giving* and *death-giving* to that form, inasmuch as it builds by aggregation universes and the ephemeral vehicles ready to receive the transmigrating soul, and as eternally destroys and changes the *forms* and expels those souls from their temporary abodes. It creates and kills; it is self-generating and self-destroying; it brings into being, and annihilates, that mystery of mysteries — the *living body* of man, animal, or plant, every second in time and space;... — *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 260-261

It is by studying the small that we can infer the great, once we grasp the philosophy that is contained in the idea of analogy; once we realize that the Universe is one organism, and that every lesser organism of whatever nature is an integral part of the Whole, part of its nature and therefore essential to it. It is thus not a mere figure of speech to compare the human body to a universe, or the “Spheres of Being” (or stars and planets) to cells in the human body, for this body is verily an epitome of the Whole. Perchance the organs of this whole may be great central suns, controlling lesser suns in an almost infinite series of gradations, whose planets may be atoms of this mighty entity. Analogy would lead us to infer a universal nervous system and circulations of life currents, purifying and rejuvenating every such cell, with its consciousness permeating everywhere.

## **SOURCE OF THESE TEACHINGS**

The foregoing is but a sketchy outline of the hierarchical constitution of the Universe, and before proceeding further it is pertinent to answer the question which must arise in the minds of those unfamiliar with these teachings as to the source from which they come. Are they inferences and guesses of some penetrating minds, arguing from particulars to universals? A study of this majestic philosophy will make it quite clear that no human mind could have evolved it. Only those far beyond the ordinary human stage would be capable of studying and recording the workings at the heart of Nature.

Theosophy is the majestic Wisdom-Religion of the archaic ages and is as old as thinking man. It was delivered to the first human protoplasts, the first thinking human beings on this Earth, by highly intelligent spiritual Entities from superior spheres. This Ancient Doctrine, this Esoteric System, has been passed down from guardians to guardians to guardians through innumerable generations until our own time; and, furthermore, portions of this original and majestic System have been given out at various periods of time to various races in various parts of the world by those Guardians when humanity stood in need of such extension and elaboration of spiritual and intellectual thought.

Theosophy is not a syncretistic philosophy-religion-science, a system of thought or belief which has been put together piecemeal and consisting of parts or portions taken by some great mind from other various religions or philosophies. This idea is repudiated by Theosophists, for the simple reason that it is not true. On the contrary, Theosophy is that single System or systematic formulation of the facts of visible and invisible nature, which, as expressed through the illuminated human mind, takes the apparently separate forms of science and of philosophy and of religion. We may likewise describe Theosophy to be the formulation in human language of the

nature, structure, origin, destiny, and operations of the Kosmical Universe and of the multitudes of beings which infill it.

It might be added that Theosophy, in the language of H. P. Blavatsky {*Theosophical Glossary*, p. 328}, is “the sub-stratum and basis of all the world-religions and philosophies, taught and practiced by a few elect ever since man became a thinking being. In its practical bearing, Theosophy is purely *divine ethics*;... — G. de Purucker, *Occult Glossary*, pp. 177-178

The real facts of life included in what is known as the Wisdom-Religion have been taught again and again in ages past, and as often have been lost and forgotten just as the cities of former civilizations are buried in the Earth and lost to sight and memory. Great teachers have come in every age and have given, suited to the molds of minds of that cycle, as much of truth as could be understood and assimilated. The teaching is that in the early ages of humanity on this planet, great beings from other worlds came and impressed the minds of human beings with the facts of life, leaving a body of adepts referred to in H. P. Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, pp. 281-282, as follows:

Alone a handful of primitive men — in whom the spark of divine Wisdom burnt bright, and only strengthened in its intensity as it got dimmer and dimmer with every age in those who turned it to bad purposes — remained the elect custodians of the Mysteries revealed to humanity by the divine Teachers. There were those among them, who remained in their *Kumâric* condition from the beginning; and tradition whispers, what the secret teachings affirm, namely, that these Elect were the germ of a Hierarchy *which never died since that period*:—

*“The inner man of the first \* \* \* only changes his body from time to time; he is ever the same, knowing neither rest nor Nirvâna, spurning Devachan and remaining constantly on Earth for the salvation of mankind.....” “Out of the seven virgin-men (Kumâra) four sacrificed themselves for the sins of the world and the instruction of the ignorant, to remain till the end of the present Manvantara. Though unseen, they are ever present. When people say of one of them, “He is dead”; behold, he is alive and under another form. These are the Head, the Heart, the Soul, and the Seed of undying knowledge (Gnyana). Thou shalt never speak, O Lanoo, of these great ones (Maha...) before a multitude, mentioning them by their names. The wise alone will understand....” (Catechism of the Inner Schools.)*

It is from these that all the great Adepts of history have descended. They are the Guardians of Humanity, and it is from among their number that from time to time in history the founders of the great religions have come among men. These facts of cosmogony have been brought to our Root-Race in this age by H. P. Blavatsky, who founded the Theosophical Society in 1875, as a part of the Theosophical Movement which has been active (though often unknown except to a few) in all ages and among all

Races. Referring to the method of studying the framework of Nature, H. P. Blavatsky wrote:

The flashing gaze of those seers has penetrated into the very kernel of matter, and recorded the soul of things there, where an ordinary profane, however learned, would have perceived but the external work of form.... It is useless to say that the system in question is no fancy of one or several isolated individuals. That it is the uninterrupted record covering thousands of generations of Seers whose respective experiences were made to test and to verify the traditions passed orally by one early race to another, of the teachings of higher and exalted beings, who watched over the childhood of Humanity. That for long ages, the “Wise Men” of the Fifth Race, of the stock saved and rescued from the last cataclysm and shifting of continents, had passed their lives *in learning, not teaching*. How did they do so? It is answered: by checking, testing, and verifying in every department of nature the traditions of old by the independent visions of great adepts; *i.e.*, men who have developed and perfected their physical, mental, psychic, and spiritual organizations to the utmost possible degree. No vision of one adept was accepted till it was checked and confirmed by the visions — so obtained as to stand as independent evidence — of other adepts, and by centuries of experiences. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, pp. 272-273

Such is our authority for the teachings of the hierarchical constitution of the Universe, presented not in a dogmatic sense, but as an explanation, the acceptance of which each one must decide for himself. This has been, indeed, prior to the last century, an esoteric teaching for our historical period, and the fact that it is now given on a printed page seems to contain a hopeful promise of present possibilities.

The following definition of a hierarchy from this heretofore esoteric standpoint is quoted from G. de Purucker’s small glossary:

The name is used by Theosophists, by extension of meaning, as signifying the innumerable degrees, grades, and steps of evolving entities in the Kosmos, and as applying to all parts of the Universe; and rightly so, because every different part of the Universe — and their number is simply countless — is under the vital governance of a Divine Being, of a god, of a Spiritual Essence; and all material manifestations are simply the appearances on our plane of the workings and actions of these Spiritual Beings behind it.

The series of Hierarchies extends infinitely in both directions. If he so choose for purposes of thought. Man may, if he so choose, for purposes of thought consider himself at the middle point, from which extends above him an unending series of steps upon steps of higher beings of all grades — growing constantly less material and more spiritual, and greater in all senses — towards an ineffable point; and there the imagination stops: not because the series itself stops, but because our thought can reach no farther out nor in. And similar to *this* series, an infinitely great series of beings and states of beings descends downwards (to use human terms) — downwards and

downwards, until there again the imagination stops, merely because our thought can go no farther.

The summit, the acme, the flower, the highest point (or the “hyparxis”) of any series of animate and “inanimate” beings, whether we enumerate the stages or degrees of the series as seven or ten or twelve (according to whichever system we follow), is the divine unity for that series or hierarchy, and this hyparxis or highest being is again in its turn the lowest being of the hierarchy above it, and so extending onwards forever — each hierarchy manifesting one facet of the divine Kosmic Life, each hierarchy showing forth one thought, as it were, of the divine thinkers.

Various names were given to these hierarchies considered as series of beings. The generalized Greek hierarchy as shown by writers in periods preceding the rise of Christianity may be collected and enumerated as follows:

(1) Divine; (2) Gods, or the divine-spiritual; (3) Demigods, sometimes called divine heroes, involving a very mystical doctrine; (4) Heroes proper; (5) Men; (6) Beasts or animals; (7) Vegetable world; (8) Mineral world; (9) Elemental world, or what was called the realm of Hades. The Divinity (or aggregate Divine Lives) itself is the hyparxis of this series of hierarchies, because each of these nine stages is itself a subordinate hierarchy. This (or any other) hierarchy of nine, hangs like a pendant jewel from the lowest hierarchy above it, which makes the tenth counting upwards, which tenth we can call the Super-Divine, the Hyper-Heavenly, this tenth being the lowest stage (or the ninth, counting downwards) of still another hierarchy extending upwards; and so on, indefinitely.

One of the noblest of the Theosophical teachings, and one of the most far-reaching in its import, is that of the hierarchical constitution of Universal Nature. This hierarchical structure of Nature is so fundamental, so basic, that it may be truly called the structural framework of Being.

— *Occult Glossary*, {Under “Hierarchy.”}

## UNIVERSALITY OF THE TEACHINGS

Echoes of this Ancient Teaching can be found more or less plainly stated in India, Japan, and Egypt. The scheme in the Neo-Platonic philosophy has just been given in the definition of a hierarchy. This was copied from the Greeks, as taught by Plato, and the Christian scheme which has been alluded to earlier, was patterned after the same with different names. The Syrians had a similar system, using their special terms, likewise the Babylonians. The Kabbala referred to the Ladder of Life. All of these were exoteric inasmuch as the real key to their full meaning was withheld, but they show how widely spread were the ideas, and indicate a common source from which they all sprang. They at least show that a belief in a gradation of power and authority in the inner spheres was general; that there was understood to be a multiplicity of gods working together in their appropriate realms and conducting the affairs of the Universe. It took the dark ages to develop the degraded belief in an extra-



cosmic God who personally attended to the affairs of the Universe. Now, however, it is being recognized that the God of theology is a logical impossibility. The perfect God premised should have made perfect beings living in a perfect world. But facts, as we know them, indicate that evolving, learning entities are working their way to freedom and knowledge. Every grade or plane or station must have its Guides, infallible in relation to the territory they have conquered, but still fallible in their own spheres, while they too must have their Guides, infallible to them, and so on infinitely. The Ancient Wisdom taught constant growth and evolution; imperfection ever working toward perfection, to be attained in the Sphere inhabited for the time. Thus we see law and order and design in the Universe as a whole, which yet provides the schools in which learning entities can grow through their experience and profit by their mistakes.

The AH-HI (Dhyân-Chohans) are the collective host of spiritual beings — the Angelic Hosts of Christianity, the Elohim and “Messengers” of the Jews — who are the vehicle for the manifestation of the divine or universal thought and will. They are the Intelligent Forces that give to and enact in nature her “laws,” while themselves acting according to laws imposed upon them in a similar manner by still higher Powers; but they are not “the personifications” of the powers of Nature, as erroneously thought. This hierarchy of spiritual Beings, through which the Universal Mind comes into action, is like an army — a “Host,” truly — by means of which the fighting power of a nation manifests itself, and which is composed of army corps, divisions, brigades, regiments, and so forth, each with its separate individuality or life, and its limited freedom of action and limited responsibilities; each contained in a larger individuality, to which its own interests are subservient, and each containing lesser individualities in itself.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 38

## HUMAN COMPOSITE NATURE AS A HIERARCHY

We have spoken of the human body as a hierarchy. This may be more easily grasped than the idea that man as a whole is a larger hierarchy of which the body is the lowest, the simplest, and least important. Christians have been used to the idea that we are composed of body, soul, and spirit, but the real philosophical meaning has been lost to the West for centuries, and the average person has been content to think chiefly of the body, while holding a vague idea that he has a soul as well. While this threefold classification is correct in a general way, for more careful analysis of the human being, the Ancient Teaching describes us as a sevenfold (or tenfold) entity, or expressed in another way, as an entity having seven principles or aspects. Each one of these aspects, like the body, is a

hierarchical entity, having its own individual system, but working with the larger hierarchy under the Hierarchy.

These principles or entities are (1) Âtman, the essential Self; (2) Buddhi, the faculty or spiritual organ in Man, manifesting itself as intuition, understanding, discrimination, etc.; (3) Manas, the center or organ of the human ego-consciousness in Man, and therefore the producing cause of the 'I am I;' (4) Kâma, the seat of the impulses, desires, aspirations, and therefore the driving force in the human constitution; (5) Prâna, the 'electrical field' manifesting in the human as vitality; (6) Linga-śârîra, the astral model body; and (7) Sthûla-śârîra, the physical body. Number 3, Manas or mind, has a higher and lower portion, which latter and the four lower principles have yet to gain their immortality. This word 'immortality' is here used in a special sense. Nothing that exists can ever cease to exist, of course, since all units are part of the Whole. But the lower principles have not yet evolved to the point of self understanding and mastery, which is their destiny in the eternities to come.

A less analytical classification includes the Upper Duad, namely, Âtman and Buddhi, as Spirit; the Intermediate Duad, namely, Manas and Kâma, as Soul; and the Lower Triad as Body.

Here we are only outlining the human constitution from the hierarchical standpoint, as his composite nature is dealt with more fully in elsewhere. Seven parts or principles have been mentioned, but in truth, as has been said, every hierarchy consists of ten, three of which, in our case, are unmanifested, at least so far as we are concerned. Further, there are two more, one connecting any hierarchy with the one above it, and one with the hierarchy below it, making twelve in every system.

A little reflection will reveal that this teaching about man as being many in One is in harmony with universal experience. Impulse, emotion, thought or impersonal love, directs every human act, the motive and quality depending upon the center in which the consciousness is resting, which may be either high or low. Very highly evolved men work from their spiritual center, which sends its impulses down through the whole nature eventuating in noble thoughts and deeds. These impulses are felt but feebly in the undeveloped man who more frequently centers his consciousness in his unevolved, uncertain, and vacillating intermediate nature. But whether high or low, every impulse comes to the body from above or within, expressing itself in speech, thought, or action. And the within and the without are evidently one organism, acting together simultaneously.

The Universe is worked and *guided* from *within outwards*. As above so it is below, as in heaven so on earth; and man — the microcosm and miniature copy of the macrocosm — is the living witness to this Universal Law and to the mode of its action. We see that every *external* motion, act, gesture, whether voluntary or mechanical, organic or mental, is produced

and preceded by *internal* feeling or emotion, will or volition, and thought or mind. As no outward motion or change, when normal, in man's external body can take place unless provoked by an inward impulse, given through one of the three functions named, so with the external or manifested Universe. The whole Kosmos is guided, controlled, and animated by almost endless series of Hierarchies of sentient Beings, each having a mission to perform, and who — whether we give to them one name or another, and call them Dhyan-Chohans or Angels — are “messengers” in the sense only that they are the agents of Karmic and Cosmic Laws. They vary infinitely in their respective degrees of consciousness and intelligence; and to call them all pure Spirits without any of the earthly alloy “which time is wont to prey upon” is only to indulge in poetical fancy. For each of these Beings either *was*, or prepares to become, a man, if not in the present, then in a past or a coming cycle (Manvantara). They are *perfected*, when not *incipient*, men; and differ morally from the terrestrial human beings on their higher (less material) spheres, only in that they are devoid of the feeling of personality and of the *human* emotional nature — two purely earthly characteristics.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, pp. 274-275

## THE INFINITE AND ETERNAL CAUSE OF BEING

The underdeveloped individual has always stood in awe of the mystery of life. Only mystics have found within themselves some answer to the eternal questions, “Whence did I come?” “Whither shall I go?” Exoteric religions of the West have referred the origin of all things to a god — a god colored, of course, by humanity's own various and immature conceptions of perfection. But the Ancient Wisdom, the fountainhead from which all religions have flowed, in whatever form it has been presented to humanity during all the millions of years since the human host was evolved on this globe, states that this form has always been built around the basic central premises of a Boundless Principle, which had no beginning and can have no end; in which all beings exist, from which all proceed, and to which all eventually return. It is the Eternal IS, and the Eternal NOW. All speculation concerning it is impossible, as a part cannot comprehend the Whole of which it is a part. It is the One Reality, amidst the phantasmagoria of the never ceasing and eternally changing movements of life. It is the noumenon behind all phenomena.

This Principle we know to be true, not only because such is the assertion of the Ancient Wisdom as it has been presented today, and therefore as it must have been presented in the past, but also because the rational mind accepts it as inevitable. This Boundless Principle manifests and withdraws, sleeps and wakes. The great Universe is active during its Day, then Darkness and Silence reign over space. In the poetical symbolism of the ancients, it is described as the Inbreathing and Outbreathing of Brahmâ. In the outbreathing a new Universe comes into being, yet it is but the old reborn. In the inbreathing all returns to Silence

and Darkness. So it is with solar systems, so it is with planets, with Races of men as a whole; with individual men; with atoms.

The formation of crystals from a saturated solution of certain substances may offer a suggestion to some minds. The heated solution is clear and transparent, then quietly as the liquid cools, beautiful starry crystals appear as if by magic, now here, now there, while the liquid is not decreased or diminished. In our undeveloped state and with our finite minds it is not to be supposed that we can grasp these transcendent facts except in broad outline. Yet we can work in the direction of truth and absorb enough to guide us along the Path which all must tread.

The Universe reimbodies itself... following precisely the analogical lines,... that the soul of man does in reincarnating, making the necessary allowances for varying conditions. As man is the product of his former life, or rather of his lives, so is a universe, a solar system, a planet, an animal, an atom — the very great as well as the so-called infinitesimal — the fruitage, the flower, of what went before. Each of these bears its load of karma precisely as the soul of man does.

— G. de Purucker, *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 29

We have said that this Ancient Wisdom-Religion has been given to every great Race, and we may add, to the various subdivisions of such Races, in such measure and form as would fit the needs and understanding of these respective eras. There have been greater civilizations in the past than those we know today. There are times when more advanced souls are in incarnation than at other times, and naturally a Great Teacher would present the teachings about life in a form best fitted to the mental development of those who are to receive them, though basically the teachings would be the same. So it must always be, and the fact that such has been the case is corroborated by a variety of evidence from as far back as our historical records reach. The Great Religions can be shown to have had a common origin, but even without such overwhelming support from history, the assertion that there must be those advance guards of humanity, equipped to hand down such ancient teachings, is a belief which one cannot escape if evolution be accepted as a fact. And evolution is before our eyes every moment of our lives. We see everything growing in all the kingdoms. Children grow to adult age, and adults often unfold glorious qualities in their natures, showing the possibilities, the trend of human life, and suggesting, almost declaring thereby, that some men, during the long past, must have reached a godlike status, fitted to be Great Teachers to their younger brothers.

History again confirms this inference in the outstanding figures of Gautama Buddha, Krishna, Lao-Tzu, Jesus, Quetzalcoatl, and others. It is true that these teachings invariably degrade, more or less according to the relative darkness of the cycle in which they were given. Yet even in the

Christian childish conception of a personal God — a great cosmic man who is beseeched to grant favors to one over another — even in this travesty of the original teaching it is possible to discern the distorted outlines of the true picture.

*“Thus there is but one Absolute Upâdhi (basis) in the spiritual sense, from, on, and in which, are built for Manvantaric purposes the countless basic centers on which proceed the Universal, cyclic, and individual Evolutions during the active period.”*

*“The informing Intelligences, which animate these various centers of Being, are referred to indiscriminately by men beyond the Great Range as the Manus, the Rishis, the Pitris, the Prajâpati, and so on; and as Dhyâni Buddhas, the Chohans, Melhas (fire-gods), Bodhisattvas, and others, on this side. The truly ignorant call them gods; the learned profane, the one God; and the wise, the Initiates, honor in them only the Manvantaric manifestation of THAT which neither our Creators (the Dhyân Chohans) nor their creatures can ever discuss or know anything about. The ABSOLUTE is not to be defined, and no mortal or immortal has ever seen or comprehended it during the periods of Existence. The mutable cannot know the Immutable, nor can that which lives perceive Absolute Life.”*

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 2, p. 34

This fundamental proposition of a boundless underlying principle is recalled here because it must be the real starting point, from within, of our study of Hierarchies.

## THE UNIVERSE AS A HIERARCHY

The Universe may be symbolized as the Great Hierarchical Tree. Like a tree it grows, bears its fruit, and dies down. Like a tree it has its roots, which in this case is that Boundless Underlying Principle. So suggestive is this symbol that its use has been universal. The Aśwâttha tree of India, symbolized as the tree of wisdom and knowledge, whose fruits are immortality, was said to grow with its roots above and its branches below. And the strange Banyan tree of India, whose branches reach down and root themselves so that one tree will cover acres, is an old symbol of Life.

The symbol for Sacred and Secret Knowledge was universally a tree, carrying the idea of its being handed in hierarchical form from one Adept to another, as the branches of a tree grow from one to another. Then there is the mundane tree of the Norse legends, which cannot die until the last battle of life shall be fought. Again, in the Scandinavian legends, after the darkness during which the great Unknown sleeps, Yggdrasil, the tree of the Universe of Time and Life, grows again and fills all Space. The Dragons or Serpents, symbols for Initiates, are said to guard the Tree of Knowledge. And there is the story of Eve offering Adam the apple from

the Tree of Knowledge, a variant of that of Juno giving to Jupiter, on her marriage, a Tree with golden fruit.

No words can really describe the hierarchical constitution of the Universe. They can but hint of it through symbols or by recalling certain observed operations of Nature. It might be pictured as one vast organism of living tissue, running the infinite gamut of degrees from spirit to matter; for spirit and matter are essentially one, matter being but the other pole of spirit. This vast organism must further be conceived as not only filling all space, but as *being Space itself*. And as this is a living organism, every point of it must be a center of consciousness — in other words, it must be an entity of some degree of consciousness, be it high or low, self-conscious or otherwise. Thus, no speck of dust or grain of sand is without its own quality of consciousness, though, of course, not as human beings understand this word. In this sense every atom is an entity. Every composite being is composed of atoms which obviously could not be used or respond to impulses if they were not themselves alive, having their own degree of consciousness. If there were not this essential unity, there could be no coordination in Nature and any broken link would mean chaos. This is a new idea to Western habit of thought, but familiar to the East and common in ancient times.

Planes or worlds exist within each other, invisible to each other, not interfering with each other, yet influencing each other since they are all part of the same organism, compact like the human body, with no point unoccupied, born out of the living matrix of Space, the deathless, all-permanent basis. Every entity has grown out of a higher one as literally as a stem grows out of its branch. Humans, like the leaves of the tree, may fancy themselves separate, yet they exist only as part of the Whole. In the Root from which they spring, they all “live and move and have their being.”

## AS ABOVE SO BELOW

This Hermetic saying from the “Emerald Tablet of Hermes” can be, if we know how to use it, a guide to the discovery of Nature’s inmost secrets. As one studies this all-embracing philosophy of the Ancient Wisdom, the truth of that wise old saying that one who fully knows himself will know all, begins to be clear. Even in a grain of sand is written the secret of all life for those who have the eyes to see it. The small mirrors the great in broad outline, yet no two atoms are exactly alike. Each one is stamped with its own individuality, which is unfolded through the eternities.

In any one universe, however, the *plan* repeats itself infinitely. Out and out to the remotest confines of that universe the ideal pattern is ever the same, filling all Space, though forms vary infinitely. This must be so,

because the Universe is one organism, a common consciousness pervading the Whole. The supreme purpose in Nature guides every atom, since every atom is a part of this Whole, thus insuring order, stability, harmony, in the grand cosmic operations, and preventing even the mistakes of learning entities from disturbing the plan of the mighty Hierarch who directs the forces of the Universe. The free-will of every lesser hierarch down to and including man, and all entities below him, is exercised only within its own domain and cannot disturb the larger harmony of which it is a part.

In considering the Universe as a Hierarchy, we used as our point of departure starting from above, the Boundless Underlying Principle. Starting now in thought from below, the electrons are within the atoms; atoms form molecules; molecules, the cells. Cells make the bodies of lower entities; gradually develop, differentiate, forming larger organisms. Finally the complex human body appears, an aggregate of organs, themselves hierarchies of cells working together, a little universe patterned after the great one. Then the real man using this body repeats on a grander scale the same pattern; that is to say, in his body there is a correspondence, a relation to every part of his constitution as a whole. Otherwise, the man himself could not express himself through his body, nor relate himself to external Nature, which is also a part of the Whole. Man in his entirety might be said to be a part of the body of a far greater being, who through man is able to contact the Nature of which he also is a part, and so on up it goes over the Ladder of Life.

Let us start then again in imagination from above, from the inconceivably great Hierarch of our Universe, bounded by the Milky Way — our Universe, which is but one of innumerable universes. Near to it would be the greater solar systems, the spiritual essences of which are on planes far, far beyond the range of our physical vision, like color waves which are octaves upon octaves above visibility for us. Born of these are other solar systems, living their separate lives, yet inescapably, intimately united with their parents. They likewise have their offspring to whom they wing their energies over the secret pathways of Space.

Smaller and smaller grows the pattern in spiritual power, though not necessarily in dimension, no two alike as no two men are alike, yet all having the same essential elements; all ultimately nourished from the same fountainhead; all interdependent, intermingling, and interblended. Somewhere on the way down, the octave of light becomes *our* octave and we see a few of the starry worlds of which Space is compact. Passing us in the octaves below into the darkness for us, into the light for them, are other worlds. But knowing something of our own world, we can form some vague conception of the infinities above and below, which make the spiritual matrix of Space.

The Universe, as said, is built on the number ten, which means that there are ten steps or grades in every hierarchy, with one connecting step

above and one below, in which both share, making twelve in all. In every case the three upper principles or steps or grades are formless to the seven below. So in our world — manifest to us — we have a constant recurrence of the number seven, for example, in the colors of the rainbow, in the notes of the musical scale, the seven days of the week, our seven senses with two as yet undeveloped, etc.

Reverting to our tree symbol, we can conceive the trunk as one all-embracing hierarchy, and having within itself an infinitude of lesser graded hierarchies, each one complete in itself, that is, having the ten principles common to all more or less developed as the case may be. Every branching starts a new hierarchy, and this process proceeds downwards or outwards to the leaves, which is the ultimate expression of form in that hierarchy, and which is as far as it can go in that particular period of manifestation or Day of Brahmâ. Then one half of the day is over, the Life-Waves slowly return until finally the Night of Brahmâ closes *that* drama of life. But during this relatively eternal period of time, from the beginning of one Day to that of the next, every being, great or small, from gods to atoms, will have evolved enormously, so that when the next Day opens, they will take their places on a much higher rung of the Ladder of Life than they did on the last. This great day may refer to the Universe, to the Solar System, or a Planetary Chain, but each hierarchy and each member of a hierarchy has its own cycle of day and night, long or short, depending upon its scale of development. For instance, a Planetary Chain reimbodies several times during the life of its Solar System. Likewise the atoms in our body may live but a few seconds, while the body as a whole may last seventy years or more.

## OUR SOLAR SYSTEM AS A HIERARCHY

Our world is our Solar System, and the real Sun is a great spiritual Being, a god, in whom the innumerable hosts of beings on its own globes and on its planets, move, live, and have their being. It is our own great hierarchy. What we see as the Sun is but the aura of its body. It has been said that the greatest adepts cannot send their consciousness beyond our Solar System. When the life-term for this great Being is ended, and it breaks the cord of life, the whole fabric of worlds crumbles and the spiritual essences are withdrawn into their source, as the sap of the tree returns to its roots. We are told that, after certain premonitory signs, this happens as suddenly as does the death of a human body, when the atoms of the physical body return to the Earth, and the higher spiritual elements are withdrawn into their various sources. As above, so below.

When the Solar Pralaya arrives in the grand fullness of Time, there comes a moment, a final instant which is the utter completion or consum-



mation of all things in that system; and in the twinkling of an eye, literally, and instantly, all the planets and the sun itself are “blown out,” as it were. The last one of all manifested beings has at that instant gone to higher planes; and there being nothing whatsoever left to hold physical matter together anywhere within the Solar System, that system immediately falls to pieces and vanishes away... like an instantaneous shadow passing over a wall. — *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 227

When the great period of the Universal Kosmic Pralaya occurs, and the universe is indrawn (following the Oriental metaphor) into the bosom of Parabrahman, what then happens? The spiritual entities then enter into their Para-Nirvâna, which means exactly for them what is meant for us when we speak of the death of the human being. They are drawn by their spiritual gravitational attractions into still higher Hierarchies of being, into still higher spiritual realms, therein still higher rising and growing and learning and living; while the lower elements of the Kosmos, the body of the universe... follow their own particular gravitational attractions: the physical body to dust; the vital breath to the vital breath of the Kosmos; dust to dust, breath to breath. So with the other Kosmic principles, as with man's principles at his decease:... Then when the clock of eternity points once again for the Kosmos to the hour of “coming forth into light” — which is “death” for the spiritual being, as death for *us* is *life for the inner man* — when the Manvantara of material life comes around again (the period of spiritual death for the Kosmos is the material life of manifestation), then in the distant abysses of space and time the Kosmic Life-Centers are aroused into activity once more: first the stage of the nebular fiery cloud; then the whirling nebula; then the spiral nebula; then the ringed nebula; then the sun and the planets, and finally the human and other beings that grow on the last; each one of these planets having its seven rounds to fulfill in the forthcoming planetary periods, time after time, during endless life. Endless hope and experience lie in this marvelous scheme, but always at every step on the Path there is a dividing of the ways for those entities which have attained moral responsibility, an up and a down, for the “moment of choice” is really continuous. — *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153

Elsewhere it is explained that every sun and every planet consists of ten Globes, though the inhabitants of these Globes can only see the Globe or Globes on the same plane as that on which they are themselves for the time being. Seven of these are manifest and three unmanifest (to us). The Sun then itself would compose one hierarchy, and branching from it, to use the tree analogy, would be its planets, only six of which in our system are known to modern science. The other four are not on our plane of visibility and cannot be discovered by any telescope, however large.

Uranus belongs to our Universal Solar System, of which we are one branch, so to speak, but not to our own individual Solar System. This is a mystery which is more fully explained in *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, pages 451-453. Neptune, however, generally supposed to be

part of our Solar System, is what is known as a ‘capture,’ a foreign body, one might say, and in the process of time it will leave us. Thus we have as the branches from our Sun, six major hierarchies, or six planets that we see — Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn — and four that we cannot see. Further, every Globe of every planet, though part of one being — the planet as a whole — is a smaller hierarchy within the greater, for every Globe has its own ten principles or aspects, its own Hierarchy or Ruler. As above, so the below is patterned after its progenitor.

A hierarchy implies a hierarch, and in the case of worlds, it means gods, of whom they are the bodies. A planet, therefore, would have a supreme Hierarchy, under whom would be the hierarchs over each Globe all bound together by unbreakable ties, all working together to a common end. Also, inseparably united with each planet are the beings who inhabit it and derive from it their physical life. All of these great rulers belong to the Hierarchy of Compassion, to which also belong the Buddhas and Adepts who work under them and guard our humanity.

We are taught that there exists a Hierarchy of Compassion, which H. P. Blavatsky sometimes called the Hierarchy of Mercy or of Pity. This is the Light-Side of nature as contrasted with its Matter-Side or Shadow-Side, its Night-Side. It is from this Hierarchy of Compassion that came those semi-divine entities about the middle period of the third Root-Race of this Round, and incarnated in the semiconscious, quasi-senseless men of that period, those advanced entities otherwise known as the Solar Lhas, as the Tibetans call them, the solar spirits, who were the men of a former kalpa who during the Third Root-Race thus sacrificed themselves in order to give us intellectual light; incarnating in those senseless psychophysical shells in order to awaken into a divine flame of egoity and *self*-consciousness the sleeping Egos which we then were. They are ourselves because belonging to the same spirit-ray that we do; yet we, more strictly speaking, were those half-unconscious, half-awakened Egos whom they touched with the divine fire of their own being. This our “awakening” was called by H. P. Blavatsky the *incarnation of the Mānasaputras*, or “Sons of Mind” or Light. Had that incarnation not taken place, we indeed should have continued our evolution by merely “natural” causes, but it would have been slow almost beyond comprehension, almost interminable; but that act of self-sacrifice, through their immense pity, their immense love, though, indeed, acting under Karmic impulse, awakened the divine fire in our own selves, gave us light and comprehension and understanding. So from that time we ourselves became the “Sons of the Gods”; the faculty of self-consciousness in us was awakened, our eyes were opened, responsibility became ours, and our feet were set then definitely upon the path, that inner path, quiet, leading inwards back to our spiritual home.

— *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, pp. 258-259

The hierarchy of our order of Adepts is described in *The Secret Doctrine* as a “Wondrous Being” who descended from a high region in the early part of the Third Age.

The “BEING”... which has to remain nameless, is the *Tree* from which, in subsequent ages, all the great *historically* known Sages and Hierophants, such as the Rishi Kapila, Hermes, Enoch, Orpheus, etc., etc., have branched off. As objective *man*, he is the mysterious (to the profane — the ever invisible) yet ever present Personage about whom legends are rife in the East, especially among the Occultists and the students of the Sacred Science. It is he who changes form, yet remains ever the same. And it is he again who holds spiritual sway over the *initiated* Adepts throughout the whole world. He is, as said, the “Nameless One” who has so many names, and yet whose names and whose very nature are unknown. He is *the* “Initiator,” called the “GREAT SACRIFICE.” For, sitting at the threshold of LIGHT, he looks into it from within the circle of Darkness, which he will not cross; nor will he quit his post till the last day of this life-cycle. Why does the solitary Watcher remain at his self-chosen post? Why does he sit by the fountain of primeval Wisdom, of which he drinks no longer, as he has naught to learn which he does not know — aye, neither on this Earth, nor in its heaven? Because the lonely, sore-footed pilgrims on their way back to their *home* are never sure to the last moment of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion and matter called Earth-life. Because he would fain show the way to that region of freedom and light, from which he is a voluntary exile himself, to every prisoner who has succeeded in liberating himself from the bonds of flesh and illusion. Because, in short, he has sacrificed himself for the sake of humanity, though but a few Elect may profit by the GREAT SACRIFICE.

It is under the direct, silent guidance of this MAHĀ — (great) — GURU that all the other less divine Teachers and instructors of humanity became, from the first awakening of human consciousness, the guides of early Humanity. It is through these “Sons of God” that infant humanity got its first notions of all the arts and sciences, as well as of spiritual knowledge; and it is they who have laid the first foundation-stone of those ancient civilizations that puzzle so sorely our modern generation of students and scholars.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, pp. 207-208

There is a tradition, and our Teachers tell us that it is a tradition founded on truth, that even unto this day there exists in Central Asia a certain mystical and mysterious land, or district if you like. It is called Śambhala. This is a word known in Sanskrit literature, but because the sayings and legends regarding it are connected with what our self-sufficient European Sanskritists and Orientalists call “pagan superstition” and the “love of the Orientals for imagery,” and so forth, our European scholars say that it is a myth. Blind men! It is an actual district on earth, in a certain part of Tibetan territory, and has been for ages the subject of much mystical speculation, and remains so to this day. It is the “home” of our exalted Teachers. It is likewise the “home” of the “Wondrous Being” considered as man, or in his racial aspect. This “Wondrous Being” incarnates himself from age to age at will

and at pleasure, but never leaves the duty he has taken upon himself, nor will he ever drop it until his work is done. He is the spiritual bond and link of the various Bodhisattvas and Buddhas of the Hierarchy of Compassion with superior worlds and with us and the lower beings of our Round. This land of Sāmbhala is described as a place of great beauty, surrounded by a high range of mountains. It is said that no human eye will ever see it unless permitted to see it. It is said that to this land of Sāmbhala go those who are “called” there, sometimes to return and sometimes to remain; and that there, supreme over all the Masters, reigns the human aspect of this “Wondrous Being,” the Great Initiator, the Great Sacrifice.

These are the teachings; and it is further said that from this land, spiritually, continually, and also in actual physical shape at cyclical critical periods, go forth Masters into the world.

— *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, pp. 263-264

## COOPERATION THROUGHOUT ALL HIERARCHIES

As has been expressed in several ways, there must be intelligent coordination of the most perfect kind of all the forces working through a universe, otherwise there would be confusion and destruction on a kosmic scale. Everyone knows that there is, on the contrary, the most absolute harmony reaching to a mathematical precision; for example, astronomers can compute, centuries in advance, where one or another star will be; when comets will return; what was our relation to the Zodiac thousands upon thousands of years ago, etc. Consciously or unconsciously everyone rests in absolute confidence upon the reliability of the eternal order of things, in spite of the false theories, dogmas, and creeds to shake such confidence. No one who thinks could offer the puerile theory that such coordination could exist by accident. It is but too plain that only through a partnership transcending human consciousness could it prevail. The Ancient Wisdom explains this great ordered system through a Kosmic Hierarchy.

The kosmic work is accomplished, speaking in broad terms, by two classes of beings — the Architects and the Builders of the Universe. The Architects, relative to the others, represent the spiritual, the divine side of Nature. They might be called the supernal Planners and Thinkers of the Kosmos. In the Buddhist system they are called the Dhyāni-Buddhas. They may be said to form the habits of Nature which we ignorantly call the ‘Laws of Nature;’ or we might say that these so-called ‘laws’ are the Wills of the Great Architects. Yet these, however great, are subject to the wills of Beings higher yet on the Ladder of Life than are they themselves, for Nature is conscious from beginning to end, and being one great organism, all its parts work together harmoniously. So these ‘laws’ are the action and interaction of consciousness and wills in the Kosmos, and they emanate from the overseers, the higher gods.

The Builders or masons of the world belong to an inferior hierarchy spiritually, yet they have relative dominion over their sub-hierarchies. Actually all these interblend, of course, but broadly speaking there are these two great classes. The Greeks called these World Builders *Kosmokratores*, those who receive the creative impulses from a higher class and carry them out. As we should expect, the seven grades or classes exist among both the Architects and Builders as in everything else, related in every case to the seven grades respectively below them. The pattern, the plan, is the same from god to atom. As an example of this cooperative division of labor, each Globe of our Planetary Chain is under the guidance of a special class of Architects, who work through a special class of builders for that Globe, while these Globe Architects are coordinated under the Architect of the whole Chain of Globes.

Man, as has been said, is, like everything, built on the hierarchical plan, with his seven or ten principles. Each principle is itself a conscious being, and down to and including the mind, each principle is a self-conscious being. These principles have been named earlier, and here are referred to only from the point of view of hierarchical formation, as stated above. At the head of this great Hierarchy is the Âtman, spoken of as man's 'inner god.' But this great Being is also the 'inner god' of many, many others in the human stage of evolution.

To return to our tree symbol, every 'inner god' is a major branch, which divides and divides, eventualizing in a group of human beings. His influence reaches his large family through intermediaries, the first being Buddhi, or the Spiritual Monad, a lesser but high god from whom branch out the Mânasaputras, or Sons of Mind, who send their rays directly into the evolving minds of men. Those men who have profited by the help of these higher beings will, in the next great cycle on another planet, have gained a rung on the Ladder of Life. They will then have become the Mânasaputras to help those now in our animal kingdoms. The present Mânasaputras and those above them will likewise have stepped up as the great Tree of Life spreads in all directions.

Now, we find these two classes of Architects and Builders working in man as a whole, as they work in every other hierarchy. His higher triad represents the Architects. It is they who make of him a divine being, and who ever seek to reach and further the evolution of the lower self. From them come all his inspiration, all his yearning for the noble and beautiful things of life, his sense of moral values, his conscience and intuition; while in the lower self we find the Builders, all working under the hierarchs controlling these subordinate hierarchies, just as that which works through the human brain controls the various activities of the physical body through the nervous system. As above, so below.

The more perfect the working of this chain of hierarchies, the more perfect is the life of man. When it is clogged or broken, we may have moral

or physical abnormalities. Dr. de Purucker, in answering a question in the series *Questions We All Ask*, says in No. 29, pages 417-418:

But what becomes, to follow the language of this questioner, of the Ego of one who goes insane? Where is the Ego of an intellectually disabled person? This questioner of course asks his question according to the ideas of the modern Occidental, having the idea in the back of his mind that the body is the man, and that the Ego is something which lives inside the body, and that something happens to it in such cases, and that the man then becomes insane or intellectually disabled.

We Theosophists have a different viewpoint. We say that the body is but a reflexion of what you are inwardly, that it merely mirrors what you are within. Now, what are you? You are a bundle of energies, a collection of powers, faculties, and characteristics, and the body is the vehicle through which these work on this physical plane. This bundle of inner energies, this collection of faculties, becomes dislocated as it were, or out of tune with its vehicle, and therefore cannot work properly through that physical vehicle, due, perhaps, to some accident; and hence disease results, or insanity, or intellectual disability.

A physical body which is an intellectually disabled person furnishes an example where the Reincarnating Ego did not find full expression through, so to speak, full entrance into, the physical vehicle. An intellectually disabled person, an insane person — irrevocably insane I mean — is one whose inner Ego is more or less absent in function, linked to the physical body nevertheless by chains of vitality, but not functioning fully and smoothly. The Ego in such cases as it were overshadows the brain, but does not illuminate it.

H. P. Blavatsky, explaining the evolution of man, and referring to the awakening of mind by the Mānasaputras in the Third Root-Race on this Globe Earth, writes:

... the two higher principles *can have no individuality on Earth*, cannot be *man*, unless there is (a) the Mind, the *Manas-Ego*, to cognize itself, and (b) the terrestrial *false* personality, or the body of egotistical desires and personal Will, to cement the whole, as if round a pivot (which it is, truly), to the physical form of man. It is the *Fifth* and *Fourth* principles [counting from below] — *Manas* and *Kāma-rūpa* — that contain the dual personality: the real immortal Ego (*if it assimilates itself to the two higher*) and the false and transitory personality, the *mayavi* or astral body, so-called, or the *animal-human* Soul — the two having to be closely blended for purposes of a *full* terrestrial existence. Incarnate the Spiritual Monad of a Newton grafted on that of the greatest saint on earth — in a physical body the most perfect you can think of — *i.e.*, in a two or even a three-principled body composed of its *Sthūla-śarīra*, *prāna* (life principle), and *Linga-śarīra* — and, if it lacks its middle and fifth principles, you will have created *an intellectually disabled person* — at best a beautiful, soulless, empty and unconscious appearance.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, pp. 241-242

## LAYA CENTERS

A few words must be said as to the channels of communication between the various hierarchies which not only fill but *are* the Universe. In the last century the teaching of science was that there was a definite amount of force or energy in the Universe, which was never diminished, but was convertible from one form to another; that the energy of electricity, for example, could reappear as an equivalent quantity of heat energy. {Expanded: That electricity, for example, could become light; light transformed to heat, etc. From: theosociety.org.} But the stronghold of materialism has been invaded since those days. Our modern scientists have recognized other planes than this physical plane to which our five senses respond. Matter or force can disappear from this plane or enter it from a higher, to explain which Sir James Jeans has introduced the hypothesis of ‘singular points,’ which are suggestive of the ‘laya centers’ taught in the Ancient Wisdom. We read in one of Dr. de Purucker’s works:

The dawn of manifestation, as *The Secret Doctrine* tells us, begins in and with the awakening of a laya-center. The Sanskrit word laya,... signifies in Esotericism that point or spot — any point or any spot — in space which, owing to karmic law, suddenly becomes the center of active life, first on a higher plane and later descending into manifestation through and by the lower planes. In one sense it (such a laya-center) may be conceived of as a canal, a channel, through which the vitality of the superior spheres is pouring down into, and inspiring, inbreathing into, the lower planes or states of matter, or rather of substance. But behind all this vitality there is a driving force,... There are mechanics in the universe, mechanics of many degrees of consciousness and power. But behind the pure mechanic stands the spiritual mechanician.

— *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 49

A laya center then is a center of *homogeneous* substance. Such a center is at the apex of every hierarchy, at the heart of every entity of lower degree in that hierarchy, indeed at the heart of every atom dwelling in it, thus allowing ingress and egress for consciousness everywhere. This makes it possible for any hierarch, such as the divine Architects mentioned above, to reach through its agents to the remotest corner of its kingdom, and coordinate every function. Modern science has an analogous conception in its ‘stepping down’ provision — referring to two differing rates of vibration which are bridged by an intermediate rate more nearly akin to both the others, though, of course, the hierarchical idea is not yet recognized by modern science.

The teaching of laya centers is intimately connected with the teaching concerning the birth of worlds, which teaching shows the weak points in the nebular hypothesis and completes an explanation the need for which

has been recognized. There is a simple analogy which will help to convey the idea of the *laya* state. If water is poured over a lump of sugar, the latter passes into its *laya* state. Its form has disappeared and it has entered into something else, but it may, under suitable conditions be precipitated again. Thus, as the time comes for a cosmic body to close its life-cycle, its *higher principles* are dissolved into the highest cosmic ether, before entering the intense spiritual activity of higher spiritual planes, where they enjoy their rest from manifestation for aeons. But as a new Great Day dawns, these Hierarchs descend through their *laya* centers, and collect their children who have been resting in the respective lower *laya* centers to which they by nature belong.

### EMANATIONS

The Hierarchical constitution might be called the secret anatomy of the Universe, and the energies and forces flowing from the infinite number of conscious beings of infinite grades and working through the living structure of the Kosmos might be called the secret physiology of the Universe — the *laya* centers being part of the structure and explaining Nature's marvelous method of uniting all parts of this stupendous organism so that they work together as one. For man, though more intimately connected with the higher centers of his *individual* hierarchy, is also linked by streams of energy with the Sun which gives him life; with the farthest star; with the unknown center of all life — the Boundless.

Now there is another aspect of Nature which, again to borrow the terms of science, might be called the embryology of Nature. How did these endless hierarchies come into being? The answer can be suggested by returning in thought to our tree symbol. Every hierarchy is born out of the one above it. This is the old doctrine of emanations, which ecclesiastical Christianity took such pains to cover up in the early centuries. If it had been understood, not only would the 'special creation' theory have collapsed, but much else. H. P. Blavatsky discusses this subject in *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, pp. 34-39. She calls attention to the false translation of the Hebrew word *asdt* as 'angels,' while it means 'emanations,' and shows that had this been understood rightly, "the mystery of the Christian trinity would have crumbled, carrying into its downfall the new religion into the same heap of ruins with the Ancient Mysteries." (We interpolate that the 'new religion' was not, as she explains, the *true* religion of the great Avatâra Jesus.)

This doctrine of Emanations was universal. It was taught in the old religions and also in the great philosophical schools of Alexandria. It could not be otherwise, for it is part of the archaic Wisdom-Religion, taught to the first human beings on this planet, and the fountainhead of all subsequent knowledge for the human race.



A deeper understanding of this marvelous, yet simple, working of Nature belongs to more advanced instruction, but the broad outlines are plain enough for the understanding of a child. A belief in the divine origin of all that is, in a Boundless Principle or Being in which everything is rooted, is inherent in all normal human beings, however much it may have been distorted by the various exoteric theologies. The teaching that everything is actually a part of this Boundless Principle is not always so clearly or so generally perceived in our confused age, though the Bibles of the past express in their various ways that “in Him we move, and live, and have our being.” Once, however, that this latter is plain to the mind, it follows that all life has grown out from the one Life. How else could it come into being? — since this one Life is Space itself, unmanifest when it breathes in its forces, slowly visible as the dawn of a new day opens.

Issuing from the inner center of Darkness, forever unknown, appear first the high gods in a living matrix of Space, every mathematical point of which contains the potentialities of the Whole, though every such point has its own latent individuality, its own characteristics, making it different, though one, with every other. These gods awaken to consciousness the gods one degree lower than themselves, and *emanate* into them their spiritual energies, as they themselves draw these from the great center of Life. [See quotation, top of page 296.] Or, to use another figure of speech, from them grows the next branch of the Tree of Life, already existing in the Divine Mind. From the latter grows another branch, until the tree fills all Space. Every subordinate entity is the *emanation* of another just above it. In the ancient ceremonies this teaching was symbolized by the lighting of many candles from the one, though the real significance of this ceremony is not understood in the West today. The first candle does not thereby lose any of its light, though it gives it freely to others. In an analogous manner every truly spiritual teacher awakens the sleeping fires in his disciples. Thus are the hierarchies born, children of their Hierarchy.

All this Universe is pervaded by me in my invisible form; all things exist in me, but I do not exist in them. Nor are all things in me; behold this my divine mystery: myself causing things to exist and supporting them all but dwelling not in them. Understand that all things are in me even as the mighty air which passes everywhere is in space. O son of Kuntî, at the end of the kalpa all things return unto my nature, and then again at the beginning of another kalpa I cause them to evolve again. Taking control of my own nature I emanate again and again this whole assemblage of beings, without their will, by the power of the material essence.

— *The Bhagavad-Gîtâ*, pp. 64-5

## INVOLUTION AND EVOLUTION

This is a vast subject, calling for separate treatment, but must be touched upon here because it is so inseparably united to the subject of Hierarchies, being indeed but another aspect of this latter. We hear much from scientists of evolution, yet it is impossible without involution. As the gods emanate, they *involve* themselves into their emanations, otherwise these lower vehicles could not *evolve*. Everything works in everything else and for everything else. Every lower has a still lower into which it must involve itself, partly for its own experience and partly to bring about the evolution of its inferior. And this implies that every last atom has locked up within itself the potentialities of the Whole. For example, man has his body into which he pours his energies, and these lower centers of his organism not only receive vital force from him, but are colored by his thoughts and desires, and Nature will hold him responsible to the last farthing for the trend he has given to their evolution. Incessantly the atoms enter and leave his body to migrate to another, either elevated or degraded by their contact with him.

Now evolution is the unfolding, the developing, the bringing out from the divine Seed within of all its latent capacities, its Swabhâva in short; its individual characteristics or the essence of its being. The whole effort of evolution, however, is not merely to bring out that which is within each individual Seed, but also that each individual Monad, and each Ego, and each soul, shall gather up from the matter in which it works other less progressed entities which become parts of itself, and shall carry them along with it on the arc of the evolutionary journey upwards.

— *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 113

There is much teaching in Theosophy regarding Evolution, which as said would be a subject in itself. In every great cycle, such as the life of a planet, there is a change at the halfway point. Spirit involves itself in matter until it can go no further in that great cycle. Then the pendulum swings in the opposite direction and matter involves itself in spirit. During the first half of this great Age, matter is being awakened or evolved through the influence of spirit. During the second half, matter is *involved* or raised up to the spiritual plane from which both started on their long journey. Matter, which is but the other pole of Spirit, returns awakened in consciousness. Spirit returns laden with its rich experiences, compensated for all it has passed through. These are the *great* sweeps of the pendulum, the dominating tendencies, but as a matter of fact both of these processes — involution and evolution — proceed concurrently; one cannot exist without the other. Together they are Nature's expression of cooperation, for Matter and Spirit are one, the terms being used relatively. Matter

evolves into Spirit and Spirit becomes more spiritual. Their mingling comes through emanations, and hierarchies are born through emanations.

## ONENESS AS A FACT IN NATURE

It is pertinent to inquire into the real value to the human race of the knowledge of the structural constitution of Nature. Why have the Masters of Compassion taken such infinite pains to present this philosophy at the present time? Certainly not to satisfy intellectual curiosity, but rather to awaken people's minds to the superb universal cooperation which exists; to make them see and feel their inescapable responsibility, and the glorious destiny awaiting those who accept it.

If the Golden Rule were practiced, Earth would be a paradise instead of the hell it is to so many. Everyone knows this, and certainly there is no ignorance as to the Golden Rule. Why is it so neglected? This cannot be explained simply by the evil impulses in human nature and its unadvanced evolution, for there have been past periods in history when this same human nature, no more highly evolved, has been happy and sane. Now the Earth reminds one of a huge schoolroom where most of the children are either regarding each other with suspicion, or openly fighting for some imagined prize, while the rest are painfully striving to keep the peace.

The trouble is that this army of human children have not for centuries been taught the truth about life. They have been taught that they were 'worms of the dust,' not potential gods; that they must forever wander in ignorance of themselves and of the facts of being; that they must look for favors from the Ruler of the Universe, who was said to be full of love, but who so often, to their minds, fails to give proof of this. They have been made to feel themselves as outcasts and not as partners in the Universe of which they are an inseparable part. They have not been made to understand the truly cooperative system of the Universe, with which they themselves must learn to cooperate. In short, they have not been made to see that oneness is a FACT in Nature. Yet even under these adverse circumstances, many have given proof of their innate divinity by intuitively sensing the truth. Had there been wise guides during all these Dark Ages, instead of the blind leading the blind, how general would have been the recognition. Now, however, that the results of false teachings have culminated, and have borne their evil fruit, and now that the suffering children of Earth are consciously or unconsciously *demanding* an explanation of life, as their minds have more fully evolved, this philosophy has been brought to them again to save them from themselves.

The teachings of Theosophy as a whole, of which one aspect is the explanation of the hierarchical constitution of the Universe, will give a *basis* for ethics which is absolutely necessary to bring about the *practice* of ethics. It is impossible that the average person of this age, without

knowledge of his real place in the universal scheme, should act in accordance with it. Without this knowledge he is in a vicious circle. His feeling of separateness increases his selfish tendencies, and these latter increase the former until life becomes impossible and there is a general explosion.

Those on the higher rungs of the Ladder, *conscious* of their place in the mosaic of Nature, pass on their knowledge to the fine Flowers of the human race — our Masters of Compassion — who in turn unceasingly seek to touch the minds of those below them who are receptive. It is their expressed hope that enough will be found willing to listen to their message in this critical transition age to stem the tide of disintegration, and gradually, through their help, to purge our civilization of its nightmares and insane delusions, and to awaken men's minds as well as hearts to a consciousness of the *reality* of harmony, love, cooperation, enveloping them and only waiting to be recognized. How foolish is selfishness!

Selfishness is restrictive; it is the foundation of all degeneration, of all moral decay, of all mental and physical weakness; it is crippling; it binds you in, and leaves you no room to expand and to grow. Selfishness is the root of all evil, and therefore of weakness of mind, of lack of faculty, of lack of power, of lack of judgment, of lack of discrimination, of lack of a feeling heart. Selfishness is therefore the fertile cause of all misfortune and pain. Everything that cripples the native faculties of the human constitution arises out of selfishness. It brings about a deplorable and evil-working view restricted to your own little circle of thought. You are then a prisoner, imprisoned in your own selfishness, and therefore are you fearfully crippled in life's noblest battles. Selfishness makes you a prisoner — and your prison is your lower self! — G. de Purucker, *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, pp. 91-92 second and revised edition

Theosophy, in explaining the cooperative system of the Universe, shows that Oneness is an actual *fact*, whether in our ignorance we like it or not, and it is impossible to run counter to *facts* for any length of time. No one can hurt another without hurting himself still more. This is an appeal to the head, but the appeal to the heart is yet stronger. The whole of Nature above this transitory human period is an overpowering expression of compassion and active love. Without the intelligent working of this Law of Compassion, the children of Earth would be like babes abandoned by their mothers to the cold winds of fate. But — if those whose minds have been awakened by this compassionate host choose deliberately to close the channel of inspiration and resist the call to move up higher, they must, perforce, fall like dead leaves upon the Earth to be ground up again in Nature's laboratory and start afresh. For all are a part of the Universe — an eternal part — and cannot get out of it.

The Great Heresy and the only real heresy is the idea that anything is separate, distinct, and different essentially, from other things. That is a wandering from natural fact and law, for Nature is nothing but coordination, cooperation, mutual helpfulness; and the rule of fundamental unity is perfectly universal: everything in the Universe lives for everything else.

— *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91

Theosophy thus teaches the noble, pure, superb system of ethics which has been the basis of all the great religions. It explains more fully than was possible to Jesus at his cycle, the basic cooperative structure of the Universe; it draws aside more than one veil which heretofore has kept humanity in a prison of ignorance, deprived of its heritage of knowledge. It reveals beauty where there has seemed confusion. It awakens responsibility and true dignity, and points clearly to the only door which opens the broad, peaceful, and beautiful arena of the larger life — the door of impersonality.

Behold the Truth before you: a clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled spiritual perception, a brotherliness for one's co-disciple, a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction.... a courageous endurance of personal injustice, a brave declaration of principles, a valiant defense of those who are unjustly attacked, and a constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the Secret Science (*Gupta Vidya*) depicts — these are the golden stairs up the steps of which the learner may climb to the Temple of Divine Wisdom.

— From an ancient writing quoted by H. P. Blavatsky for the Instruction of her students.



# The Astral Light

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## INTRODUCTORY

The work of Theosophists and others have familiarized us with the word 'astral' in such expressions as 'astral body,' 'seeing in the astral light,' 'getting on to the astral plane;' and in the following pages an attempt is made to furnish inquirers with an outline of the subject in accordance with the Theosophical teachings. The entire subject is vast and comprehensive; but, as with other subjects, it is possible to begin with what may be called an elementary book, which shall outline the main features without perplexing the neophyte with too many details; leaving these latter to be mastered in the course of further studies of the Theosophical teachings.

Though much has been written about the astral light in other works, we have in mind in this Manual a particular object, and that is to relate the subject to recent changes in world-thought which have taken place, especially as regards the scientific outlook. In a world in which the old-fashioned scientific universe is regarded as a plenum, and in which Nature and her laws are held to be fully explained by scientific formulas, such a conception as the astral light may appear to belong to that mysterious category known as the 'supernatural.' Here, however, the supernatural will be entirely rejected, and we propose to show that the astral light is a part of nature, and an *essential* part of Nature. It is realized today by scientists themselves that their former conceptions are by no means adequate to an explanation of the natural phenomena which have now come under their ken; and they are actually feeling their way towards ideas conformable to the Theosophical teachings.

The restricted spheres of both religion and science have left unexplored a very large realm of nature and of human experience, thus leaving us without guidance in a realm which it is of the utmost importance for us to understand. This lack is partially and very inadequately filled by various schools of psychology, psychoanalysis, and the like, which are groping largely in the dark. Again there is the whole vast subject of the 'Night Side of Nature'— apparitions, wraiths, presentiments, haunted houses, and the like, the reality of which is so well attested that few remain today who feel able to get away with a simple denial of the facts. Such things are natural, a part of Nature, and demand to be explained and understood.

### MEANING OF THE TERM 'ASTRAL LIGHT'

This term, though perhaps not the best that could be chosen, has come down to us from certain medieval mystics and passed into current use. *Astral* means 'starry,' and was used both by ancient and medieval philosophers to designate spheres above the terrestrial or earthy. In the



same way, such spheres were often spoken of as spheres of light or fire or ether. As to the word 'light,' we might substitute the word 'matter' and speak of astral matter instead of astral light. But in this case it would be a kind of matter that was self-luminous. We might also speak of the astral plane; and this may help us to realize that we need to feel more certain as to just what such words as 'light,' 'matter,' and 'plane,' really mean. How does science regard light? If it is a vibration, then we must suppose some vibrating medium, and this medium must be of a material nature. And if light is not a vibration, then we must suppose that it is itself a form of matter.

Theosophy recognizes several different *planes* of Nature. The plane familiar to us is called the physical plane; it is related to our physical senses. These senses are limited in their scope; they give us a partial view of Nature. While they are commonly regarded as our means of communication with Nature, it is also possible to regard them as windows which only allow us to see a small part of Nature and shut us out from the rest. From the reports received from these senses we have constructed an imaginary picture of the Universe: put in technical language, we have a set of concepts derived from our percepts. If we have other senses, more subtle ones, and these should come into play while our former senses became inactive, we should get quite another picture of the Universe. Things which we have taken for granted because we are so familiar with them, and which we have assumed to be universal and invariable, would be seen to be peculiar to the physical plane, to our physical consciousness, and not necessarily appropriate to other planes. Notions of space and time, magnitude and position, and density and force might be entirely different. We should have left the physical plane; we should be on the astral plane, in the astral light.

It is often convenient to consider the Universe under threefold aspects, just as we may consider man as spirit-soul-body. In this view the astral light would be the intermediate sphere between the spiritual and the physical, and thus it would be the soul of the world — as indeed it has often been called. Thus the Astral Light, in this view, would form a connecting link between the higher and lower worlds; it would stand to the higher world in the relation of a body, and to the lower world in the relation of a spirit. But it must be pointed out that such a threefold division of the Universe is not a complete analysis, and is only adopted for the convenience of a concise view; for Theosophy divides the Universe into many planes. In this latter view the Astral Light is the plane immediately above the physical plane, and is the lowest of a number of cosmic planes, reaching from the physical plane to the highest spiritual plane, in a gradation of steps of greater and greater refinement. To these other planes various names are given, such as Âkāśa and Aether; but it is not necessary at present to go into details as to these distinctions.

Thus the Astral Light or Astral Plane is another world, or another story of the world, related to a different set of human senses, and characterized by different relations of space, time, and other qualities. If it be asked whether the Astral Light is a form of matter or a form of energy, it may be answered that the former distinction made between these two by science is now becoming obliterated, and it is coming to be recognized that there is no essential distinction between matter and energy. Both of them are now regarded as particular and contrasted phases or aspects of some one thing which is more fundamental than either. What to call this one thing, and how to define it, is a question that now engages the attention of physicists. It is a very old idea that there must exist a permanent substratum to Nature, a basic substance, a protyle, an 'absolute,' a *prima material* of which all the various elements known to science are merely modifications; and not only so, but all the various forms of energy are also modifications. The quest for such a basic substance is one form of the quest for the 'philosopher's stone,' the great magic agent.

## SCIENTIFIC VIEWS

Physical science has found itself involved in difficulties and contradictions by the attempt to explain all physical phenomena in terms of physics alone; and has presented us with a picture of a Universe composed of indestructible units of matter, acted on by forces. But, if these forces are material themselves, we have matter impelling matter; and if they are not material, they must be something else — say spiritual — and materialistic science did not recognize any such thing. Further, this scheme does not provide any means of explaining how the immaterial forces can act on the material forces, or (which is the same thing) how energy can act across spaces assumed to be empty. These and similar difficulties disappear at once, as soon as we regard the physical world as merely a manifestation of energies acting behind the scenes, so that we can see the effects but not the causes, the shifting scenes but not the scene-shifters. We may now say, with all the authority of modern science behind us, that the former supposed permanent and indivisible atom of matter has now become resolved into a mere center of vibrations and energies; and this makes it necessary to assume a subtler and ultra-physical form of matter in which these vibrations and energies can inhere. Thus we have full authority for presuming the reality of at least one grade of matter which is not physical matter, and whose properties must therefore be different from those of physical matter. Also we can say that this matter partakes in an equal degree of the qualities usually assigned to energy and force. It becomes desirable therefore to use some such expression as 'force-substance' or 'energy-matter' to designate such an entity which is neither the one nor the other but both.

In view of the above, we can scarcely be accused of fantasy when we speak of the astral light as a world of energy-substance of a subtler order than the physical world, and underlying the latter as its prime mover.

The physical world, as compared with the astral world, is a world of results; while the astral world is to the physical world as a world of causes. The astral world is a world of forms and types, which find their expression in the physical world. This idea is necessary in order to account for many quite familiar happenings, which have no real explanation on orthodox lines of the older physics. Take for example the production of a tree from a seed. It may be granted that the materials for the tree are gathered from the soil and the atmosphere, but that is not enough explanation; we require to know why each seed should produce a tree conformable to its own nature and build these materials into one particular pattern and no other. It is because the entire pattern of the future tree is contained within the seed, and the growth of that seed is simply a process of unfoldment, during which the particles from soil and air are gathered together and built into the required form. And let us bear in mind that no question of size, no question of how such a large pattern can be packed into such a small seed, is relevant; for it has already been shown that our physical notions of space and dimension do not necessarily, or even probably, apply to the astral world. If thought desirable, we might here invoke that old friend the 'fourth dimension' as a possible means of escape from the difficulty.

We can easily extend our illustration of the seed and tree to other familiar cases. For instance, what explanation can physics give for the way in which the human body preserves its integrity of shape, although its physical particles are continually changing, some being cast off, others taken on? Why does a mole persist in the same place throughout life? If we try to evade the point by saying that the new particles take the same *place* as the old particles, then it is legitimate to inquire, What is a *place*? And it will be a puzzle to define a place apart from any objects which may occupy it. The rational explanation is that there is an astral body within the physical body, and that this inner body remains unchanged throughout all the changes of physical substance.

This is a topic which belongs more particularly to discussions on the constitution of man, and to the astral body in man, to which the reader may be referred; but it is impossible to avoid some overlapping, so intimately are the various Theosophical teachings interblended. In the same way we might adduce the phenomena of memory, a faculty which enables us to preserve the images of events, despite the continual changes in the physical substance of the brain. But we must deal specifically with the Astral Light in Nature, rather than as manifested in man particularly.

## A COSMIC PICTURE GALLERY

The Astral Light has been well called the world's memory and the cosmic picture gallery. It is Nature's storehouse of forms. Everything in the physical world pre-exists in the astral world as an image or type or form. Besides this, it is a great memory, Nature's memory; for it retains impressions of objects and events on the physical plane. Thus it is a great record. The thoughts of men perish not when the thinker dies; they have passed out into the Astral Light, where their records remain, and whence they can be recovered by the vision of the trained seer. This suggests that nothing can ever be irrecoverably lost. This carries us beyond the familiar notion of the passage of time, and offers us a picture in which past, present, and future coexist as one whole. The Astral Light contains the germs of all that is to be on the physical plane, and the records of all that has been.

Here again the recent advances in scientific philosophy will help us to an understanding. In seeking to interpret the more recent findings of experimental research, it has been found no longer sufficient to regard merely the position which objects occupy in space; it becomes necessary to define their position in *time*. And thus a fourth coordinate is added to the familiar spatial three, and we not only ask *where* a thing is, but *when*. And in place of objects we speak of *events*. With this help it becomes easier to understand how the astral light may be a storehouse of events.

Many familiar phenomena have been pushed aside or declared impossible for no better reason than that they could not be explained by the orthodox science of the time. But when we have a simple explanation ready to hand there is no reason to reject them or to try not to see them. Thought transference is a matter of common occurrence, especially between people closely related or associated with each other. We often fail to remember something and leave off trying; and later on the memory comes back unexpectedly. We fail to solve a problem, and the solution pops into our head suddenly at some later time. We live in an atmosphere of thought, just as we live in an atmosphere of air; and ideas come into the head from we know not where, and pass out again we know not whither. Thoughts are things; they may not come under the definition of physical matter as 'that which can be handled and weighed;' but we have seen that there may be other sorts of matter, having altogether different properties.

It is not only thoughts, but also emotions, which are stored up in the astral light and passed from one human being to another; and this explains the unconscious and unseen influence which we exercise upon one another. It is really impossible to sin in secret; an evil thought or feeling will poison the Astral Light as a dirty body would foul the water in which we bathed, or an unwholesome breath might pollute the atmosphere. On the other side of the picture, our good thoughts and aspirations must have their influence; and this influence is more potent because it rises to a higher

plane. The importance of individual responsibility becomes greatly increased in view of this. And this leads us to speak of the connection of the Astral Light with the law of Karma.

## **THE ASTRAL LIGHT AND KARMA**

While we may believe that our present experiences are the fruit of our past acts or thoughts, and that our present acts and thoughts will beget future consequences for ourselves, we often fail to see the links connecting cause with effect. This is not surprising in view of the limitation of our knowledge of Nature: we see only a small part of Nature, and there must be much that we do not see. But the teaching about the Astral Light will enable us to supply some of the missing links. Every act, every thought and desire, imprints itself on the Astral Light, so that we may be said to 'people our current in space' with our own creations, the offspring of our thoughts and deeds. And the consequences of such acts will return to their doer in accordance with two laws, for which we readily find analogies in physical science. One is the law of action and reaction; the other is the law that like attracts like. Any energy thrown forth in one direction tends, when the force is spent, to flow back in the opposite direction, as in the swing of a pendulum or a stone that is thrown up; and as each impression is stamped with the quality of its creator, the law of affinity tends to bring it back to him. Karma is the adjuster of disturbed equilibrium; it may even be said that what we call an act is only half an act; the whole act includes the reaction as well. But the deed and its reaction may be separated by long intervals, so that we fail to trace the connection. The two may even be separated by the gap of physical death, so that the causes set in motion in one incarnation will not yield their results until a later incarnation. But the Astral Light provides for this, for it is the great storehouse of Nature and can preserve impressions indefinitely.

Misunderstanding as to Karma may be caused by confusing physical acts with moral acts; and much of this misunderstanding will be cleared up if we bear in mind that the Astral Light is only one of seven cosmic planes, and that Karma acts on all planes. Also, we must remember that Karma is not a blind mechanism, such as is imagined by materialistic thought. There can be no such thing as a blind mechanism anywhere; life and consciousness lie behind all phenomena, even the phenomena of physical matter, as is better realized now than it was last century. It may be convenient sometimes to use mechanical terms in speaking of Karma and the Astral Light, but we must not forget that the Astral Light, like the rest of Nature, is alive. Spirit and Matter are opposite poles of the same fundamental substance; and the higher we advance from physical matter up through the various cosmic planes towards spirit, the more accentuated become the spiritual qualities. So the Astral Light may be thought of as an

intermediate grade between Spirit and Matter, or between Mind and Matter (it is hard to find exact terms in our language); and when we remember that there are seven planes of the Astral Light, we can more readily understand how Mind and Matter may be connected by a series of graduating links.

When we speak of a chain of causation connecting acts with their results, we must bear in mind that the links in this chain are not the inert bodies dealt with in physical mechanics, but are more or less conscious living beings, endowed with volition and purpose to a greater or less extent. It is taught that when a thought-form leaves our mind it may coalesce with an *elemental*, and by this coalescence there is engendered a living being, which thereupon begins a life of its own. Its conscious life consists entirely in the tendency to repeat the act which it represents, so that it is instinctual and is not endowed with more intelligence than is necessary to enable it to execute that function. Here then we have an intelligible explanation of the phenomenon called ‘habit,’ as also of a large class of actions known as ‘impulsive.’ Each one of us has surrounded himself with a host of such elemental beings, which are continually trying to express themselves through our minds or our bodily mechanism. Such words as tendency, proclivity, and the like, as used in common parlance or by science, are mere counters; they are abstract nouns or uncashed checks or algebraic letters for unknown values; so that our explanation is not superfluous but necessary.

As soon as we begin to study our own daily experiences, with the above ideas in mind, we shall find plenty of corroboration for the teachings. Previously we had overlooked this evidence because we were not seeking it. It helps people greatly in the work of understanding and ruling themselves, if they can realize that they are to a great extent permitting themselves to be controlled by actual obsessing beings — namely, these thought-elementals and elementals of desire, continually prompting to unconsidered speech or acts, and inspiring moods of anger, sarcasm, levity, etc., which we afterwards regret; and a poor excuse it is to say that ‘I don’t know what made me do it, but something came over me.’

## **DANGERS OF THE LOWER ASTRAL LIGHT**

That stratum of the Astral Light which lies nearest to the physical Earth is its lowest and coarsest layer; and it is this layer which teems with what might be called the effluvia of human thoughts and emotions and passions and gross actions. This region is peopled with a great variety of beings, endowed with little or no intelligence, instinctual in their action, for the most part harmful to humanity; and there is constant interaction between the two planes. For the most of us, our physical bodies act as a merciful shield, shutting us out from these beings and protecting us against

their noxious influence. The Theosophical teachings tell us that, after the death of the body, a ghost survives for a time in the astral realms, awaiting what is called the 'second death,' which liberates the soul from its astral remnants. The extensive lore of ghost stories, apparitions, warnings, banned spirits, hauntings, etc., provides abundant evidence of the actuality of this belief, which has been familiar to humanity in all ages and countries. In cases where the person has died with a strong desire in his mind, his double has appeared to survivors, seeking their prayers or the burial of its bones, and so forth. The astral remains of very sensual and evil persons survive in the astral light, and seek to perpetuate their existence by preying upon the living; and this accounts for many cases of what can only be described as obsession. We often read in the papers of comparatively harmless but nervously unstable individuals being seized with sudden unaccountable homicidal mania, and perpetrating some act of violence which they afterwards regret and are unable to account for.

In short, not to dwell on a topic treated elsewhere in our literature, we may describe this lower Astral Light as a most undesirable region tenanted by a variety of undesirable beings. Those, therefore, who presumptuously seek to force an entry into this realm are guilty of a most unwise action: they may open a door which they cannot shut again; they may establish links which they cannot again sever; they may expose themselves to temptations which they cannot resist; they may upset the delicate balance of their nervous system and their mental and emotional nature. To engage in any practices with a view to opening up communication with the astral plane or its denizens, is conduct which can only be described as the foolhardiness of ignorance carried to a high degree. Only an exceptionally strong, pure, and trained character can withstand the dangers of this realm; and it is not without justification that students of Occultism are warned against any such procedure.

## **THE ASTRAL LIGHT AND EVOLUTION**

Science has found difficulty in making facts fit theories, because it regards the physical world only. The physical organisms of plants and animals present a series of graduated forms, and their resemblances give rise to the idea that they are derived, the one from the other, by a process called biological evolution. But observation has proved that these species are a set of disconnected links, each remaining true to its own kind, and with no visible connecting links or gradations between them. It is even found that variations produced by an alteration of the environment, such as happens when we cultivate domestic breeds, are not permanent, but that there is a tendency for the species to revert to its original type as soon as the special environment is removed. This difficulty arises from not taking

into account the astral plane. The changes by which one type passes into another take place in the astral form, which is plastic.

Actually the organism is a living conscious soul, which grows, develops, and changes by its own evolutionary purpose. These changes are then transmitted to the astral form, and thence to the physical organism. But it is only when the change has been completed astrally that its physical counterpart appears. Thus the physical organisms do not present an unbroken continuous line, but a succession of steps. When we view a spiral staircase from one side, we see a number of separate stages, one above another, but do not see the continuous stairway by which these are connected.

## THE ASTRAL LIGHT AND ETHER

According to the atomo-mechanical theory of the Universe, we have atoms separated from each other by empty spaces, and yet acting on each other; and the difficulty has been to provide an explanation for this seeming action at a distance. It would seem that it is necessary to suppose a medium between the atoms for the conveyance of energy from one to another. If this medium is itself material, we have not solved the original problem, but merely moved it one step farther. But if the medium is not material, what is it? Again, in order to supplement the undulatory theory of light, it was necessary to suppose a medium, purely hypothetical and not subject to direct observation, to which was given the name of *ether*. Many obstacles were encountered because theorists would insist on trying to endow this ether with the properties of physical matter, especially as to density and rigidity. But all that was really necessary in this medium was that it should be able to transmit vibrations, and there was no justification for attributing to it those other properties which are associated with vibration in physical matter. It is clear that what is needed is a form of ultra-physical matter; and its properties can only be ascertained by experiment, and not by inference and calculation from known physical data. There must be a substratum for the manifestation of luminous, electromagnetic, and cosmic ray phenomena; and this would seem to answer to one of the subdivisions of the Astral Light. The Astral Light, instead of being an annex or upper story to Nature, is a necessary component, and without it the physical Universe would fall apart or be reduced to absolute stagnation.

Such things as weather, storms, and earthquakes also stand in need of the Astral Light to complete the explanation. Science may assign meteorological phenomena to a number of secondary causes, such as convection currents in the atmosphere, deflected by the Earth's rotation; and they may trace them farther back to magnetic conditions, and even to fluctuations in the magnetic field caused by what goes on upon the Sun. A



knowledge of the Astral Light enables us to carry the chain of causation a step farther. Moreover it supplies a link between the mental and moral atmosphere of humanity and the terrestrial phenomena which are so often suspected of being related to them. Earthquakes are attended by various mechanical phenomena, such as subsidence and the slipping of faults; but it is at least an open question whether these should be regarded as causes or as effects. Besides it is well known that most animals and some human beings can feel the approach of an earthquake before it happens. If the Earth is a vast globe, subject to continual contraction through loss of heat, the great wonder is that it remains as still as it does; and we wonder if it is not perhaps *held* still. The Theosophical teaching is that the Astral Light is subject to tensions, caused by the thoughts and emotions of humanity; and that such tensions find sudden relief, thus agitating the crust of the Earth. As to meteorological phenomena in general, it is obvious that, however many physical causes we may assign to them, they are still left in the category of 'chance.' But when we introduce the Astral Light as a factor, we see a way of connecting these happenings with the mental and moral condition of the inhabitants of the Earth; the unsatisfactory idea of chance is avoided, and rationality is introduced into the explanation. Earthquakes occur most frequently in particular regions, but it is natural that when anything is shaken it should give way in its weakest spots, where the rocks are displaced or broken or where there is a dynamical tension due to inequality of pressure. There should nowadays be enough machinery at the disposal of science, in the way of sunspots and electromagnetic influence, to carry the explanation of earthquakes a step farther than mere mechanism; but still there would be a lack of links to connect them with mental and moral phenomena.

## THE ASTRAL LIGHT AND HISTORY

We have spoken of the need for the Astral Light in order to give a scientific explanation of Nature, of the impossibility of explaining evolution without it, and of its role in showing the connection between human acts and the results which we reap from them. We have now to show how necessary the idea is for a rational understanding of history. In history, as elsewhere, the current views may be roughly divided into the theistic and the rationalistic. According to the former it is Providence which directs events; the latter seeks to represent history as a causal chain in which past events determine future events, or as a kind of evolution. It is very evident that, if history were such a chain of cause and effect, with no influence entering it from without, it would resemble a stream slowly winding down hill, and could not possibly rise to any higher source. The Providence idea is much the better of the two; without Providence we must

fain introduce vague unknown influences grouped under the word 'chance,' a word which is merely a confession of ignorance.

History is the complex drama of human souls, each one growing and evolving, and all interacting with one another, the whole movement being fed by a continual fount of inspiration from within each individual. And the most potent effects are seen to be produced by a comparatively few individuals of extraordinary power, who give birth to new ideas, initiate movements, inaugurate new eras of thought, becoming the center of groups and passing on their work to their followers. But what we are considering in this place is the function of the Astral Light in the historical process. Thoughts mold events, but the Astral Light is the medium between thoughts and events. Hence the action of thoughts on events is not immediate and direct. The Astral Light acts as a great storer and accumulator, receiving impress from thoughts, and gradually transmitting that impress to events. As each individual bears about with him his character in the form of habits impressed upon his own astral substance by his past thoughts and acts, so on the large scale there are national characters and racial characters, due to deep impressions in the Astral Light and these may be called habits on the large scale. The tremendous force and fixity of such habits — or fashions, prejudices, or racial characters — is well known. In what do they inhere? What answer can science give? The intimate biological study of heredity has given us a notion of germ-cells handed on from generation to generation, whose function it is to preserve the type amid temporary variations.

Here then we have a ghost of an explanation, but the germ-cell is a very small apex upon which to balance so great a weight; at best it is a detail in the process. These tendencies inhere in Nature's great storehouse, the astral light. It surrounds the Earth like a mighty atmosphere in which we all live. Each race and nation has its own Astral Light, and the whole of humanity has its Astral Light. This stores up impressions tenaciously and enduringly, and it takes a great deal to change them. How else explain the well-nigh indelible characteristics of nations, lasting through the centuries and handed on with every succeeding generation? We are all born into such a ready-made atmosphere, and it takes a strong individual character to contend against it and modify its influence.

Many unaccountable happenings in history find ready explanation in this way. Take for instance the famous gunpowder plot in the reign of James I of England. Historians are at a loss to explain why a group of gentlemen of excellent character should incontinently decide to blow up the king, the royal family, and the whole of the House of Lords, House of Commons, and various government executives in one vast massacre, which would have left the nation at the mercy of mob law and might well have brought the separate national existence of England to an end; and should have actually placed the powder and stationed the desperado with

his matches, only to be thwarted at the last moment by what seemed a mere accident. What influence could make people depart so far from their natural character as to commit an atrocity of such unparalleled magnitude? The answer is found in the state of the human mind in those times. Europe was mad over religious controversies; France was split into rival creeds, bent on mutual extermination — the massacre of St. Bartholomew was recent. The infection had spread to England. It was what we should call a 'psychic wave.'

From time to time the astral light grows surcharged with influences from the thoughts of men; and as Nature tends ever to restore equilibrium, relief is found in violent outbursts or psychic cataclysms, which are strictly analogous to epidemics of disease. The immediate consequences are disturbing, but the result is purification.

## DENIZENS OF THE ASTRAL LIGHT

It is not to be supposed that there is any world, any plane of great Nature, not inhabited and peopled with living beings, even as is our own familiar physical plane. The whole Universe teems with living beings, appropriate to their particular spheres. If human beings such as we could not live on the planets, this is no reason for inferring that there are no humans at all there; and the same with the other planes of Nature. As physical beings live on the physical plane, so astral beings live on the astral plane, adapted to their habitat as we are to ours. It must, however, be confessed that this is a ticklish subject to deal with, and one of which it may be said with some truth that ignorance is bliss. For, as has been said, we are mercifully protected by our physical bodies from too close contact with the pernicious influences of the lower Astral Light, and to remove that protection prematurely is to court disaster.

Yet on the other hand, knowledge may protect; so we must try to hold a just balance between these opposite maxims. To direct people's attention to pernicious astral denizens may be equivalent to encouraging them in the very thing they ought to avoid; for the morbid imagination of weak people may conjure up hobgoblins that have no existence outside that imagination, and cases of obsession are much better cured by a diversion of attention to healthy pursuits than by a morbid introspection or psycho-analysis of the slums of consciousness. Nevertheless it is of benefit to know that many of the impulses which we dignify by attributing them to ourselves may be actually the result of evil promptings from entities which are not ourselves at all but merely intrusive elements. It will place us on our guard and enable us to defeat them by taking our stand firmly on our own selfhood.

It is stated elsewhere that following the disintegration of the physical body of man, there is a temporary survival of the astral and lower psychic

parts of his constitution; and that in some cases this may persist for a long while, perpetuating its life by vampirizing the living, such contact being caused by weakness and intemperance in the living, or perhaps inadvertently courted through spiritualistic practices or dabbling in 'psychism.' Such a psychic remnant or 'spook' is of course destitute of the moral element, because all the higher part of the human nature has separated and passed elsewhere; so that it is merely actuated by the desire to satisfy its gross instincts. So here is one kind of denizen of the lower Astral Light. The existence of Earth-bound spirits, ghosts, larvae, etc., has always been recognized, and the mind will recall instances of various modes of worshiping them or propitiating them, or warding them off. Intercourse with such creatures is harmful both to them and to us, for they should be allowed to die out naturally and not be kept in an unnatural existence.

Next we may consider that class of beings known by such names as Elementals, Fairies, Nature-spirits, Nymphs, etc. It is found that classical antiquity believed in nymphs, dryads, and other beings inhabiting rivers, mountains, forests, trees, etc.; and that many peoples of today whom we call uncivilized believe in such beings; also that there is no nation but has its stories of fairies and nature-spirits. This kind of belief is called by our 'wise men' 'animism' and defined as the practice of attributing life to non-living things. But these wiseacres have put the cart before the horse. It is they who have attributed inanimation to living things. The ancient and popular view is right. Everything in the Universe is a living being of one kind or another. To the ancients a tree was a living soul, which they called a dryad or some similar name; the visible tree was merely the outer garment of this living being. The dryad did not inhabit the tree, but *was* the tree.

So with other nature-spirits; the Astral Light is the home of these beings, all of whom are on the path of evolution, each in its appropriate stage. It would be absurd to limit the number of kinds of animate beings to those alone who happen to be on the plane of physical matter. But this is a large subject and we must leave its special treatment for another occasion.

As for elementals, no physical action can take place without them; they constitute a necessary factor among those components which contribute to the performance of an action, and are represented in science by gaps which have to be provisionally filled by words of vague meaning, like 'force' or 'affinity.' What after all do we mean by the *properties* of matter? A more suitable expression would be the *dispositions*, *instincts*, or *proclivities* of matter. For mind lies behind all, and physical phenomena are merely the expression of mental states. Hence there must be in the astral world the elementals of all actions in the physical world. When we hum a tune we create an elemental, which is quite apt to worry us by

insisting on being sung at inappropriate moments; as though we were haunted by a fly settling on us.

This little illustration will suggest fruitful thought as to the nature of habits. Our actions generate elementals, endowed with our own vitality and tending to come again to repeat themselves and to be revitalized. Thus we get an idea of an elemental as a being which can only do one thing, and whose whole life consists in doing that thing over and over again. If this is not a good explanation of habits, we should always be ready to hear of a better.

## SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF THE ASTRAL LIGHT

Since the astral light teems with influences put there by the thoughts and emotions of man, and since there is constant reaction of the Astral Light upon man, then it follows that the Astral Light must play a very important part in determining human conduct considered as a society. The appearance of epidemics of disease simultaneously in widely separated regions is but imperfectly accounted for by the theory of minute germs transported by people or blown on high air currents. And even so, we have still to explain the *origin* of such epidemics, whose incidence is so little connected with physical events and so unpredictable that we can only fall back upon such weak words as 'chance' and 'casual.' But, as has been said, physical events are the copy of astral events; physical epidemics follow upon astral epidemics, and these latter again are engendered by distempers in human thought. A familiar analogy is provided by physical science. We cannot transmit a sound wave through the air from Europe to America, but we can transform that sound wave into radio waves, then transmit them, and then reconvert them into sound waves. Similarly, epidemics may be transmitted, and their transmission explained by regarding them as being conveyed on astral currents and reproduced as physical diseases elsewhere.

But apart from physical epidemics there are astral epidemics, or perhaps we should say psychic epidemics; and in the case of these also the usual physical explanations do not suffice to explain all the facts. The propagation of such epidemics is of course greatly increased by word of mouth and the influence of the press, but these material means will not explain all the phenomena; for we find waves of opinion, emotion, enthusiasm, sudden crazes, appearing without assignable cause in widely separated places at the same time.

History furnishes us with strange instances of epidemic hysterias, and in the present day we may find great religious revivals sweeping over countries, or a war fever spreading over the world. What is called crowd or mass psychology is well known and shows the existence of something which is much more than the mere sum-total of the minds of the

component individuals, for these individuals are swept away against their own judgment. Such ideas should not be strange in view of the machinery now provided by science, in the shape of etheric waves, sunspots, etc., to explain the transmission of influences.

It has been said that 'Thoughts are Things,' and it is true. Ideas float into our mind, and we cannot tell where they come from; we work them over in our mind, and they pass from us, we know not whither. Of course there is a constant interchange of thoughts between people, and thought-forms are passing on currents in the Astral Light, like objects floating in water; we suck them in, and pass them out again in modified form. And not merely thoughts, but emotions — or, better still, thought-emotions; currents of energy which cause emotions in us and prompt to action. Which of us can claim to be master of his thoughts and emotions, immune against influences coming from an unseen source, able to stand independent of this general atmosphere in which we are immersed? Truly, our individual separation grows thin when we think of this thought-atmosphere which we all share, from which we receive, and to which we give. And think of the responsibility which is on each one of us! No person can sin alone; the privacy of his thoughts cannot shield him from guilt. A thought is an act, and every act produces consequences. Before blaming others for acts which we would not commit, do we not need to be sure of our own unexpressed desires and imagination? May we not ourselves have contributed to their delinquency?

But for consolation we may look at the other side of the picture and realize that no *good* thought, no high aspiration, no feeling of true generous love and compassion, can be entertained by us without passing out from us as a potent force to work healing in other lives; and such a thought is all the more potent because it acts on a higher plane.

There are many problems studied by men of science and by those interested in bettering social conditions, which would be greatly clarified by an acquaintance with the astral light and with its counterpart the Astral Body of man. For instance, the question of heredity, which is by no means fully elucidated by the findings of scientific research. The microscope has revealed a number of minute factors, whose behavior has been most carefully studied; yet it is found that that behavior is unexpected and incalculable; so that what is studied is effects rather than causes. We see the scenes shifting but not those who stand behind and shift the scenery to and fro. It is just hear that the Theosophical explanation steps in and completes that given by science. Logic would suggest that the causes of physical phenomenon cannot themselves be physical; and, this being the case, it is useless to seek them in the physical world. What we can see under the microscope are things at the first stage of their appearance in physical three-dimensional space, and which previously have existed in

the astral space. In this condition they do not come with the ken of the physical senses.

Heredity is by no means exclusively physical; it is also psychic and mental (not to mention other kinds); and the growing organism, both before and after birth, is subject to influence from the astral plane, which must yield effects that cannot be traced by a mere examination of the microscopic physiological processes. Such a science as eugenics, admirable though its aims may be, is handicapped by a too exclusive attention to the physical aspect of the question, and treating the problem as though it were the same for man as for animal. If this analogy holds good at all, then such a selective process of mating as is contemplated might be expected to produce a race excellent in physical and animal qualities, but lacking in most of what makes the man different from the animal. Legal restrictions on the multiplication of insane or degraded types is one thing, and attempts to breed a superior race by scientific and legislative action is quite another. We need first to understand better the complex nature of man.

But this is not the place to multiply instances of this kind; and they may be left to the reader to supply for himself.

### **PSYCHIC PHENOMENA, APPARITIONS, ETC.**

Subject to what has been said above about the great risks attending heedless dabbling in psychism, a word may be said as to the relation of the Astral Light to the above matters. There are innumerable accounts of apparitions of recently deceased persons, the foreseeing of coming calamities, ghostly warnings, the *poltergeist* or racketing spirit, and suchlike; and in these cases certain peculiar and comparatively infrequent conditions bring about a temporary connection between the astral and physical worlds. Relations of time, space, physical obstacles, etc., are seen to be different on the astral plane; communication between the living and the dead is difficult, and is often only achieved by the mediation of particular people endowed with a mediumistic constitution. A study of such records will provide much information and serve to confirm what we have said about the astral plane.

Glass, crystal, water, some metals, have a power of condensing (if that is the right word) the astral fluid, thus assisting the efforts of a seer; whence is explained the use of crystal globes, magic mirrors, and the like. The phenomena of psychometry, by which some people are able, by handling some object such as a letter or article of attire, to arrive at much information about the writer or wearer, is an instance of the power which the astral light has of preserving images of events. It is an intriguing thought that nothing can perish, for psychometry proves to us by unimpeachable evidence that even scenes belonging to a remote past can

thus be recovered. Explanations along the lines of our physical experience are out of order and are necessarily futile. Observation must precede theory; a large range of unfamiliar phenomena must be studied before we can venture to attempt their formulation into a set of laws.

Foreknowledge, prediction, the seeing of events not yet enacted in the physical world, presents a great obstacle to our power of conception. It is evident that here we have to deal with the nature of *time*. Coming events cast their shadow before them, it is said; if we can see the shadow, we may forecast the coming event. But what is foreseen is not a certainty; it is only a probability of greater or less degree. Some of the stories of forewarnings show that the foreseen danger was averted by the precautions taken by the dreamer or seer. It would seem that the astral time and physical time do not exactly gear together.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Students of Theosophy, especially those new to the subject, may find themselves perplexed in seeking a definite idea of the relation of the astral light to other cosmic principles. There are several reasons for this. In the first place let it be said that it is not desirable to expect a too narrow and hard-and-fast definition, for by striving to do that we narrow down the idea into something which will fit conveniently into our existing stock of ideas; and thus we limit the conception. It is necessary therefore for the student to keep his mind fluid until he has had time to study the matter from various angles and to relate it to the many collateral subjects from which it is inseparable. If he fails to do this, he will find what will seem to be contradictions; that is, his studies will bring him to statements which do not agree with the too narrow ideas which he has already formed from his first incomplete study. The difficulty here is the same as is met with in any other study; statements which at first appear contradictory are later found to be merely supplementary.

Again, the term 'Astral Light' itself was borrowed from certain old philosophers, and has been borrowed many times by one writer or another, so that its meaning came to be vague and various; as those who used it were perhaps not very well informed, or each one used it in a sense of his own. Accordingly, when we read such a book as H. P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, we cannot safely assume that the term is always used in exactly the same sense, and shall need some judgment to decide in what sense it is being used at a given time. Sometimes other writers are referred to, such as Eliphas Lévi, and the word may be used in their sense. Sometimes we find it used as synonymous with Âkâša, and sometimes as sharply distinguished therefrom. Such perplexities, however, will disappear on a more intimate study of *The Secret Doctrine*, and no doubt will be left as to the real meaning.



At the present time too we have the advantage of Dr. de Purucker's works, in which the teachings of *The Secret Doctrine* are so clearly analyzed; and it is now possible to give to the term 'Astral Light' a more precise meaning, which can be regarded as the accepted meaning. In *The Esoteric Tradition*, by G. de Purucker, pages 952 and following, we find a tabular arrangement of the principles of the Universe, of which the following is a brief summary:

1. The Supreme Monad or Root, from which emanate the other principles, and called Paramâtman.
2. Alaya, Âkâśa, the origin of Cosmic Soul.
3. Mahat, or Cosmic Mind.
4. Cosmic Kâma, the desire or impelling force of the Universe.
5. Cosmic Jîva or Vitality.
6. Astral Light; Cosmic Ether.
7. Sthûla-śarîra; the Physical Universe.

This then shows Astral Light as the next cosmic principle above the plane of our physical Universe. It also shows Astral Light as the medium through which play the life-forces or 'lives,' collectively called cosmic Jîva, impelled as these are by cosmic desire. Finally Astral Light is a medium connecting cosmic Mind with the physical plane of Nature. On pp. 949-50 of the same book we see the corresponding principles in the human constitution, the place of Astral Light being occupied by the Linga-śarîra.

It is always important to remember that these various cosmic principles do not actually lie one above the other in layers, but are interblended. It is often necessary to represent them in a tabular form for purposes of explanation, but we must avoid letting that tabular form create a false picture in our mind. Physical science has made us familiar with the idea of different states of matter occupying the same space and interpenetrating one another; and this might be represented by a diagram in which they were placed one *above* another.

Furthermore, every septenary division in Nature is subdivided, and subdivided again, on the same septenary plan so that we can speak of various planes of the Astral Light and use such expressions as higher or lower Astral Light.

We find the following in G. de Purucker's *Occult Glossary*.

The Astral Light is with regard to the material realms of the Solar System the copy or reflection of what the Âkâśa is in the spiritual realms. The Astral Light is the mother of the physical, just as the spirit is the mother of the Âkâśa or, inversely, the physical is merely the concretion of the astral, just as the Âkâśa is the veil or concretion of the highest Spiritual.



# Psychic Powers

Helen Savage

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## INTRODUCTORY

The craze to obtain superphysical powers, so apparent today, is nothing new. Nor is the appearance of such powers a recent evolutionary development. The literature of every people is full of references, historical as well as fictional, to certain individuals who can do things of a 'magical' character, which the laws of physical science, known today, do not explain.

Such persons may be able to talk with 'spirits': they hear phantom voices and see visions, and often think they are guided by angelic beings. They may be able to conjure up visions of the past, or of things happening at a distance, or they can foretell the future. Sometimes they are able to override the normal laws of Nature by handling red-hot coals and similar things without being burned. Sometimes they are able under trance to draw and write things that are ordinarily quite beyond their capacities. Others may have the power of exerting a sort of enchantment or fascination over their fellows and of making these latter do their bidding; or they can heal the sick by the 'laying on of hands' and in other ways.

It is noted that in the presence or atmosphere of a certain type of such individuals strange happenings take place. 'Raps' and other sounds may be heard that are caused by no known agency; or there are the ringing of bells and sounds of musical instruments. Furniture perhaps moves of itself, and other household objects become disarranged. There may appear in the air what seem to be human hands and faces and ultimately complete figures.

The above examples, and many others that might be enumerated, are all included under the general category of psychic powers. In their essential nature these powers are not evil, though they vary widely in quality, ranging from those which are closely associated with the physical nature of man to those which work more closely with his spiritual nature.

Then, too, religious belief and custom has always profoundly affected the status of such powers, and it seems likely that their development along lower or higher lines has run parallel with, and has been a fundamental part of, the growth and influence of religion among the people. For instance, at a time when the Mysteries were still influencing the life of ancient Greece, a high type of clairvoyant was used in the sacred oracles, the priestess on the tripod being considered holy, and cherished and protected from contamination of any sort. The Temples of Aesculapius in Greece, where the art of healing was highly developed, and where the most remarkable cures were performed, were a recognized part of the Mysteries themselves.

On the other hand, during the Dark Ages in Europe most unwholesome types of 'psychic epidemics' occurred, connected in some cases with sorcery. And as late as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

psychics were still believed to be witches and were put to death by the Church.

There are, in fact, certain cyclic periods in history when there occur unusual outcroppings of these psychic manifestations. At such times the numbers of these abnormal individuals increase. Others through curiosity and the element of wonder are carried along on the psychic wave. The whole matter is given undue importance and an emphasis which almost always reacts harmfully upon those thus engaged, because they are ignorantly invoking strange forces which they cannot control. We are at the present time in such a cycle. It is with this cycle that we are particularly concerned: how it is affecting Western people, and what light Theosophy throws upon the whole matter.

The present cycle started in the middle of last century with the rise of modern Spiritualism. The movement spread like an epidemic, first through America and later to some extent in the European countries. About this time there had been a growing interest in cures effected by means of hypnotism, and combined with new possibilities these experiments suggested, the spiritualistic movement was welcomed as a new revelation. Reputed clairvoyants developed into mediums, 'spirit circles' were formed in many families, and it was obvious that a great many people were rushing headlong into experimentation and practices whose dangers they little dreamed of.

Already by the last quarter of the century much harm had been done, both in the disastrous effect on mediums themselves, and in the tremendous interest that had been aroused in every and any sort of abnormal power. A glamour had been cast over it all and many were feverishly hunting after the most unwholesome sorts of inner development with complete ignorance of the nature of what they were after.

Part of the mission of the Theosophical Society, founded in 1875, was to call a halt to this mad rush for phenomena and powers. This was to be done principally in two ways:

(a) By trying to illumine hearts and minds of men with a spiritual light which so far transcended the will-o'-the-wisp flickerings of psychism, that the latter would lose their fascination.

(b) By presenting a scientifically sound rationale of these lower powers, thereby giving logical and convincing proof, first, of the existence of such powers, and second, of their extreme danger.

It was in this cause that H. P. Blavatsky, when she first came to America in 1873, had been instructed to work with the Spiritualists. In her own words:

I am here in this country sent by my Lodge on behalf of truth in modern spiritualism, and it is my most sacred duty to unveil what is, and expose what is not....[See *H. P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement*, by C. J. Ryan, chs. 5 and 6.]

But beyond a certain point they were not willing to accept her explanations of phenomena based on the Ancient Wisdom which she had been taught. Many of them even repudiated her, and thereby they lost a valuable champion and gave up the opportunity offered to them to put their experimentations upon a sound basis and at the same time satisfy the natural human longing for evidence of postmortem survival.

There was, further, the counter-current of materialism that had to be reckoned with. While the simple-minded, as well as others of a mystical type, were being sucked into the psychic vortex, the great army of the skeptics saw in these manifestations only trickery and hallucination; and since both these factors are abundantly found in the annals of Spiritualism, the skeptics had a pretty good case.

The situation was a difficult and peculiar one because the psychic demonstrations which, it had been hoped, would jolt a materialistic world into an awakening to a wider outlook, got out of hand, so to speak. Since the group of Spiritualists had become utterly useless as an instrument for serious study, H. P. Blavatsky herself, under the direction and often with the aid of her Teachers, was then instructed to give proof of her own supernormal powers. [A description of these may be found in much of the early Theosophical literature, as for instance *The Occult World* by A. P. Sinnett.] Her purpose in this was to show the skeptics that beyond their circumscribed sphere of physical matter was an invisible world operating under its own unerring laws which, for one who understood them, could be made to act with definite and demonstrable results. Further, as W. Q. Judge says, she exhibited these marvelous feats

for the purpose of showing those who were learning from her that the human subject is a complicated and powerful being, not to be classed, as science loves to do, with mere matter and motion. — *The Path*, Vol. VIII, May 1893

H. P. Blavatsky was bitterly disappointed in the general attitude of the scientists towards her entirely disinterested efforts. Writing in her magazine *Lucifer*, in February 1888, she says:

Never were the phenomena presented in any other character than that of instances of a power *over perfectly natural though unrecognized forces*, and incidentally over matter, possessed by certain individuals who have attained to a larger and higher knowledge of the Universe than has been reached by scientists and theologians, or can ever be reached by them, by the roads they are now respectively pursuing. Yet this power is latent in all men, and could, in time, be wielded by anyone who would cultivate the knowledge and conform to the conditions necessary for its development.

She continues:

Therefore, it is hardly to be wondered at, that *word* came to abandon phenomena and let the ideas of Theosophy stand on their own intrinsic merits.

When the Mahâtmas who started the Theosophical Society were urged to cause a newspaper published in India to appear in London on the day of publication, or vice versa, to convince the skeptics once for all, their answer came:

Very true, we work by natural not supernatural means and laws. But as on the one hand Science would find itself unable (in its present *state*) to account for the wonders given in its name, and on the other, the ignorant masses would still be left to view the phenomenon in the light of a miracle; everyone who would thus be made a witness to the occurrence would be thrown off his balance and the results would be deplorable.

— *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter No. 1

They declined to perform the experiment, pointing out further that, on the one hand, no phenomena, however startling, would ever convince the skeptics; and on the other hand, that in order to prevent superstitious practices arising, a healthy element of doubt should be preserved. Further, as greater and greater proofs would be demanded, the Mahâtmas themselves would end by finding themselves on the point of breaking the unalterable esoteric law, namely, that the secrets of the occult arts shall never be divulged except to those who have undergone the most strict and thorough discipline in their own schools of training.

It is now more than a century {and a half} since H. P. Blavatsky brought her spiritual message to the West, and we are seeing evidences of its infiltration into the general thought-world, which is turning men's minds away from materialism. But much remains to be done in educating people as to the dangers of psychism. We are opening upon a new cycle which will see the progressive development of new faculties in man. As the human race advances it will inevitably become more finely organized both physically and psychically, and will come gradually more and more in contact with forces, powers, and beings that belong to a more subtle plane of existence. What Theosophy has to give in the way of explanation and preparation is needed *right now* as the introduction to a new cycle of development.

## FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS

The nature of the psychic powers and faculties cannot be understood without a comprehension of certain basic conceptions. These are as necessary as charts are in sailing an unfamiliar sea.

First we must dismiss the idea that anything can be brought about by supernatural means. No divine being can suspend the working of natural law. On the other hand, neither can we say with the materialists that everything can be explained by the laws of *physical* nature alone.

The teaching of the Ancient Wisdom is that there is indeed more to the Universe than can be measured by our physical senses — or by our laboratory researches, which are but an extension of the powers of our sensory perceptions. Our physical Universe is but a reflection of a vast and invisible realm, filled full with many grades of conscious living beings. It is their combined activities which bring about what we call the *laws* of Nature, but which might better be called the *habits* of Nature.

Humanity forms one group of these invisible entities — because, after all, the conscious thinking self of us is invisible. The portion of the Universe that we call *visible* is merely that aspect of it for which we have developed organs of perception: the eye, the ear, and so on. Those aspects of the Universe that we cannot perceive with our senses are not far away, in some distant stretches of space, but are right with us here and now, interpenetrating our physical sphere and impinging upon our inner selves at every moment of the day and night.

It is a mistake to suppose that invisibility necessarily implies spirituality. Assuredly spiritual energies have their source in the unseen realms of Nature, but evil energies do likewise. The physical world is like a great arena for the enactment of the pageant of life, which we as human beings are at one and the same time taking part in and beholding. But this gorgeous and sometimes very tragic presentment only feebly depicts the unseen forces, both exalted and degraded, which move the actors to noble or to sordid deeds.

### THE ASTRAL LIGHT

Those substances and energies of invisible nature impinging most closely upon our physical sphere are known in Theosophy under the general term the *Astral Light*. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that its grosser portions thus impinge upon our sphere; for in its highest reaches it merges indefinitely into the purest cosmic ether, the source of all intelligence in the Universe. The Astral Light surrounds and interpenetrates our globe as an ethereal essence, so sensitive and plastic that it receives and retains in its subtle substance an impression of all that takes place on Earth, and of all the thoughts and emotional energies



emanated by man. But it is more than a photographic plate, a mere recorder. It is a great crucible

in which all the emanations of the Earth, whether psychical, moral, or physical, are received, and after undergoing therein a myriad of ethereal alchemical changes are radiated back to the Earth... thus producing epidemic diseases, whether these latter be physical, psychic, or moral.

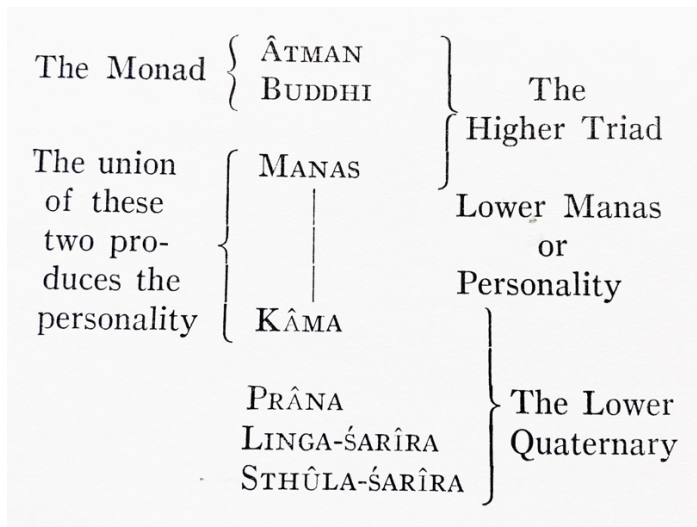
— G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 953

There is, in fact, a constant interchange between what we call the physical plane and the astral plane. No sharp dividing line exists between the finest grade of physical matter and the densest grade of astral substance. The one merges into the other as naturally as dark night merges into dawn. This fact, with all that it implies, plays a large part in the explanation of the phenomena of memory, hallucination, emotional *complexes*, psychoses, and dozens of other problems of mind and consciousness that puzzle psychologists. And it has to be reckoned with in the study of every aspect of psychism. The psychic waves that sweep over portions of the Earth at cyclic times are caused, we are told, when through certain stresses and tensions in the Earth's constitution, the protecting veils between the two planes grow thin, and contact with these finer substances is more easily made by peculiarly constituted individuals.

One of the chief characteristics of the astral light is its deceptive quality. Its whirling and eddying currents, its confused jumble of pictures, and its irresponsible as well as often evil denizens, bewilder and lead astray all but the highly trained seer. The ordinary person is not developed along the lines that would allow him a safe entry into these realms. Nor does the mere ability to enter them guarantee one's safety therein.

## THE NATURE OF THE PSYCHE

Man, like the Universe, has an inner nature ranging from the purely astral to the highest spiritual. His complex make-up is explained in detail elsewhere, but for convenience we here reproduce the diagram therein used.



The Monad (Âtman and Buddhi) represents that high spiritual source of all that is noble and inspiring in our human existence. The lower three principles in the diagram (Prâna, Linga-śarîra, Sthûla-śarîra) are the human body, both astral and physical, and the vitality that courses through them as long as our life on Earth lasts. But what we are particularly concerned with for our present study is the intermediate portion of the diagram, for it is the seat of the ordinary individual, made up of mind (Manas) and emotions (Kâma).

The Greeks sometimes called this part of us the *psyche*, and it is from this root that words such as psychic, psychism, and psychology have been formed. The use of this Greek root is accurate because the studies with which these words are associated all deal with the nature of the psyche: its relation to the body-part of man and to his spiritual nature, as well as to the world about him, including the Astral Light.

As a little study will show, our diagram suggests that Manas (mind) partakes of the spiritual nature of its parent above, and forms with it the Higher Triad. Further, that desire when linked with the body-part of us forms a lower group of four, the Lower Quaternary. But what makes us as we are today is the union of Manas and Kâma. It is this Duad that holds the key position in our present evolutionary make-up. It is for this Duad that life on Earth is necessary, and its dual aspect explains the many contradictions, surprises, and disappointments of human nature.

This Duad is the seat of our psychical nature. Our psyche is thus an undeveloped being. It has the use of all the powers of the human constitution to carve for itself a glorious destiny: will, imagination, thought, desire; but as yet it has not learned how to use them with wisdom. Its character is unstable. It is torn between its urge to understand and interpret through its own powers the will of its spiritual parent; and on the

other hand its urge to identify itself with the animal nature below. It is drawn hither and thither by the attractions of the senses. Its purposes are divided. It is in fact that familiar part of ourself which needs no description.

In the normal, healthy individual this 'conflict' is a natural stimulus to achievement. There is harmony and symmetry of development. Health means *wholeness*, and where psychic health exists one finds those characteristics that belong to the well-balanced person: poise, clarity of thought, firmness of purpose, a sense of proportion, often a sense of humor tempered by a natural kindly feeling. We have in fact what is often spoken of as a well-adjusted personality.

Psychic ill-health occurs when the harmonious working of all the factors in man is broken. This often occurs when the psyche attempts to assume a position in the general economy of the human being to which it is not entitled; and there is little doubt that, could we see the chain of circumstances through several lives perhaps that lead up to our present psychic ills, we should find that somewhere along the way we had, perhaps by imperceptible degrees, built up the condition we now are trying to overcome.

The particular phase of psychic ill-health that we are concerned with here is that serious aspect shown by many people who possess what are called psychic powers. In the ordinary medium, for instance, there is always an actual dislocation of the psyche. The danger of this state will be discussed later; suffice it to say here that the involuntary disjunction of this intermediate principle is never a desirable thing, for it makes the unfortunate individual the prey of evil entities in the astral light which crave a vicarious existence on Earth as a means to satisfy their unfulfilled desires. Though purity and natural goodness do act to a certain extent as a protection to the medium, still there is likely to be a progressive deterioration in the medium's character, and his weaknesses, however mild, may prove to be the entering wedge for undesirable astral visitants to 'control' him.

## THE ASTRAL SENSES

The true self in man has been evolving appropriate vehicles for growth and experience through long ages, and our inner economy is most marvelously regulated. Our spiritual nature provides us with the power to develop and express in ever greater degree our latent faculties. Our body serves as a means of contact with the outside world and with our fellows. It further acts as a protection, a barrier as it were, to the inroads of the astral plane. Our senses act in a selective and limiting way, and this is as much a blessing as it is an inconvenience. Until we are unaffected, at least in some degree, by the influences penetrating by means of our senses to

our psychic nature, it is foolish to wish for this barrier to be broken. Yet this is what happens with those who crave to possess psychic powers. The ordinary man is to a certain extent imprisoned within his body. The psychic is in danger of breaking this guard, and finding himself in a realm where he is more or less helpless.

The fact is that for every one of our physical senses we have an astral counterpart which is the true center of sense perception. It is through these astral centers that the Ego within really hears, sees, tastes, and touches. Without them, the physical senses would be useless. But at present these astral sense-centers are in their turn dependent upon their physical replicas. We cannot use them consciously and independently as yet. This will come in the future as a further stage of development. When that time comes it will be natural for us to use these astral senses *at will*, and then we shall know at first hand a great deal about the inner aspects of the Universe which are now hidden from us. We must wait, however, until “the inner Self has grown to maturity,” as W. Q. Judge expresses it. [See his pamphlet {or article} “Culture of Concentration”.]

This sort of thing fascinates the average person; but there is nothing more magical about it than the fact that now we can look into the heavens at night and catch with our physical eye the light that started from the stars perhaps millions of years ago — a marvel truly!

This future development of the astral senses is but a phase of a greater power that is to be ours: that of being able through conscious will and thought to travel where we will in a refined ‘astral body’ of our own making, free from the burden of the “too too solid flesh.” It was such a power that Apollonius of Tyana used when he suddenly vanished before the very eyes of Domitian and the crowd gathered at his trial in Rome, and appeared before his friend an hour later at the grotto of Puteoli. [See *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, p. 597.]

Those who advertise to teach for a price the power of roaming at will in the astral have no idea of the difficulties involved, nor of the dangers they invite where even a partial success may be attained. There are also those who profess to know such dangers, but who do not sufficiently warn against them.

Psychics at the present time shadow forth this power that is to be ours in the distant future. They are not symmetrically developed, however, nor do they know anything about the true nature of their prematurely awakened ability. They may have one astral sense partially developed, as for instance the astral left eye or right eye; such being the case of the ordinary clairvoyant. Or they may be able to extend an astral arm, as some mediums do. But what they are able to see or sense is always one-sided, scrappy, and misleading; and as the power is used involuntarily, they have no guarantee that they can stop it when they will.

The Theosophist does not consider it a fortunate thing for persons at the present time to have abnormally developed astral senses. It is in nearly all cases an affliction. It is always a responsibility.

### STUDY NECESSARY

It is necessary to study the subject of psychism in order to put the matter entirely on a rational basis. Too often the word *psychic* is veiled in a sort of mysterious atmosphere which enhances its attractions. People speak of having psychic experiences as though they were set apart from the ordinary run of mortals in some special, favored way. Or they have a dread of the very mention of the word, saying that it conjures up in their minds a host of vague terrors. Neither of these attitudes is desirable. One might as well be a rank materialist, scoffing at the very idea of the existence of invisible worlds, as to hold these false notions that cloud the understanding and lead one astray.

As a matter of fact, when we speak of the psychic world, we simply mean that invisible realm where our lower mind naturally functions. Here our psychic nature is active all the time; and it is this very psychic nature that provides us the means by which we can act on this physical plane. To be sure it is the seat of temptation and desire, of mental and emotional illusion; but it can also, when trained and controlled, be the transmitter of the vitality of the Spiritual Self into active expression in daily life. Nay, more, it is *the only means* the Spiritual Self has of functioning here on Earth.

The abnormal development of the psychic nature, producing what are generally understood as the psychic powers, would be recognized, like all abnormalities, to be a mere side issue, if its nature and development were studied today as once they were studied in the ancient science of psychology, which H. P. Blavatsky speaks of as “the most important branch of the Occult Sciences” [*Studies in Occultism*, p. 54, 1946 ed.]

### PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIC POWERS

The subject of psychology does not rightfully belong under the heading of psychic powers; rather should we say that the study of psychic powers rightfully belongs under the heading of psychology, as a branch of the general subject.

Some scientific investigators of psychic matters have evidently held the same view. In a letter to Sir William Crookes written in 1871, E. W. Cox says, in discussing the mysterious powers that ‘sensitives’ possess:

I venture to suggest that the force be termed the *Psychic Force*; the persons in whom it is manifested in extraordinary power *Psychics*; and the science relating to it *Psychism*, as being a branch of *Psychology*.

Psychology is defined as “the science of the nature, functions, and phenomena of the human soul or mind.” But H. P. Blavatsky gives a more inclusive and therefore more accurate meaning in *Isis Unveiled* (Vol. I, pp. xxvii-xxviii):

*Psychology*, or the great, and in our days, so neglected science of the soul, both as an entity distinct from the spirit and in its relations with the spirit and body.

It is obvious, then, that every conceivable aspect of man’s make-up and activity, other than those aspects which are purely physiological (and it is a question whether there are any that could come under that category), could logically be included in some branch of the science of psychology.

But modern psychologists are just beginning the great task of developing a science; and they have limited themselves right from the start by trying to do away with the terms *soul* and *mind*: the first, because as scientists they do not feel justified in entering the realms of metaphysics; the second, in an attempt to avoid the ever-puzzling problem of the relation of mind to matter. Descartes, it will be remembered, laid down the principle that mind and matter are two opposing substances having absolutely nothing in common. The modern psychologist prefers to think of the human being as a body-mind unity — a Theosophical concept also when freed from any materialistic implications. Instead of ‘the science of mind,’ he prefers to speak of ‘the science of individual experience.’ On this basis he tries to analyze such phenomena as sensation, emotion, memory, imagination, aesthetic feelings, desire, understanding, belief, and all types of thought processes.

As a simple example: The ordinary person is not concerned with an explanation of his reactions to outward stimuli. For him there is no mystery in the fact that a gunshot will make him start; that he finds certain kinds of music pleasing, and others not; or that an almost-forgotten tune may bring such a rush of unpleasant memories that he is put in a gloomy mood for the rest of the day. But the psychologist is concerned with the explanation of these things. He does not take them for granted. He wants to know why.

The effect of the gunshot may undoubtedly be explained purely physiologically. But can the other two reactions? What, exactly, are moods? What are memories? Have they, indeed, any real existence? When the psychologist banishes any soul or any mind from his scheme, any inner entity which *experiences*, he is hard put to it to explain even such simple reactions as the above. He must find some other explanation for obvious functions of mind and soul. The various schools of theoretical psychology

have thus elaborated the most complicated systems and developed a difficult and highly technical terminology to explain the simplest phenomena of experience.

But whatever terms are used, the idea of an Ego or self is implicit in all systems except the most materialistic. Some such conception is continually cropping up. The banished ego slips in by a back door and has to be reckoned with. As a matter of fact it is often only a sort of *temporary* ego that is postulated, a result of the interaction of brain and body. Little or nothing is known about the spiritual genealogy of the true egoic center in man and its progressive development through many lives on Earth, bringing into each life what it had made of itself in the past.

Yet philosophies of the past have all taught of a *self* in man; sages have studied the constitution of our inner nature with scientific exactitude. It would seem foolhardy to ignore their testimony as to the existence of the Self and the nature of the complex vehicles it uses for expression during its evolution on this Earth. The very universality of such teachings, their intellectual profundity, and their ability to account for all the phenomena of human experience, both normal and abnormal, warrant their serious study; and it is one of the aims of Theosophists today to bring this knowledge of our inner nature to the attention of the modern world.

Theosophy is, indeed, like a key to a code. Without the key a code is unintelligible, though one may make any number of observations about it and pile up a vast amount of data concerning it. The data may be absolutely correct, but they do not answer the question: "What does the code mean?" The modern psychologist has gathered a vast amount of such observable data about man. The key to the code is missing; but we notice that some of the more penetrating scientists are turning to the sacred books of the East to find the missing key.

It is naturally in the field of the abnormal states in man that psychology and psychism meet; but the former confines itself mainly to research and experiment connected with such obvious states as dreams, hypnosis, insanity, hysteria, and double personality, leaving untouched a far wider range of unexplained 'powers.' Perhaps this is just as well for the time being.

It is worthy of note that practical psychology brings out a whole new set of problems to be solved which are totally unsuspected in the theoretical systems. In the treatment of abnormal states the practitioner often proves himself much bigger than his theory. This is surely because he brings to bear upon his actual problems his natural love of his fellows and his keen desire to bring relief to those who suffer. The spontaneous qualities of his spiritual nature cannot be denied and are bound to exert an influence upon those with whom he labors. On the other hand, he can ill afford to ignore any sources of knowledge in regard to psychic powers, for the simple reason that he is using them himself to some extent. His good

intentions will not save his patient from the possibly disastrous effects of a power used in ignorance.

The use of hypnotism in the cure of various afflictions is discussed later, but it may be pointed out here that even where hypnotism is not directly used, there is a large element of *suggestion* (another form of the same power) in the emotional relationship that is often developed between doctor and patient. The negative patient who lays open to his doctor the secrets of his inner Self is likely to leave his own will passive for the entrance into the psychic nature of whatever the doctor wishes to put there. Leaving aside all cases of unscrupulous behavior on the part of the physician, the negative condition into which the patient is thrown is never advisable.

Though no sweeping generalities or dogmatic assertions can be made in regard to the profound problems that the medical psychologist is faced with when he probes into the dark chambers of the unbalanced psyche, we can look forward to the time when the patient will be taught to find and to rely upon the center of strength within himself, the true Spiritual Ego from which, in the end, all power for recovery must spring. All outside help, however salutary, can only have a lasting effect if it becomes an aid to the patient's own latent capacity to correct, from within, his own unbalanced state.

Psychic derangements often accompany, and indeed are the cause of various nervous and mental disorders which the medical psychologist treats. For instance, it is well known that certain types of megalomania, or exaggerated egotism, are often accompanied by psychic lesions where the sufferer imagines that he is being led to the performance of great deeds by some angelic guide. He hears 'voices,' he is said to be 'clairvoyant,' and in touch with *spiritual* powers, while all the time his own hallucination is feeding his sense of superiority. It would seem that a knowledge of the true nature of the psyche and the possibility of its *dislocation* in the human constitution — one of the commonest evidences of mediumship — would be an enormous help to the psychologist in studying such cases.

While it is freely admitted by many that Western psychology is still in its infancy, in its application to the practical affairs of everyday life, such as education and industry, excellent work is being done. But it is obvious that, whereas *psychologization* is freely taught and used, very little is known of the true nature of this psychic power. It has become such a common thing now to believe that it is a good action and a sign of strength of character to force one's own ideas or convictions upon others, that clever methods for doing so are ever on the increase. The very word *psychologize* has come to have this exclusive meaning, though its technical meaning is, of course, "to analyze psychologically." If it is argued that success in college or in business depends upon the use of this power, then we can only answer that that in itself is a sad commentary on present-day



standards. A real psychologist might analyze this ignoble practice as an attempt, by illicit means, to bring about what the person of high integrity, character, and genius accomplishes through the compelling power of truth and of his innate spiritual strength. True greatness requires no psychological tricks to enhance it.

## MEDIUMSHIP AND ITS DANGERS

Mediumship of one kind or another is far more common than is generally supposed. It is by no means confined to ‘sensitives’ in the séance room. And since a great many types of psychic powers are linked up with this matter, and their origin very little understood, it is worthwhile devoting time to its study.

Speaking in a broad and general sense, we all act as ‘mediums’ for the transmission of the thoughts and impulses originating in minds other than our own, to a certain extent at least. This is inevitable since we live and move in this world as parts of a great whole. The very law of life is a giving and taking. We are continuously exchanging and interchanging life-atoms — gross, ethereal and spiritual. Ideas spread through the astral ethers unimpeded by time and space. They enter the minds of men, are there clothed in a million forms, and are sent forth again to touch new minds, which in turn become new centers of generation. Thought expresses itself in action. Action becomes the stimulus to more thought. The flow is never-ending.

But for all that we must admit that, in our unenlightened attempts to use our divine faculties of will and imagination, we have transgressed the natural law of giving and taking. The complexities of human relationships offer endless illustrations of this fact. From motives good, bad, or mixed, in a thousand different ways we impose our wills on others; or, we become the instrument for the carrying out of someone else’s will, or are moved to action by some other outside agency. Such relationships are not necessarily evil, but when they become habitual, then to the extent that the outside energy controls us, we are actually ‘mediums’ of one kind or another, using this word in its broadest sense.

In a penetrating article in *The Theosophist* (June 1884, p. 211), H. P. Blavatsky enumerates various types of such mediums, showing how such types may vary from the most debased to the most sublime:

A person may consciously and voluntarily submit his will to another being and become his slave. This other being may be a human being, and the medium will then be his obedient servant and may be used by him for good or bad purposes. This other “being” may be an *idea*, such as love, greediness, hate, jealousy, avarice, or some other passion, and the effect on the medium will be proportionate to the strength of the idea and the amount of self-control left in the medium. This “other being” may be an elementary

or an elemental, and the poor medium become an epileptic, a maniac or a criminal. This “other being” may be the man’s own higher principle, whether alone or put into rapport with another ray of the collective universal spiritual principle, and the “medium” will then be a great genius, a writer, a poet, an artist, a musician, an inventor, and so on. This “other being” may be one of those exalted beings, called Mahâtmas, and the conscious and voluntary medium will then be called their “Chela.”

H. P. Blavatsky says further that the “medium” may or may not be conscious of the source of the influence which moves him. He may be unaware of what the actual being is like whose action is transmitted through him. He may really be getting inspiration from his own higher nature and imagine that he is in personal communication with Jesus. Or some adept may influence him to write a great scientific work and the writer imagine that he is in communication with the ‘spirit’ of Faraday or Francis Bacon. On the other hand, a person may be moved to commit a crime which he considers entirely foreign to his nature, and not be aware of the fact that in this case he is being influenced by an evil denizen of the Astral Light to whom he has given hospitality.

It can be seen from the above that energies foreign to our own stream of vitality can use us at times in various ways. The playground of their activities is always the region of our psychic nature whether these energies come from ‘above’ or ‘below.’ The dangerous and often evil cases of this psychological phenomenon occur when the psychic principle *passively allows itself to be numbed, paralyzed, or even ousted* by an intruder from outside. A large proportion of ordinary mediums are an outstanding example of this sort of usurpation; and a study of what is usually understood as ‘mediumship’ will serve as a specific illustration of the above general remarks, and provide suggestive hints as to the enormous possibilities there are for loss of moral stamina as well as of psychic and physical health, where self-control is lacking.

## THE ORDINARY TRANCE MEDIUM

The term *medium* usually designates one who is abnormally sensitive to impressions from the Astral Light. Some people are born with marked mediumistic powers. A great many more, having slight tendencies in that direction, have developed these tendencies, ignorantly supposing that a heaven-sent gift has been conferred upon them. The Spiritualists have been largely responsible for this. Since the rise of the Spiritualist movement in the middle of last century {nineteenth}, they have never wavered from a sincere belief that by means of ‘sensitives’ under trance, communications can be made with the spirits of departed loved ones.

Now, no true Occultist would deny that communication of some kind is made. The question is: Communication with what? There are Adepts in

occult science who have answered this question. It was they who instructed H. P. Blavatsky in that knowledge which she endeavored to share with the Spiritualists. The teachings of these Adepts concerning the nature of spiritualistic communications bear the force and conviction of first-hand testimony: for that is exactly what it is. They have used neither guesswork, fancy, nor even philosophical speculation. At home in the invisible worlds, they have used the discriminating faculty of their own spiritual clairvoyance to test and observe what takes place therein. The Theosophical teachings upon these matters represent the findings they have deemed wise to release for the present generations of men.

First of all, it is impossible to understand this subject of ‘communication’ without a knowledge of what happens to our complex nature after death.

Barring all frauds, of which, unfortunately, there have been all too many in the history of Spiritualism — we might list types of contact made by the medium as follows:

(a) Elementals or Nature-spirits. These throng the astral light. Their will, such as it is, is not directed by purposive thought. They are irresponsible and mischievous, and will assume whatever thought-forms are most strongly present in the atmosphere of the séance room, impressed thereon by the medium or the sitters. Their lively action explains a large proportion of the phenomena of spiritualism.

(b) The ‘shells’ [*Ibid.*, Ch. V, “Can We Communicate with our Dead?”] of dead men, called *Kâma-rûpas* in Theosophical philosophy. These are of astral substance, and like the greater Astral Light, from which they draw their life, they are impregnated with all the passional and lower emotional thoughts and feelings of the human beings who built them up during Earth-life.

Such *Kâma-rûpa* is no fit body for the real self after death, who makes its escape out of the astral light as quickly as it may, leaving this ‘shell’ to fade out as it will. It is this ‘shell’ that is often revitalized in the séance room, its passions quickened into a false life, and its automatic memory made to rehearse again and again the words and acts of the Ego that once ensouled it.

(c) Akin to these ‘shells’ are the elementaries. These are the most evil denizens of the astral light. They are also *Kâma-rûpas* of former human beings, but of

grossly materialistic ex-humans whose evil impulses and appetites still inhering in the *Kâma-rûpic* phantom draw these phantoms to physical spheres congenial to them. They are a real danger to psychical health and sanity, and literally haunt living human beings possessing tendencies akin to their own. They are soulless shells, but still filled with energies of a depraved and ignoble type. — G. de Purucker: *Occult Glossary*, p. 55

Blavatsky describes such a Kâma-rûpa as a vampire “feeding on the vitality of those who are so anxious for its company” (*Theosophical Glossary*, p. 172).

(d) Occasionally, under *very* rare and unusual conditions, and when death has just taken place, the true Ego of the deceased may speak through the medium. (This sometimes can happen just before death also.) The rare event of such communication just after death is, in fact, only possible as long as the brain is still functioning. Occultism has always stated what physiologists now admit, that the process of decease may last several days. When true death has taken place, the Ego slips into unconsciousness from which no medium can recall it.

(e) Certain unusual cases exist where authentic communication has been made with the spirit of a departed friend. This does not mean the *descent* of such spirit. It implies that the medium’s higher Ego is *on the same high plane* as the disembodied spirit and can thus contact it. The medium must be absolutely pure, and then his Higher Ego, untrammelled by an impure psychic vehicle, “has the opportunity and facility of influencing the passive organs of its entranced physical body, to make them act, speak, and write at its will. The Ego can make it repeat, echo-like, and in the human language, the thoughts and ideas of the disembodied entity, as well as its own. [H. P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 30]

(f) This last case would cover those likewise rare occurrences of contact between the medium and some spiritual being, the contact always made through the intermediary of the medium’s own Higher Ego. It should be distinctly understood, however, that in cases (e) and (f) there can be no materialization in the séance room.

It might be added here that the adept can do this and similar things self-consciously and directed by his will. The unstable condition of the constitution prevalent among mediums is only too often a hindrance to communications of a spiritual nature.

Finally, we should include those numerous instances where the medium is merely reading the thoughts in the minds of the sitters. The technical or detailed information thus received has often been adduced by the unsuspecting investigator as irrefutable proof of true ‘spirit’ communication. As a matter of fact, everyone present at a séance is likely to influence the type and extent of the phenomena presented, even though he may be taking no obvious part in the proceedings. It has even been pointed out that a skeptic present will act as a sort of ‘freezing’ agent impeding the usual progress of affairs.

## MATERIALIZATIONS

Having enumerated the types of entities with which communication is made, there still remains to be given an explanation of just what it is that

appears in the séance room. The word *materialization* is used in Spiritualism to denote the objective appearance of what purports to be the spirit of the departed one. The striking and sometimes photographic likeness of these shapes constitutes one of the surest proofs to the Spiritualist that it is indeed the dead friend or relative who has ‘returned.’ Since the actual state of affairs precludes the possibility of the return of the true spirit of the departed from higher realms, what explanation are we to give for this phenomenon?

The Theosophical philosophy explains that the densest astral substance is very near indeed to the most tenuous physical, so that the appearance caught on the photographic plate and seen occasionally with the human eye is that of a coarse grade of astral substance which has become partially objective through the concurrence of a number of favorable conditions. This should be no more difficult to understand than the various electric phenomena with which we are all familiar. Electricity is forever about us, yet only under certain conditions does its activity become visible. There is also an analogy in the transformations from the invisible to the visible and vice versa which take place daily in the test tube of the chemist. Or, again, where is our spark of fire before we strike the match that causes it to spring into visibility?

Evidently there is more than one grade of astral substance employed in materializations, and as there are a number of different factors involved, the matter is a very complicated one; but a few general principles can be stated.

Sometimes the apparition, if we may so call it, is formed by the actual astral eidolon or Kâma-rûpa of the deceased which naturally bears the likeness of the body that once harbored it.

Whenever the strong desires of living men and the conditions furnished by the abnormal constitutions of mediums are combined together, these *eidola* are drawn — nay, *pulled* down from their plane on to ours and made objective. — H. P. Blavatsky, *Theosophical Glossary*, p. 210

Then there is the ‘double’ or astral body which can be projected a short distance from the physical body of the medium. This gathers to itself particles of ethereal substance suspended in the atmosphere about it, and drawn even from the vital emanations of the sitters. It then takes upon itself whatever thought-forms are most strongly impressed from the minds of those present — more often than not, the likeness of the deceased.

Another and more tangible process is the extrusion of material substance (ectoplasm) from the body of the medium, which substance, being highly plastic, molds itself into recognizable forms. In some cases this is like a flat plate upon which a picture is thrown. Obviously these images are not ‘spirits’ of any kind; they are merely illusions foisted upon the ignorant sitters by sportive Nature-spirits.

In fact, only too often the Spiritualists, and even the more scientific researchers, are subject to the most deceptive illusions because of the activity of the mischievous denizens of the Astral Light.

### POLTERGEISTS

It is to these astral denizens that are to be attributed the crazy moving of furniture, violent breaking of household objects, ringing of bells and other strange noises, as well as the more intelligent ‘raps’ answering questions by a sort of code, which are known both in the séance room and out of it. [It is a recognized fact that these messages often start out in an incoherent manner, but by mediumistic encouragement a pseudo-personality is gradually developed, representing itself as a spirit known to the sitters. This is explained in Theosophy by the fact that elementals collect the thoughts and images in the minds of those present — which are usually centered upon the departed one — until by degrees an artificial resemblance to the latter’s way of thinking and method of expression is built up. If this line of investigation was followed out by psychic researchers, it would lead them to a fuller appreciation of the illusory nature of a great number of the phenomena of so-called spirit-return.] These phenomena are generally classed under the term *poltergeist*, a German word meaning literally “racketing spirit.” This term is quite accurate, but scientists have adopted it without accepting its significance, since they do not recognize the existence of ‘spirits.’ When they do not dismiss such occurrences with some mechanical explanation which is often absurd and totally inadequate, they simply describe them as “phenomena of an unexplained nature and of untraceable origin.”

These phenomena, known in all ages and to all peoples from the most savage tribes to the most highly developed races, are explained in Theosophy in accordance with the principles already set forth earlier. The factors involved are first, a person of mediumistic tendencies, and second, the inhabitants of the Astral Light. The ‘medium’ may be a person temporarily in an unbalanced state perhaps through some nervous malady or nervous shock. Often it is a young girl; and the household may be annoyed for some time by these disturbing happenings without the slightest idea as to who is acting as the ‘contact-point’ with the astral world. Such a person’s constitution acts as an electric wire, so to speak, conducting astral forces onto the physical plane.

There are two general explanations for these disturbances, but, as in all such matters, each case under observation would have to be expertly studied for a complete understanding of all the factors involved. Sometimes it is the medium’s own astral limbs, extruded in a sort of dream fashion, which lift books from a table, knock down pieces of china, and so on. More often it is frolicsome Nature-spirits which, attracted to psychically sensitive people, are unconsciously used by them to perform these various crazy acts. The medium serves as a sort of inferior type of

magician — not evil, but using Nature-forces as a magician does, though unconsciously and without the technical knowledge of the latter.

A more fully developed medium may attract the decaying Kâma-rûpa of some former evil human being, or even a sorcerer who is reaching the last stages of disintegration but who has enough vitality left to permit him to act on the physical plane through the constitution of the medium. Thus the medium who develops his so-called powers by repeated attempts at contact with ‘the other side’ is in a far worse state than the mere ‘sensitive’ whose inner faculties may be temporarily out of control.

### MEDIUMSHIP AN UNDESIRABLE PROFESSION

This whole business of attempting to communicate with the dead has been traditionally considered among all peoples as *necromancy*. Modern Spiritualists are saved from its more evil forms by their good intentions and perhaps even more because of their very ignorance of the occult laws for tampering with the dead which were known to evil sorcerers in the past. It is in their ignorance also that they are violating a law of Nature which mercifully puts a veil of oblivion between ourselves and those who have passed from this plane. Though it is true that present-day attempts to communicate with the departed Ego are not successful, nevertheless the tampering with the being in the Kâma-loka delays the process of the Ego’s freeing itself from the lower astral realms. W. Q. Judge tells us that the Ego may actually feel a twinge every time his shade is called up in the “charnel house of a living medium’s body.”

But the greatest danger in these practices is to the medium himself. His nature, in the first place, becomes a playground for elemental beings. Normally these beings look upon man as their master and they are quick to recognize and respect those superior moral qualities manifest in the controlled and balanced person. But when man drops to their plane and ignorantly invades their uncanny realm, then they become the master. Since they are quite without conscience and moral stamina, it is obvious that the very fiber of character of one under their influence is consistently undermined.

The medium also opens the door of his nature to elementaries who are forever seeking an entrance into Earth-life in order to satisfy their unfulfilled lusts. In some cases these usurpers are successful in ousting the wavering psyche of the medium from its seat within the human constitution and then play havoc with his nervous system and mental and even moral stability. Deterioration nearly always results.

Even the ‘shells’ of averagely good individuals, magnetically drawn to the séance room, are harmful. Since they are galvanized into a false life by drawing upon the nervous vitality of the entranced medium, the latter is always left bloodless and exhausted. In fact it is generally recognized

that the nervous health of mediums is deplorably bad; and their usual psychic instability is also admitted. Note the accepted definition of a medium quoted in a modern book on Spiritualism: [*A Cavalcade of the Supernatural*, by H.H.U. Cross, 1939, p. 137]

One whose constituent elements — mental, dynamic and material — are capable of being momentarily decentralized. The innate tendency to dissociation in these peculiar constitutions is increased by the practice of mediumship, *which tends to render the primarily abnormal state more and more easy and normal* — a fact that should cause one to pause before embarking on the career.

H. P. Blavatsky's emphatic warnings against the cultivation of mediumistic powers, as well as the words of other Theosophical teachers, take on added force when one reviews the fate of the many human wrecks that modern Spiritualism has left in its train.

### MEDIATOR VERSUS MEDIUM

Fortunately this unlovely subject has another side to it — the true occult science of which mediumship is but a counterfeit. In the highly trained human being, the psychic nature can be so absolutely under control, so free from the pull downwards towards things of matter, so pellucid, that it can act as an intermediary for the transmission of the lofty energies of the Spiritual Ego without distortion or misrepresentation.

The technical word to describe such an intermediary is *Mediator*. The character of a mediator is the antithesis of that of the medium. The former is highly spiritual, with a forceful personality often, and a firmness of will which could in no way be affected or turned aside by beings in the lower Astral Light. It is said, in fact, that the evil denizens of the astral currents surrounding our Earth could not endure to be near one who radiated such spiritual vitality. Myths and stories of every land telling of those highly developed beings who seem to walk in the light and radiate it about them, and from whom 'devils' and 'demons' flee, have their originals in actual individuals. If we do not see many such in our day, we may well believe it is because we have not created an atmosphere congenial to their exalted natures. [See *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, pp. 487-488]

A mediator is also able on occasion to step aside, so to speak, with full consciousness, in order to allow his brain and body to be used by one even greater than himself. This 'stepping aside' in no way resembles the disjunction or dislodging of the intermediate nature which takes place in the case of the hapless and helpless medium, nor has it anything to do with Spiritualism or spiritualistic séances. It is done with the full intelligence and cooperation of the individual and for a divinely compassionate purpose. There is a great mystery connected with this which in published



writings can only be hinted at; but those who are at all familiar with the life story of H. P. Blavatsky will know something of how she, as the Messenger of the Lodge of Compassion, offered herself as their mouthpiece.

There is value to the ordinary man and woman in this teaching of the infilling of the nature with the inspiration of the Higher Self. By studying the principles of both mediumship and mediatorship, we can learn in our every act to avoid the former while cultivating the latter state. A positive, alert attitude to the duties that life brings us, a practice of the power of concentration, and an attempt to lift even the commonplaces of our existence to a plane where they can be illumined by the light of our own spiritual nature, are the first steps in a training which must extend over many lifetimes before we reach the status of the mediator.

There is in very fact, wondrous mystery as it is, a continuous and unceasing effort of the inner god to lean downwards towards us, so to speak, in order to raise its 'lower self,' the human individual, up to higher planes towards a final consummation of self-conscious unity with itself. When the inner god thus leans from its heights and touches its lower brother-mind, there then instantaneously passes from the god a spiritual-electric fire into the being of the one thus divinely touched.

— G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, pp. 984-985

There is no normal human being who cannot learn to become such a mediator for the transmission of this "spiritual-electric fire" from the god within his own being.

## HYPNOTISM

Closely associated with the general topic of mediumship is that of Hypnotism, since the subject of the hypnotizer's experiments becomes in a very real sense a medium: his will is temporarily paralyzed and often permanently weakened, and his psychic nature becomes a passive receiver of the foreign will-force it is subjected to.

H. P. Blavatsky speaks of hypnotism as the "illegitimate son of Mesmerism." This indicates that a distinction is actually to be made between the two, though in early Theosophical literature the terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

Anton Mesmer reintroduced to the western world, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, a knowledge of the healing power of magnets. He showed that certain diseases could be treated effectively by stroking the afflicted parts with magnets of various kinds. He soon realized that the magnetic rods with which his first experiments were made merely served as conductors for a fluid emanating from his own person; and he then re-nounced the truth that the human body itself is a magnet and that some

people have the ability to use this magnetic power from themselves without the aid of metals. It is because of its presence in the physical body that the force became known as ‘animal’ magnetism for want of a more truly scientific term.

This magnetism is, as a matter of fact, as Mesmer was well aware, a quality pervading the whole Universe, man merely sharing in it because he is built out of the very substance of the Universe. In man it manifests as an invisible fluid that can be induced to flow by means of the will from one individual to another. Blavatsky describes it thus:

Occultism calls the force transmitted, the “auric *fluid*,” to distinguish it from the “auric *light*”; the “fluid” being a correlation of *atoms* on a higher plane, and a descent to this lower one, in the shape of impalpable and invisible plastic Substances, generated and directed by the potential Will...

— *Studies in Occultism*, p. 32

This “correlation of atoms” spoken of is but one aspect of the general law, already stated, that we are all continuously pouring forth streams of life-atoms on all planes of our being. This outflow is very weak in some individuals, very strong in others, depending upon the general vitality of the individual, which vitality is in itself determined by the habitual trends of the Ego through many lives, in which it has been building and perfecting for itself outer and inner bodies for its means of expression in Earth-life.

The magnetic fluid is not in itself a spiritual thing, and it need not necessarily be the possession only of those who are spiritually developed. It might be said that the force *per se* is colorless, receiving its healthy or unhealthy stamp from the operator. All types of magnetic healers of today use this force, and whether they understand its rationale or not does not affect in any way the quality of the emanation. They give to the patient of their own vitality and, if their own vital stream is healthy, not only on the physical but on the psychic plane (this latter being the more important), then real cures can be made by means of this ‘auric fluid.’ But it is a question how many would-be healers have an absolutely pure heredity; and there is always some risk in attempted cures of this kind because where there are any physical weaknesses in the practitioner, even though they be only in germ, these may be transplanted into the patient’s life-stream, and a worse disease take root in the adopted system than the one that is being cured.

Painstaking and conscientious investigation over long periods of time, and a study of many types of cases, would have to be undertaken to provide *convincing* scientific proof of this occult truth; and even such examinations would be incomplete since the present-day scientist does not consider the thread of continuous life carrying along from incarnation to incarnation, following the longer cycles of cause and effect.

Anton Mesmer was, of course, an adept in the art of magnetic healing. As one of the cyclical envoys from the Lodge of Compassion he was authorized to teach the real nature of this power and its use in healing. His cures were effected always by direction of his will and in full understanding of the polarity of the physical body in its relation to the great magnet, the Universe. His knowledge, in fact, was much vaster than is generally supposed. We are told [See *Theosophical Glossary*, p. 214] that he founded in 1783 the “Order of Universal Harmony,” where it is generally supposed only animal magnetism was taught; but in reality he taught the principles and methods used in the ancient Temples of Healing, called in Greece the Temples of Aesculapius.

There has always been known to the few *enlightened ones* a complete occult system of healing; sometimes it has been generally recognized for the actual fact that it is, and sometimes it has been scoffed at and called superstition or fraud, as was the case with Mesmer’s work of nearly two centuries ago. In many lands this art, or true science, was carried on under the aegis of the Mystery-Schools where proper supervision and training was possible; where the physicians were adepts in the mysteries of man’s inner nature as well as of his physical body, and where the possibility of the art being used for evil purposes was unthinkable.

Today there is no such occult school for training in this art, whose modern presentation, the pseudo-science known as Hypnotism, denies the very source from which it sprang. This modern counterfeit is classed by all occultists as a species of the Black Art — Sorcery; unconscious in many cases, to be sure, but evil nonetheless because it violates a fundamental law and right of our human nature: that each person shall be his own ruler in his inner kingdom, with the right of choice as to what guests he shall entertain therein, and the right to direct his own development by discovering for himself and making use of the exhaustless treasures that his inner kingdom contains.

*Hypnotism* comes from a Greek word *hypnos*, meaning ‘sleep;’ and the practice is so named because the state brought about in the subject of the experiment resembles an artificially induced somnambulism. In such a state the will of the subject is passive, and by means of impressing pictures upon the astral double (a process called ‘suggestion’), the subject automatically does whatever the operator wills that he shall do, since the physical body, driven by the will-force from without, merely produces the motion-patterns indicated in the astral double.

In this process the nervous system, the link between the physical and astral bodies, is anesthetized: a state that in itself has questionable after-effects, since it is likely to cause or aggravate the nervous unbalance and sensitiveness so characteristic of all types of mediums.

Further, when the hypnotizer dominates the will of another so that it becomes inactive, what actually happens is that he synchronizes the rate

of vibration of his will and that of his subject. Blavatsky thus describes the process:

... it is the Will of the operator radiating through his eye that produces the required unison between his will and the will of the person operated upon. For, out of two objects attuned in unison — as two chords, for instance — one will always be weaker than the other, and thus [the stronger] have mastery over the other and even the potentiality of destroying its weaker “co-respondent.” — *Studies in Occultism*, pp. 37-38

In these words lies the key to a scientific explanation of the deterioration of the force of will in the victim of such practices. Even in cases where experimentation is well-meaning, once the controlling power is withdrawn, as for instance at the death of the hypnotizer, the subject finds himself stranded, deprived both of the artificial aid and of his self-generated will. It is for this reason that the use of hypnotism for the cure of bad habits or mental ills, cannot be approved by the Theosophist. To be able temporarily to supply an alien psychic force for making an artificial adjustment, is merely delaying the process that finally has to take place. Cures made in this way are at best temporary, and the time will come when the steps of the sufferer will have to be retraced and the enfeebled psychic nature build as best it may a secure stronghold within the outer vehicle.

In all cases of hypnotic subjugation, the contact between hypnotist and patient establishes a *rapport* which reacts on both. The karma of the two becomes inextricably woven, so that the operator becomes largely karmically responsible for anything the other may do in his unconscious state, or even afterwards due to the effect of post-hypnotic suggestion. Moreover, the hypnotizer is unable to make the line of demarcation between the purely physiological results of his efforts and the psychic results, and in his ignorance may bring on subtle reactions which even he had no intention of inducing and over which he has no control. It is even said that there is the possibility of a psychic backwash too strong for the practitioner himself to withstand, since the channels of communication are open in both directions, and the very things that he is combating may find lodgment in his own nature.

Quite aside from the use of this power for cures of one kind or another, which are, in these days, better regulated than formerly, there is much illicit use of the power to amuse wonder seekers. This is a disgrace to our civilization and can only be excused on the grounds of the utter ignorance of most performers and of those who allow themselves to be used for such public exhibitions. Such spectacles accustom the unthinking to imagine that the whole thing is a sport and nothing more; while they act as a constant suggestion to evil-minded men to develop the power for their own purposes. The last mentioned use of the power is the most insidious, since crimes committed in this way are untraceable. W. Q. Judge speaks

of this as one of the most serious aspects of our present development, since the power is likely to increase in coming generations rather than decrease, and the ethical development of the {human} race does not appear to be keeping pace.

## SELF-HYPNOTIZATION

Under this heading may be classed a great many abnormal states, which might even include the psychological case in which the self-deluded individual has given over all the energies of his being to some fixed idea that he has built up in his consciousness. The idea may have no basis in actual reality, but it can become of such absorbing reality to the unfortunate person that he may entirely lose his sense of proportion and finally become unfit to continue life among normal people. Mental unbalance of this sort often starts by the fostering of some imaginary grievance which, once it receives lodgment in the mind, finds little difficulty in waxing strong and finally dominating its victim.

However, confining ourselves to those cases which rightly come under the study of psychic powers, and in which there are definite physiological as well as psychological reactions, we might enumerate the following:

(a) Those who induce artificial somnambulism without the aid of an outside operator, by various mechanical means such as gazing at a bright object.

(b) The religious ecstasies who can reproduce upon their own bodies the wounds as pictured on the body of Jesus by the concentrated visualizing of such unpleasant pictures until the astral disfiguration affects the physical flesh.

(c) Those who practice certain lower forms of Yoga, hoping by psycho-physiological means to rise superior over the claims of body and mind.

(d) Those who, in their misguided enthusiasm, try to heal the ills of the body by denying the existence of their troubles.

In all these cases imagination and will are the two moving powers. For the human being is a tremendous dynamo of energy — a creator who makes his creations out of thought driven by will. But thought can either build or destroy, and whether he is acting upon his own nature or that of another, it behooves him to know something about the tools with which he works, otherwise he may find himself well on the road to destroying — himself.

In our normal use of thought directed by will we are using a psychic power. This is legitimate; but the cases enumerated above instance the unwise use of such power. To discuss briefly but one example, that of curing disease by forcible efforts of the self-centered will: in the ancient

schools it was understood that most sickness originates with the thinking self, which has the power of impressing, first upon the astral body, and through it on the physical, the stamp of its character. Thought at the present stage of our development is largely governed by emotion, and it is actually the potent interaction of these two that changes our bodies and accounts for our states of health and disease. The disease itself is only a symptom of an inner state, or of a state held at some time in the past by the Ego, perhaps several incarnations ago. Disease might, in fact, be described as 'a state of mind and emotion in the last stages of working itself out of the human constitution through the physical body.' For Nature works normally from within outward, and the appearance of a disease is a testimony to her thorough and efficient methods.

No adept in the art of healing will therefore do anything that will dam back the disease. He would consider it merely doing away with the symptoms and sending the seeds of the trouble back to its psychic source. To deny with concentrated will the existence of an obvious ill is a form of this damming back, or sending back, process, which, apparently so effective sometimes, is really most ineffective since it is an interference with a natural process which will at a later date have to be repeated.

This does not mean that mind plays no part in healing. Just the contrary. Since mind caused the disease, mind can also cause eventual health by creating a generating center of mental health within. But ills perhaps long ago established, are better left to the wise care of a good physician who aids Nature in carrying them out of the system; aided also, hopefully, by the patient himself by a cheerful attitude of mind based on a philosophical outlook towards the trouble.

## PSYCHOLOGIZATION IN GENERAL

Under the general term Hypnotism are included all forms of fascination, suggestion, glamour, spell-binding, and so on, all of which might accurately be grouped under the general heading of *Psychologization*, a tampering with the psychic nature of other individuals. Probably a record of the former lives of many unfortunate inmates of our mental hospitals as well as our prisons would show that there had been subjection at one time or another to hypnotic influence.

In all cases of hypnosis the confidence and good will of the patient are necessary for complete success, while prejudice against the practice may render one much less amenable to suggestion and even entirely immune. Similarly in all forms of psychologization: an intelligent understanding of the danger of the process, and a healthy and positive disapproval of any form of it, are an excellent protection. And it is worth pondering upon the thought that, as in all forms of mediumship, each

person is vulnerable to such domination at those points where his nature is weakest.

As Blavatsky says:

Every man has his little “weaknesses,” and every man has his little “mediumship”; that is to say, some vulnerable point, by which he may be taken unawares. — *The Theosophist*, June 1884, p. 211

If a man allows fear to rule his life, then it is this aura of fear about him that will invite some form of subtle suggestion. Or sloth and indifference may throw him off his guard. Living as we do amid a constant subtle interplay of forces, bathed as we are at all times by the thought-laden astral currents, it is never wise to imagine our fortress impregnable unless we can keep the connection with our spiritual inner center unbroken.

This state of inner stability is the truly *human* condition. When we drop below this by allowing any vagrant force to sweep us off our feet, we have fallen somewhat below the human standard. We can be said to be for the time sub-human. The inanities and even atrocities committed by groups of people under the power of what is called ‘mob psychology’ show to what extent otherwise quite decent people can forgo their true humanity and become irresponsible ‘elementals’ automatically driven by some outside will or idea.

## WILL-PRAYER

There is one other type of psychic power which should receive mention, though it does not strictly belong under the subject of Hypnotism. This power is used in various ways which might all be classed under what H. P. Blavatsky calls Will-Prayer.

The number of groups and individuals in the West who use some form of Will-Prayer is growing rapidly. They have discovered, indeed, an occult secret: “the *mysterious power of thought* which enables it to produce external, perceptible, phenomenal results by its own inherent energy.” — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 173

Since Man is a thinker, he is a Creator, and if his will is strong enough and one-pointed enough, he can make of an idea a *fact*. But when this divine gift is used, as only too often it is, to satisfy selfish personal wishes, remove hardships and trials, and in general do away with the wholesome disciplines which his life provides, he transforms the spiritual will into the psychic. This is a dangerous practice which can become the first step along the path of moral degeneration. One’s *willing* for this or for that may ‘work;’ but the many instances recorded of results coming about in

unexpected ways, or at times when the objects are no longer desired, should act as a deterrent to those who are tempted to dabble with occult powers.

A study of the legitimate uses of thought and will is essential to all students of life. Intelligent discrimination must be used, however, if one would discern the false from the true. [For further study of this important subject see *The Key to Theosophy*, by H. P. Blavatsky, pp. 67-8.]

## CLAIRVOYANCE AND OTHER PSYCHIC POWERS

Clairvoyance, clairsaudience, telepathy, psychometry, and the like powers may or may not be connected with the phenomena of spiritualistic mediumship. Certain phases of these powers are common to the medium under trance, but many clairvoyants, psychometrists, etc., have no connection whatsoever with the spiritualistic séance.

The possession of these faculties, mentioned above, does not indicate an unusual degree of spiritual development, nor is their manifestation dependent upon purity and unselfishness of character. They are merely evidences that one or more of the astral senses are partially able to act independent of their physical counterparts.

### CLAIRVOYANCE AND CLAIRAUDIENCE

The word *clairvoyance* means ‘clear-seeing,’ but this is exactly what it is not, as this psychic power is known today, since its outstanding characteristic is unreliability. There are, as said, many grades of astral substance, each of which is familiar to a certain type of ‘seer,’ but as a rule it is the lower regions of the Astral Light that the clairvoyant contacts, a realm where all is a welter of confusion. Even here their vision is limited; they see only into one or more sub-planes, and their pictures are therefore partial and scrappy.

Through octave after octave of vibrations the effect of every thought or act on our plane makes its own particular impression on inner planes, each and all known to the occultist. Each such impression represents but one phase of the imperishable record. The trained seer must combine all of these *aspects* in order to read the true picture. W. Q. Judge describes how even in so simple an act as a person’s moving from one chair to another in a room, all the centers of force in his being come into play and each one makes its own and peculiar effect on the astral substance, and he goes on to say that:

At once the motion made and thoughts aroused elicit their own sound, color, motion in ether, amount of etheric light, symbolic picture, disturbance of elemental forces, and so on through the great catalogue. Did one but wink his eye, the same effects follow in due order. And the seer can perceive but



that which attunes itself to his own development and personal peculiarities, all limited in force and degree. — *The Path*, Vol. V, pp. 283-4

Every reading made by the seer is modified, if not markedly colored, by his own powers of interpretation, partly governed by his degree of technical knowledge concerning the character of the various sub-planes of the astral light, and partly by his mental and intuitional development. In fact, his whole hereditary and evolutionary background affects the nature of his interpretation.

There is also a distinction to be made between actual astral records of people and events either of the past, present, or future, and mere thought-forms relating to such people and events projected from the minds of individuals. Suppose, for instance, one approaches a 'fortuneteller' for the purpose of finding out whether some project will turn out to one's liking. There are several possibilities of error in the answer, aside from the limitations already mentioned. There hangs around every man in his own astral atmosphere, sometimes called his aura, a perfect phantasmagoria of images that he weaves out of the stuff of his own thinking self. Now if our querent has built up, as he undoubtedly has, a thought-picture of what he hopes will happen, the seer may mistake this for a foreshadowing of the future outcome. Or the querent's mind may be just freshly impressed by thoughts from another dominant mind. This impression will then stand out most clearly and prove a false indication for the indiscriminating seer. Or there may be spontaneous and quite unconscious feelings of either sympathy or antipathy between the two, and this in itself will color the reply.

Further, the relation of pictures one with another is not clear in the Astral Light. There is often a reversal of sequence or conditions: the future may appear as the past, summer as winter, results look like causes, and so on. Numbers also are said to appear in reverse, as for instance 321 may be transformed into 123.

Such instances of the unreliability of most clairvoyant readings could be added to, almost indefinitely. Conflicting reports from a number of clairvoyants about some event of nationwide interest bear out the emphatic statements made by occultists as to the uncertain character of all such sources of knowledge. And mention might also be made of the strong temptation to deception and fraud risked by those professed psychics whose rather doubtful powers are not always functioning.

Besides this matter of unreliability, which often may lead others astray, there are the more serious dangers to the clairvoyant himself. It is significant that a large majority of clairvoyants suffer from nervous and other physical disorders and from mental instability, and that their degree of sensitivity often increases proportionally to their ill-health.

Further, the effect of such constant centering of attention on this subtle sense perception brings on a gradual atrophy of the thinking,

reasoning faculty. The clairvoyant, also, may not be able to stop the power at will, and the images that float before his inner eye may torment and perplex until sanity itself is threatened. When we are so little able as yet to stand firm against the throng of subtle suggestions that assault the fortress of our psychic nature through the avenues of our five physical senses, it would seem to be rashness in the extreme to wish to be introduced to a whole new set of senses, far more complicated and bewildering in action. And to advise another to try to develop clairvoyant powers is a responsibility no one would care to undertake once he knew all that it entails.

The following words from Judge are emphatic and unmistakable in their import:

But what shall Theosophists do? Stop all attempts at clairvoyance. And why? Because it leads them slowly but surely — almost beyond recall — into an interior and exterior passive state where the will is gradually overpowered and they are at last in the power of the demons who lurk around the threshold of our consciousness. Above all, follow no advice to “sit for development.” Madness lies that way. The feathery touches which come upon the skin while trying these experiments are said by mediums to be the gentle touches of the “spirits.” But they are not. They are caused by the ethereal fluids from within us making their way out through the skin and thus producing the illusion of a touch. When enough has gone out, then the victim is getting gradually negative, the future prey for spooks and will-o’-the-wisp images.

“But *what*,” they say, “shall we pursue and study?” Study the philosophy of life, leave the decorations that line the road of spiritual development for future lives, and — practice altruism.

— *The Path*, Vol. V, p. 284

Clairaudience is but another form of the same psychic power as clairvoyance and may be just as open to error. Sound, like light, leaves its impressions upon the tenacious substance of the Astral Light. This may be difficult to understand at first, but an analogous phenomenon is found in the simple experiment of the physics laboratory where sand will take on geometrical patterns when submitted to the vibrations of a musical instrument. The phonograph record still better illustrates this point.

The two powers are sometimes hardly distinguishable, both astral senses apparently functioning together. And whether of the ear or of the eye, the *image* may sometimes seem to be objective because the astral sense organ, having received its vibratory message from the ether, sends it on to the brain which then excites the physical organ of sight or sound.

## TELEPATHY

Telepathy or thought transference, also called E.S.P. (extra-sensory perception), is the faculty of perceiving thought-pictures sent out by another mind. Involuntary telepathy is very common indeed, especially where there exists a bond of sympathy. Almost everyone has had the experience of having letters cross, one being obviously the reply to the other; or that a friend at a distance is aware of something going on in one's own mind without any written word. There is nothing abnormal or 'magical' about this, since thought is known to the occultist to be vibratory, and where two minds are in sympathy, there is similarity of vibration transmitted from one mind to the other along the invisible astral medium.

Voluntary telepathy requires not only a perfect *rapproch* between two individuals, but also an intense concentration of thought directed by the will; but the development of the power in ordinary persons would be exceedingly difficult and probably dangerous in any case. As a race we have not as yet the ethical stamina that would prove us worthy to possess a power allowing us, under a thousand temptations, to pick the thoughts out of another's mind and pry into the inner recesses of his consciousness.

The present rather widespread experiments in telepathy, in order to discover whether there does exist a sixth sense in man, an extra-sensory perception, are bound to be very incomplete in their results, because the experimenters are working with the mysteries of elusive consciousness which will not be confined within the limits of the laboratory. It is like trying to draw permanent lines with a stick in a body of water. Yet their efforts are interesting, since they may lead to the opening of a door into a realm whose existence scientists have consistently denied.

There is a higher form of telepathy, if one may so call it, in which we all may partake. H. P. Blavatsky speaks of that great ocean of supernal ideas in which our globe exists. To this are attracted those great minds of the human race whose quality of thought is on a similar high plane. These giant minds become the channels by which these sublime ideas are clothed in human language to quicken the spiritual intuitions of humanity. This inner world of thought has no limiting frontiers. We keep ourselves out.

## CRYSTAL-GAZING

This rather specific term may serve to describe one type of astral visioning. It is the practice of looking into a crystal, a polished mirror, or some such object with the ability to see therein events taking place at a distance, or foreshadowings of the future. Examination shows that there are too many cases of successful divination to class this whole matter under that of hallucination or trickery. Yet as with other occult matters, the subject has not been studied seriously by scientific investigators because

of materialistic prejudice which would make the researcher lose caste in scientific circles. For too long the matter has been associated with superstition and the tricks of paid professionals. The inability of the seer to be consistently successful, or to explain causes of failure, has also helped to throw the whole matter into disfavor.

Theosophy explains that certain bright and polished objects more readily than other things collect or concentrate a portion of the astral light about themselves, where pictures are thus made visible to one who has a certain amount of clairvoyant perception. Such objects are really merely an aid to the natural clairvoyant. Records of many peoples show a wide variety of such objects used in different ages and countries, such as a pool of ink in the hand, water in a vessel, a sword blade, and so on.

### PSYCHOMETRY

This is the faculty of reading astral impressions and pictures that cluster around inanimate as well as animate objects. Such pictures the psychometrist can ‘see’ when he comes into physical contact with the object to be studied. The sensations received are not only those of sight. Sounds can be heard, odors smelt, or sensations of heat and cold, dryness and moisture felt.

Thus a manuscript, painting, article of clothing or jewelry — no matter how ancient — conveys to the sensitive, a vivid picture of the writer, painter, or wearer even; though he lived in the days of Ptolemy or Enoch. Nay, more; a fragment of an ancient building will recall its history and even the scenes which transpired within or about it. A bit of ore will carry the soul-vision back to the time when it was in process of formation.

— H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, p. 182

This power is fairly common in a mild degree. In fact all people who are at all sensitive to the unpleasant or perhaps pleasant atmosphere hanging around old houses, books, furniture, and the like are exhibiting a slight and unconscious use of the power; for it is obvious that that unseen something they sense inheres rather in the astral body of the object than in the physical shell.

Psychometry may be considered a relatively safe door into the inner world for scientists. The thousands of experiments that have been made along this line are much more satisfactory and much less subject to fraud than anything else of a psychic nature. H. P. Blavatsky suggests that the faculty was extensively used in the ancient world, and quotes a modern investigator who believes that the profound knowledge of the Chaldean astrologers was gained rather through clairvoyant reading of certain meteoric stones than by the use of astronomical instruments. [See *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, pp. 331-332]

## AUTOMATIC WRITING

Automatic writing, besides being one of the phenomena of spiritualism, is also at the present time cultivated by an ever increasing number of people whose purposes in so doing are probably varied. Some enthusiasts seriously believe that they can train themselves to be guided in the composition of marvelous works of literature, or become the channels for revelations of truth from 'on high.' But most results that have been studied, while sometimes containing bits of lofty thought, are characterized by two things: (a) inequality of style to a marked degree, and (b) lack of any coherent thread of thought. The mass of twaddle put out in this way is conspicuous. Even the best class of this kind of writing never contains any *new* contribution to the body of spiritual ideas already found in the great literatures of the world.

In India, where the mysteries of the psychic nature have been studied for many ages, such type of automatic writing has always been ascribed to *bhûtas*, astral remnants of former human beings. And the practice has always been warned against, since it leaves one passive to whatever astral entities may find an affinity in one's psychic make-up.

There is, however, another type of automatic writing which is described by G. de Purucker as follows:

This kind is wholesome, good, and proper to cultivate *if you have a wise and reliable Teacher*. Otherwise you will almost inevitably slip on the path. This other kind of automatic writing can occur when the higher part of the human constitution becomes the controlling factor for an hour or two or three mayhap. The human being then is no longer conscious of his physical personality at all; he has transcended that; he has raised himself, has become for the time being almost at one with the god within, and in these circumstances his hand writes what may actually be a very message from his own spiritual nature.

But alas, in the present state of human evolution, none can do this without initiation, without training, without a Teacher.

— *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, iv

To establish contact with the spiritual source of one's own being requires not only technical training, but a prepared vehicle as well. It was through such training and preparation that H. P. Blavatsky was able to become the channel for the writing of large portions of her books by her own Teachers. She was able at any moment to receive their 'call to attention.' And hints that she herself has given in her writings show that this was no light accomplishment.

It would not be profitable to dwell further on the various types of abnormal development as exhibited in the West; nor need the numerous other psychic powers known only to the East concern us here. Enough has been said to show how misleading is the glamour that hangs about these subjects, a glamour that we could dispel if we knew more about the genuine spiritual powers of which these are at best but a poor reflection.

For instance, it is undoubtedly the element of prophecy that makes clairvoyance so fascinating to many people. To be able to cheat time, so to speak, becomes almost a passion with some. Yet such attempts to glimpse into the future, when successful, bring dissatisfaction, unrest, a centering of attention upon oneself, and a general loss of equilibrium; when unsuccessful, they are futile indeed.

The true clairvoyant power, on the other hand, which takes its beginnings in unselfish love, brings with it no such unhappy results. It is a power used at will by the master of life; in us it feebly manifests as flashes of intuition, ‘hunches,’ warnings in dreams, and the like.

Even such qualities as discrimination and sound judgment, natural attributes of the well-developed individual, indicate that normal evolutionary growth leads us *sanely*, even if imperceptibly, towards the acquiring of clairvoyant powers. Discrimination is essentially a quality derived from our Buddhist principle, and wherever we see someone who knows *instinctively*, as we say, what to do in a crisis, when to act and when to refrain from action, who can make swift decisions, perhaps on momentous questions, that contain no flaw of judgment, who has a balanced sense of values — such a person we may know is giving exercise to the clairvoyant power of ‘seeing straight.’ The highly specialized powers of the adept must always rest on such secure foundations of character. They are the normal higher human faculties, developed, refined, and expanded to a universal scope.

One often comes upon the phrase “The Eye of Siva” or “The Third Eye” in Theosophical literature. This refers to the inner spiritual eye of the seer; but “the faculty which manifests through it is not clairvoyance as ordinarily understood, *i.e.*, the power of seeing at a distance, but rather the faculty of spiritual intuition, through which direct and certain knowledge is obtainable.” [*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 46 fn]

There was a time in the history of man’s evolution, say the Ancient Records [See *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, pp. 294-302], when the race possessed an actual physical organ known as the Third Eye which finally became atrophied as spirituality disappeared and materiality increased. This was the organ of spiritual clairvoyance, now represented in the skull by the mysterious pineal gland which remains as a witness to the fact that there exists this sleeping power within us.

The disappearance of the Third Eye took place when human physical development dominated the scene. But that racial cycle of growth has now

passed its lowest point, and it is again time for our spiritual faculties, so long recessive, to find expression through our progressively refining inner and outer bodies. Thus true clairvoyance is not something foreign to the human make-up. To the extent that we can tranquilize and purify our psychic nature, we shall again possess that direct perception of reality which belongs to us by right of our essential spiritual nature. But possession is not enough. Spiritual intuition, the true clairvoyance, does not become *our* strength and *our* knowledge until we learn how to use it.

## THE THEOSOPHICAL OBJECTIVE

When the Theosophical Society was founded in 1875, those who were attracted to this 'new' and original organization naturally interpreted its objectives in the light of their own understanding and according to their degree of enlightenment. If, as they understood, there existed a great lodge of exalted Men who possessed amazing power over the forces of Man and Nature, and who were Guardians of a great treasury of knowledge accumulated through the ages, then here was the opportunity of a lifetime to receive development along 'occult' lines and learn those secrets that confer knowledge and power upon him who can master them.

It was vague in the minds of many as to exactly what sort of training and instruction they were seeking and exactly what were the results they expected to arrive at. To some it was psychism that fascinated. And these were disappointed when they found that no promises were made to teach methods for roaming about in the astral body at will, reading astral records, or communicating with 'spirits.'

Others, interested in 'magic' and the occult arts, looked for instruction in formulas and spells and rites, in 'correspondences' and the secret properties of metals, colors, numbers, and the like.

Others aspired rather higher. They wished to acquire the powers of the spirit, those qualities that make one truly holy and wise; and they imagined that their eagerness to be put under training and their high enthusiasm were sufficient guarantee of success.

The Theosophical philosophy has an answer for each of these three classes of power-seekers, whose like can be found today, as always. The dangers of psychism have already been discussed at length in these pages. No Theosophical teacher, however, condemns psychic powers *per se*.

When a man has allied himself consciously with the god within him, with the real source of everything that he is, then these psychical powers and faculties so-called develop and unfold as naturally as the unfolding of the petals of a flower; and the use of these psychical faculties and powers then becomes not only legitimate and proper, but necessary. But to cultivate these psychical things before you have mastered the merest elements of self-knowledge, of selfhood, before you know who you are or before you have

found yourself, makes you to be as much without guides as is a bit of drifting flotsam on the ocean of life;...

— G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, v

To those interested in the occult arts, the following words of H. P. Blavatsky are a fitting answer:

Occultism is not magic. It is *comparatively* easy to learn the trick of spells and the methods of using the subtler, but still material, forces of physical nature; the powers of the animal soul in man are soon awakened; the forces which his love, his hate, his passion, can call into operation, are readily developed. But this is Black Magic — *Sorcery*.

— *Studies in Occultism*, pp. 2-3

And again:

Real *divine* theurgy requires an almost superhuman purity and holiness of life; otherwise it degenerates into mediumship or black magic.

— *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 3 fn

A distinction is made in Theosophy between occultism and the occult arts. Occultism is *Âtma-vîdyâ*, which means literally ‘Knowledge of the Self.’ This knowledge is the supreme aim of the true aspirant to wisdom because he is taught that *the Universe is within himself*, and that the farther ‘inward’ he goes, the more all-embracing his consciousness becomes. This is a mystical saying which will not yield up its secret meaning to the coldly critical mind of the pure materialist.

The occult arts, on the other hand, constitute a group of *Sciences* — however little recognized today; among which are included Occult Physiology, Astrology, Alchemy, and Chiromancy. They are based on exact knowledge and are known to the great Lodge of Adepts by natural right. But the high spiritual stature of these sages was never achieved by seeking to attain this knowledge and power for its own sake.

*Âtma-vîdyâ*, says H. P. Blavatsky, sets small store by them:

It includes them all, and may even use them occasionally, but it does so after purifying them of their dross, for beneficent purposes, and taking care to deprive them of every element of selfish motive.

— *Studies in Occultism*, p. 15

To those who aspire to attain the powers of the spirit, the answer always comes: *Discipline first*.

*Siddhis* (or the Arhat [a master of life] powers) are only for those who are able to “lead the life,” to comply with the terrible sacrifices required for such a training, and to comply with them *to the very letter*. — *Ibid.*, p. 17



There have been those who have complained of this attitude of reserve on the part of Theosophical teachers, in giving out certain knowledge, and have attributed it to unworthy motives of one kind or another — reflected, indeed, from their own distorted consciousness. Study of the philosophy, however, soon uncovers the wise reason for this reticence. Man as he is at present is comparatively well protected against his own follies and imperfections. His very incapacity shields him. But knowledge is power, and power without absolute purity and *self-control* spells sorcery and finally utter self-destruction. Knowledge also brings responsibility; and whatever evil effects arise from one's wielding of forbidden power, affecting others as well as oneself, have to be met and answered for by the unfortunate offender of the Cosmic law.

No true Teacher would be guilty of the crime, for such it would be, of putting into the hands of the unprepared the terrible temptations attendant upon the acquiring of technical instruction as to Nature's inner secrets. Only he is prepared whose psychic nature is unassailable; and preparedness is achieved through a long period of training, and by the use of the creative will.

But the first steps in training can be taken at any time. Life itself provides the opportunity. Through the gradual refining influence of suffering and the disciplines of experience, the very quality of our psychic nature changes little by little following the natural upward urge towards racial improvement. It becomes purer, less vacillating and wayward, more sensitive to the magnetic pull upwards towards its spiritual parent within. Discrimination, a quality of the spirit, begins to develop. The purpose of life takes on a new and profounder significance. The mystery of the One Life flowing through all beings gradually turns one away from the small attentions of the personal self to embrace a wider circle of sympathies and interests.

By such gradual development one becomes prepared to take a further step. No one who is ready is ever denied the opportunity to advance. The Theosophical Society has provided in this cycle such an opportunity. Yet it was not methods for developing powers that the Mahâtmas who founded the Society offered. Powers fascinate the human mind because, however spiritually conceived, they imply, to us, the ability to *have* something for oneself; to rise above our fellows; to excel rather than to serve. Our motives are of course mixed. We do entertain altruistic ideals; but the higher forms of selfishness are very subtle indeed, and altruistic motives are very easily submerged under the excess of egoism that grows *pari passu* with our psychic or, let us say, even spiritual development.

What the Theosophical Society offers is an opportunity to all lovers of humanity to do altruistic work, illuminated by the light of a comprehensive philosophy which explains the causes of the miseries and inequalities in the world. It was founded to help direct altruism along

constructive channels, and to show that whole-hearted cooperation in such work was the safest way to higher development. The dynamic energy to give the Movement power to overcome every obstacle is not generated by striving to learn tricks of the occult arts, but by arousing a burning desire to serve. In short, the Society was not formed to be a "Hall of Magic." It was to be a nucleus of Universal Oneness in the world and "to keep alive in man his spiritual intuitions."

Many Westerners find it very distasteful to contemplate a postponement of personal achievement. They say, "Why must we wait for future lives? We want powers *now*." Such people are fascinated by the various methods of training offered by self-styled 'occultists,' or by 'yogis' from the East. Nevertheless, an inquiry into these systems and their results shows that even here they do not find satisfaction. Even when such systems are not positively dangerous, they practically all pander to the acquisitiveness of the undeveloped human being. Advertisements say: "You can learn in six weeks to gain power over others" or "You can have everything you want, power, riches, friends."

Yet with all their appeal, these adaptations of Eastern systems are quite unsuited to the temperament of the average Westerner with his impatient, restless, and undisciplined nature. As a rule we are entirely unable to go through with the difficult courses of training to which the meditative, introspective Easterner is adapted to by ages of heredity, by custom and environment. The eager enthusiast gets 'stuck half way.' Unable to win through to a promised success, and equally unable to regain the more normal if not enlightened state he previously possessed, he does not know where to turn. His foundations are gone and he is likely to become a sort of derelict in life.

The better systems, with a quasi-spiritual appeal, promise the student looking for quick results the possibility of reaching a state of cosmic consciousness by following a particular course of lessons — for a price. But cosmic consciousness is not to be bought! It is the unalterable rule of the real teachers that no spiritual teaching shall ever be sold.

Further than this, the human soul has taken millions of years to reach its present stage, and that slow process of unfolding growth which is to culminate eventually in full spiritual enlightenment cannot suddenly be consummated. You cannot overnight make of a soul something that it is not. Its quality and character change slowly. Soul enlightenment comes as the fruition of lifetimes of diligence and one-pointed effort.

Thus the Theosophical philosophy holds out no false hopes. It explains the nature, origin, and destiny of the complex being called man, and provides a grand universal setting in which the awakening consciousness of the aspirant to wisdom views his own progress as inseparable from that of the whole human race, and almost inconsequential in its purely personal aspects. He finds that, far from any barriers being raised

to his progressive development, the expansion of consciousness he receives from a study of the Ancient Wisdom and from its application in a life of unselfish service, clears away veil after veil of the lower selfhood. Thus he himself, *by his own self-devised efforts*, brings about those higher stages of training and teaching which lead to the final objective: the attainment of Âtma-vidyâ, the union of the human self with the aspirant's own inner god.

As a concluding thought, we quote from the closing chapter of *The Key to Theosophy*. H. P. Blavatsky, writing in 1889, draws a picture of what the Theosophical Society may do if it can avoid the pitfalls that so many former efforts have fallen into. She writes:

Then the Society will live on into and through the twentieth century. It will gradually leaven and permeate the great mass of thinking and intelligent people with its large-minded and noble ideas of Religion, Duty, and Philanthropy. Slowly but surely it will burst asunder the iron fetters of creeds and dogmas, of social and caste prejudices; it will break down racial and national antipathies and barriers, and will open the way to the practical realization of the Brotherhood of all men.... Further, the development of the psychic powers and faculties, the premonitory symptoms of which are already visible in America, will proceed healthily and normally. Humanity will be saved from the terrible dangers, both mental and bodily, which are inevitable when that unfolding takes place, as it threatens to do, in a hot-bed of selfishness and all evil passions. Man's mental and psychic growth will proceed in harmony with his moral improvement, while his material surroundings will reflect the peace and fraternal good-will which will reign in his mind, instead of the discord and strife which is everywhere apparent around us to-day.



# Theosophy and Christianity

H. T. Edge

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## INTRODUCTORY

Theosophy is the essential truth underlying all religions and does not recognize any one religion as being supreme over the others or as the last word of truth. It is not hostile to Christianity, but finds itself obliged to combat many things which it considers alien to the genuine Christian gospel and which have gradually crept in since that gospel was originally proclaimed. Among these is the idea that Christianity is paramount among religions or that it is a final revelation of divine truth, superseding other faiths. This idea is contrary to the truth and is becoming more and more difficult to maintain. For this there are two principal reasons. {1} Ancient religions have been widely and intensively studied, especially those of India, which have become accessible through the knowledge of Sanskrit. {2} Intercommunication between nations has grown so wide and intimate. These two causes combine to prevent the exclusive attitude of mind which was possible in past times. But it is hard to give up cherished habits and, moreover, people imagine that if they surrender the paramouncy of Christianity they will be surrendering religion itself. And so we find strange expedients resorted to in the attempt to account for the existence in more ancient religions of so many of the doctrines and rituals which were supposed to be peculiar to Christianity. The Abbé Huc, in his celebrated *Travels in Tartary, Tibet, and China*, describes how he found among the Tibetan priests not only many characteristic doctrines of the Roman Church but even many of their rituals, vestures, and sacred implements. His explanation is that the Devil thus anticipated Christianity in order to deceive humanity; to which he adds a theory that early Christian missionaries may have penetrated to Tibet. A recent improvement on this is found in a theory which we have just seen in a book published under the auspices of a well-known Christian propagation society, to the effect that the lofty doctrines found in India's sacred books were due to the work of the Holy Spirit, who thus prepared humanity for the "greater things than these" to come in the future. But still it rests with him to show that the Christianity which came was really greater.

There are various brands of broad-church Christianity, which seek to enlarge the scope of the religions so as to take in many things now known to man but which did not occupy the minds of our forefathers; but the difficulty with them is to enlarge the gospel sufficiently without destroying its identity as Christianity; and again, if a body of water be widened without increasing its volume, the result is to make it shallower.

At the Church Congress in October, 1935, the Very Rev. W. R. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, said that until recently almost the whole of Christendom would have said that there is one revelation of God, and that it is to be found in the Bible; but (he continued)

the supreme revelation is not wholly external and we cannot recognize the 'Word made Flesh' unless the Word is within us. He went on to say:

God does not dictate from heaven a creed or articles of faith. He manifests Himself through the experience and personalities of His prophets and of His Son. The doctrines of the Church are formulas in which the revelation has been summed up, guarded and preserved.... It may be that more adequate expressions will be found hereafter for the spiritual heritage that they have been formed to express.... The Holy Spirit will guide us into new truth.

When such eminent and leading authorities are conceding so much, we can hardly be accused of being altogether unorthodox; we are merely pointing out some of the logical conclusions to which the Dean's admissions inevitably point.

These various attempts all tend to the confession that religions change with the times, that humanity progresses independently of them, and that they must keep up with the needs of humanity or else become a drag upon progress. Yet we cannot on this account reject all religious truth and lapse into one of the forms of unbelief, atheism, or materialism. We must not throw away the substance with the outgrown form. An organized religious system, with its creed, its prescribed ritual, its church organization, is a spirit imbodyed in a form; and like every other organism, the form has to undergo continual change, though the spirit within may ever be the same. These are facts which cannot be disputed by anyone with a modicum of historical knowledge or an acquaintance with the general laws of growth and evolution.

But there can be only one Truth. Religion itself, apart from creeds and churches, is a recognition and observance of the basic laws of the Universe. These basic laws are also inherent in man himself, so that the real eternal and universal Religion is based on the facts of human nature and must remain the same as long as man is man. The most essential truth is that man is a divine spirit incarnate in an animal body; that his salvation consists in subduing his lower nature by means of his higher; and that the true law of conduct for man is that which is expressed in the Golden Rule. This truth lies at the base of all religions, and Christianity, so far from having originated it, or even improved it, has merely inherited it.

It is necessary to refer briefly to certain Theosophical teachings which will be found more fully treated elsewhere, and one of these is the teaching as to the Wisdom-Religion or Secret Doctrine. This is knowledge concerning the deepest mysteries of Nature and man, but in the present cycle of human evolution, it is unknown to humanity in general. During this cycle therefore it rests under the guardianship of the Masters of Wisdom, or the Great Lodge of Initiates, whose function it is to preserve the sacred knowledge and to communicate it to the world at appropriate

times and in appropriate places. They accomplish this work in several ways: one is by sending out a Messenger from themselves, who appears among humanity, gathers a body of disciples, founds an esoteric school in which to give private instruction, and also gives exoteric teaching to the multitude. ["And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand." — Luke viii. 10 "And with many such parables spake he the word unto them [the people], as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples." — Mark, iv, 33-34] But after the withdrawal of the teacher, the movement which he has started undergoes changes and degeneration. It falls under the influence of worldly motives and forces; it becomes formalized; it breaks up into schools and sects; it acquires various organic forms with churches, priesthood, and creeds. The process can be traced in the history of religions in general; it can be traced in Christianity, so that the Christianity of today is not in any of its forms the original gospel as given by the founder.

It will be well to say a few words about the attitude towards Christians which we here adopt. That attitude will be sympathetic, and not merely from feeling but from knowledge. For the writer, having been brought up in the Church of England and having in early life been a sincere Christian, is thereby qualified to speak with more sympathy and understanding than is sometimes the case with those who can view Christianity only from the outside. Moreover, there will not be the same likelihood of falling into the common forensic error of misrepresenting the case of one's opponent in a controversy, of comparing what is best in Theosophy with what is worst in Christianity, or of attacking men of straw or flogging dead horses.

There is no wish to disturb the peace of those who find in Christianity, as they know it, all they need, and especially those who find in their faith the inspiration to a noble life. But there is a large and increasing number to whom our message may be welcome. The churches confess that they are losing their hold, and there are more people than ever who find themselves unable to accept what they are taught, and who yet cannot throw over religion itself and lapse into infidelity. Such people are at a loss for an expedient; they may find some way of their own, or they may form movements; but in any case their efforts lack both definiteness and cooperation. These needs are supplied by Theosophy; Theosophy can justly claim to stand as a champion of Christianity by pointing to the true and original excellence of that religion and showing how to extract the essence from the extraneous matter that encumbers it.

We shall show, then, what are the essential truths of religion which change not with the times, cause no conflict between creeds and sects, and are enshrined in the heart of man; and we shall trace these in Christianity, its doctrines, its forms, and its scriptures. Thereby we shall prove that Christianity is kin to the other great religions and to the greatest philosophical systems, and that there is enough external evidence to prove that



it is one of the effluents of the great river of the Wisdom-Religion. We shall try to trace Christianity from its beginnings, through various changes, to its present forms, so far as that may be possible with imperfect knowledge and in a limited scope. The principal dogmas, articles of faith, and ritual observances must be considered, their real meaning shown by comparison with the corresponding elements in other religions, in philosophies, and in mythologies. It will be shown how the teachings ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels, as well as some of those of his apostles in the Epistles, appear in a new light as soon as we have the key to their interpretation; and how many of such teachings have remained obscure because we had not that key.

Various movements have been started, and exist today, for uniting the world's religions in common service, so that they may pool their efforts instead of contending with each other; and though such efforts are worthy of all praise and have achieved beneficial results, yet their shortcomings and the reasons for these will be clear in the light of what we are saying. Religions are one in essence, and different in external form. The real way to unite them is to get back to the essence in each; attempts to bring about artificial union in externals are not so practicable. Moreover such attempts at unification are apt to take the form of eliminating from the common program the points of difference, so that what remains is a residue more or less vague and lifeless. Such a process resembles subtraction rather than addition; or, better, it is the attempt to find a common factor, which, as we know, becomes smaller in proportion to the multitude of the numbers whose common factor is to be found.

All religions have an esoteric basis beneath their exoteric form, and it is this which has so largely disappeared. Religions as they are do not satisfy the needs of human aspiration, for they leave out so large a part of what vitally concerns man. They are confined chiefly to ethical principles, but tell us nothing about the nature of the Universe or our human nature. Falling thus behind the age, they have allowed to grow up competing influences, such as natural science and abstract philosophy; and so we find the field of knowledge, which should be one, divided into compartments, either independent of each other or else conflicting.

The false antithesis between morals and knowledge, religion and science, righteousness and culture, has been one of the great banes of religion. A unification of the field of knowledge is much desired; a uniform law by which to live; a solid basis for ethics, morals, conduct, instead of dogmas which we cannot believe, or speculations and fads and cults innumerable. A person's real religion is what he lives by — whatever he may profess. Thus the real unification of religions is found, not by trying to force an external union, or by eliminating from them all points of difference and thus leaving a weak residue, but by getting back to the

esoteric basis of religions and showing the common parentage of them all; in short, by reviving a knowledge of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion.

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

### ‘PAGAN’ ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY

In this section we give evidence to show that Christianity was not new, but derived from what went before; that its cardinal doctrines are held in common with older religions; and that many of its rites and dogmas are adopted from what is called Pagan belief. There are people called Fundamentalists, who seek to go back to the true old gospel; but how far back do they propose to go, and just what point in history do they stop at? Let us take a few quotations from early writers on Christianity.

St. Augustine says:

The very thing which is now called the Christian religion, really was known to the ancients, nor was it wanting at any time from the beginning of the human race up to the time Christ came in the flesh; from which time the true religion, which has previously existed, began to be called Christian, and this in our days is the Christian religion, not as having been wanting in former times, but as having in later times received that name.

— *Augustini Opera*, I, 12

Eusebius, another Father, though an ardent advocate of the new faith, is constrained to admit that the Christian religion was neither new nor strange, and that it was known to the ancients. *Ecclesiastical History*, see Bk. i, ch. iv.

Justin Martyr, in defending Christianity before the Emperor Hadrian, is at pains to show its identity with Paganism.

By declaring the Word (*Logos*), the first begotten of God, our Master Jesus Christ, to be born of a virgin without any human mixture, to be crucified and dead and afterwards to have risen and ascended into heaven, we say no more than what you say of those whom you call the sons of Jupiter... As to the objection of our Jesus being crucified, I say that suffering was common to all the aforementioned sons of Jupiter, only they suffered another kind of death.... As to his curing the lame and the paralytic and such as were cripples from birth, this is little more than what you say of your Aesculapius. — *Apology*, I, chs. xxi, xxii

Ammonius Saccas says:

Christianity and Paganism, when rightly understood, differ in no essential points, but had a common origin, and are really one and the same thing.

The following quotation from the controversy between H. P. Blavatsky and the Abbe Roca, published in the French magazine *Le Lotus*, April 1888, is appropriate here:

For me, Jesus Christ, that is to say the Man-God of the Christians, a copy of the Avatars of all countries, from the Hindu Krishna as well as the Egyptian Horus, was never a historical person. He is a deified personification of the glorified type of the great Hierophants of the Temples, and his story told in the New Testament is an allegory, assuredly containing profound esoteric truths, but an allegory.... The legend of which I speak is founded... on the existence of a personage called Jehoshua (from which 'Jesus' has been made) born at Lud or Lydda about 120 years before the modern era.... In spite of all the desperate researches made during long centuries, if we place on one side the witness of the 'Evangelists,' i.e., unknown men whose identity has never been established, and that of the *Fathers* of the Church, interested fanatics, neither history nor profane tradition, nor official documents, nor the contemporaries of the *soi-disant* drama, are able to provide one single serious proof of the historical and real existence, not only of the Man-God but even of him called Jesus of Nazareth, from the year 1 to the year 33. All is darkness and silence. Philo Judaeus, born before the Christian era... made several journeys to Jerusalem. He went there to write the history of the religious sects of his epoch in Palestine. No writer is more correct in his descriptions, more careful to omit nothing; no community, no fraternity, even the most insignificant, escaped him. Why then does he not speak of the Nazarenes? Why does he not make the most distant allusion to the Apostles, to the divine Galilean, to the Crucifixion? The answer is easy. Because the biography of Jesus was invented after the first century, and no one in Jerusalem was a bit better informed than Philo himself.

These passages, which are only a sample out of what might be adduced, show that Christianity was recognized as being a continuance of an age-old doctrine, with changes in external form made necessary by changing times.

The history of Christianity proves it to have been inspired by enormous force, all-conquering vitality, enabling it to last through the centuries and dominate so much of the world. And yet, if we seek the origin, we can find only the most meager foundation. The historicity of Jesus is very doubtful; his mission, as recorded in the Gospels, is limited to a few months and is ignored by Pagan historians. Christianity was a revival of the Wisdom-Religion, started by some great Messenger from the Lodge, of whom the record has been lost. The figure in the Gospels is fictitious; the Gospels were not written until long after the time of which they profess to treat; and Paul in his Epistles seems to know nothing of them.

There is a Jewish account of a certain Syrian, named Jeshua or Jehoshua ben Panthera, who lived in the reign of the Jewish king Alexander Jannaeus about a century B.C.; and some think the name Jesus was derived from this. From this man were derived the doctrines of two sects of Jewish Christians, living before the Christian era, the Ebionites and the Nazarenes. They represent the purest form of Christianity, and taught that Christ is in all men, and the doctrines of Aeons or divine emanations, whereby man himself is shown to be a descendant from the highest divinities. Such too was the teaching of the Christian Gnostics and of the Neo-Platonists.

Evidently Christianity was originally a form of the Wisdom-Religion and taught that man is essentially a divine being, the Christ being simply the Divine Spirit in man; and that man must achieve his own salvation by recognizing his own divinity and invoking it to his aid. Later this sublime and ancient truth was transformed into belief in a personal God, apart from man and from Nature, and into the doctrine of vicarious atonement. But this process of change was gradual.

#### EARLY FORMS OF CHRISTIANITY

The center of Western civilization at the Christian era was the Mediterranean basin, the scene of a wonderful medley of competing beliefs and cults, under the general government of the Roman Empire. There were several centers where the ancient Mysteries were preserved, taught, and practiced — Alexandria, Antioch, and other places in Asia Minor — and these had communications with India and Persia. We find early Christianity maintaining the doctrines of these schools, and it has been customary to regard these forms of Christianity as heresies due to contamination from Pagan sources, which is exactly the reverse of the actual case. It is these which were the genuine Christianity, and later Christianity was a very much expurgated derivative. So much has our attention been focused upon the particular phase of this religion which eventually survived, that we have ignored the many other forms which for centuries rivaled it, only to succumb to the advancing materialism of the times.

Marcion, who founded the churches of the Marcionites in the second century A.D., sought to purify Christianity from the corruptions into which it had fallen. He denied the stories about Christ found in the Gospels, saying that such statements were ‘carnalizations’ of metaphysical allegories and a degradation of the true spiritual idea. He accused the Church Fathers of framing their doctrine according to the capacity of their hearers — “blind things for the blind according to their blindness; for the dull according to their dullness.”

Manicheism was a formidable rival to the Church. Roman emperors sought to repress it, Popes anathematized it; yet for nearly a thousand years it maintained its influence, which was felt even as late as the thirteenth century by the Albigenses in southern France, who held several of its doctrines. Its founder, Mani, was of Iranian descent, born in Babylonia; and in 242 A.D. he proclaimed himself the herald of a new religion, sent forth apostles, and founded congregations all over Asia Minor.

Clement of Alexandria, born about the middle of the second century, wished to enrich Christianity “with the deep spirituality of Platonism” and “advocated a Christianity resting on free inquiry,” not on faith alone. Origen, who succeeded him, exhorted his pupil to devote himself to Greek philosophy as a preparatory study for Christian philosophy.

Celsus wrote his work, the *True Word*, somewhere between 177 and 200; and what we know of it and its author is contained in Origen’s work written in opposition to it. He maintains that Christianity is of Asian origin; that its ethical teachings are not new; and that many of its ceremonies are the same as those of heathen religions. He asks why the one God whom Christians and Pagans alike recognize cannot be worshipped under various names, such as Zeus, Serapis, etc. Why should Jehovah be the only name by which Deity can be recognized? Why did Jesus come so late to save humanity?

Origen had been a Neo-Platonist, both he and Plotinus having been educated in the school of Ammonius Saccas. He was born in 185, and marks a further stage in the development of Christianity from its broad and lofty origins towards its narrow and dogmatic ecclesiastical form. Yet he held many doctrines since condemned as heretical: as, that all souls are in substantial unity with God, and not the soul of Jesus alone; and that the visible Universe is a manifestation of a higher spiritual causal world. Like Paul he knew of the doctrine of hierarchies of divine beings intermediate between God and Man (thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, etc.). The Universe had a beginning, so also it must have an end; but it will be succeeded by other universes, its children — a very Theosophical doctrine.

The Gnostics of the first three centuries taught the *Gnosis* or Divine Knowledge, and include such names as Valentinus, Basilides, Marcion, Simon Magus. Their teachings represent a stage of Christianity when it still had teachings about the nature of the Universe and of Man; but when the religion became vulgarized, these teachings were condemned as heretical. Their principal teachings may be summarized as follows:

1. The opposition between spirit and matter.
2. The allegorical interpretation of Old Testament stories.
3. That the supreme God was not the God who created the world; the world was created by an inferior Aeon, called the Demiurge.
4. Jesus was not the son of Joseph and Mary, but had descended from on high; was in fact the highest of the Aeons, proceeding immediately

from the Divine; he was the Redeemer not only of man but of the world, and came to restore the original ancient Gnosis.

#### 5. Belief in Karma and Reincarnation.

But as this Manual is introductory, we cannot take more space for quotations; and must confine ourselves to these few samples which will, we hope, invite the student to follow up the subject by his own further studies. That so little is generally known about these matters is due simply to the fact that the condemnation of the churches has prevented people from studying them. But once we become aware that such information is available, we can readily assure ourselves that there is amply sufficient to establish the case. The present object is to indicate that Christianity has come down to us in a very much altered and debased form from much nobler origins.

### DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY

The history of the early Christians as gathered from contemporary chroniclers of the Roman world is more familiar to the general reader. We find at first a sort of communistic sect, practicing high ideals of conduct; and as this grows larger, it acquires organization and becomes stratified into orders and we have the beginnings of an ecclesiastical hierarchy. The imperial authorities were tolerant or indifferent as regards religious belief, but extremely jealous of any organization which might threaten competition with the imperial sway. Trajan, though a man of broad sympathies, would not even permit the incorporation of a civic fire brigade for this reason.

It was thus that the Christians came in conflict with the powers that be; and the story is familiar to readers of Gibbon. It was the refusal of the Christians to enter into the ordinary life of the community, to sacrifice, to perform the usual ceremonies, to serve as soldiers, which set them apart as a dangerous sect and caused their persecution. As we know, they only grew stronger through persecution, until at last the worldly potentates were driven to make terms with the ecclesiastical ones — Clovis in the west, Roman emperors farther east. Two great factions, the Athanasians and the Arians, occupy the arena for centuries, different emperors espousing the one or the other cause; until at last the Athanasian doctrine becomes predominant in the west, the Arian in the east. Christianity is adopted by the northern conquerors of Rome, and becomes, with modifications, the religion of northern Europe.

We need not follow the story through succeeding centuries: the long and bitter struggles of the Reformation, when both parties took their faith very seriously and the temporal power was not distinguished from the spiritual, are familiar enough. We see one side resting their case on authority, supposed to have been derived by lineal descent from the

apostles; the other side resting their case on the Bible. The ghost of the Roman despotic imperium still survives, disputing the field with freedom of thought; but the controversy has lost strength, as humanity is seeking its inspiration at the eternal fount — the divine spark within the human breast.

Valentinus was the most famous Christian teacher of the second century, and was the instructor of the Church Fathers Origen and Clement. It suits Christian apologists to regard him as having sought to weld together into one, Grecian, neo-Grecian, Jewish, and Christian elements, and to have displayed marvelous ingenuity and originality in so doing. But a comparison of his doctrines with those of other systems shows at once that they were those of the Ancient Wisdom which he must have derived from the esoteric schools then existent in Egypt and other parts of the Mediterranean world. His school, the Valentinians, was very influential and widespread for a long time, having main branches in Italy and in Asia Minor, and giving rise to several minor branches. His influence on subsequent thought was very great. He averred that the Apostles had not given out publicly all that they knew, but that they had esoteric teachings. He teaches that the Primal Cause, which he names *Bythos* (the Depth), manifested itself as the *Pleroma* (Fullness), which is the sum-total of the manifested Universe. He teaches the doctrine of divine hierarchies, according to which the supreme Deity emanates from himself successive orders of divine beings, to which are sometimes given such names as Archangels, Angels, Principalities, Powers, etc., until we come to man himself, who is thus in direct descent from the supreme Deity, and who therefore contains within himself all divine powers, which are mostly latent but can be called forth into activity. The world in which we live was not created by the supreme Deity, but by some of the inferior Emanations, and this explains its imperfections, which have so often been found hard to reconcile with our faith in Divine Wisdom. He gives the true teaching as to the meaning of Christ as the Divine incarnation in every man, and salvation as the reawakening of man to a knowledge of his own essential divinity.

This gives some idea of what Christianity really is and what it was at one time known to be. But when Christianity became mainly a political factor, and it was found necessary to adapt it to the needs of so many different peoples — Roman, Greek, Asiatic, Teutonic — the necessity for uniformity and for an established church with fixed doctrines caused these finer teachings to be eliminated.

## **THE BIBLE — FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS: 1**

What is the truth between the extreme views that the Bible is the literal word of God, and that it is a mass of foolish folklore? The Bible is

an esoteric scripture, full of profound meaning when interpreted aright, a mere collection of stories if taken in the dead-letter sense. H. P. Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, pays the Bible the greatest respect, but only on the condition that it be understood in the former sense. It is one of many scriptures belonging to various times and nations. It should be studied in due relation to its fellow scriptures.

We have the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament is a collection of ancient Jewish scriptures, and we read that, after the Jews had returned from their Babylonian captivity, the scribe Ezra collected again as much as he could of the old books and re-established the Jewish canon. From this source, after other changes and eliminations, the Christian Old Testament was ultimately compiled. The Jews have their own interpretations in their Kabalistic books, such as the *Zohar* and the *Sepher Jetzirah*, and a great wealth of commentaries; but the Christians know only the dead-letter sense. This has shed a bad influence on the tone of Christianity, for some of these books, literally interpreted, contain much of war, cruelty, treachery, and grossness.

The Pentateuch or first five books of the Old Testament occupies a place of special importance; though long believed to be the work of Moses, yet intelligent criticism has shown that he cannot have been the author, and it is thought that they are largely the work of Ezra. Ostensibly these books contain the accounts of creation and the flood, the ancestry of the Hebrew nation, the wanderings and final settlement, and the law of Moses. The attempt to find consistency and to reconcile the narratives with other historical data is a puzzle to Biblical critics. No wonder, for it is a collection of allegorical legends put together for the main purpose of conveying the hidden meaning. But read esoterically in the light of the *Zohar*, etc., it reveals a mine of priceless occult truths.

The Old Testament also contains the prophetic books, and Ezekiel and Daniel contain much easily recognized occult symbology, though much tortured by those who try to find in them prophecies about the second advent and the end of the world. Then there is the poetical and imaginative literature, such as Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon; and Job, a very ancient allegory of the trials of a candidate for initiation, which is found elsewhere and whose origin is undiscoverable.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

The present canon was arrived at as the final result of a series of decisions, and is a selection out of a larger number of books, some of which are still published under the name of the Apocryphal New Testament. There were other Gospels besides the familiar four, and critics can trace back the present Gospels to older ones from which they are evidently derived. We give some quotations from *The Esoteric Character*



of the Gospels, written by H. P. Blavatsky in her magazine *Lucifer* for November 1887:

the Bible is *not* the “Word of God,” but contains at best the words of fallible men and *imperfect* teachers. Yet read *esoterically*, it does contain, if not the *whole* truth, still, “*nothing but the truth*,” under whatever allegorical garb.

No more than any other scripture of the great world-religions can the Bible be excluded from that class of allegorical and symbolical writings which have been, from the pre-historic ages, the receptacle of the secret teachings of the Mysteries of Initiation, under a more or less veiled form. The primitive writers of the *Logia* (now the Gospels) knew certainly *the* truth, and the *whole* truth; but their successors had, as certainly, only dogma and form, which lead to hierarchical power at heart, rather than the spirit of the so-called Christ’s teachings. Hence the gradual perversion.

... the Christian canon, especially the Gospels, Acts and Epistles, are made up of fragments of gnostic wisdom, the ground-work of which is pre-Christian and built on the MYSTERIES of Initiation.

... the more one studies ancient religious texts, the more one finds that the ground-work of the New Testament is the same as the ground-work of the Vedas, of the Egyptian theogony, and the Mazdean allegories.

Not to make too many quotations, we may say briefly that the Gospels are symbolic narratives, sacred writings, written down by unknown scribes from their recollections or notes, and afterwards compiled into a canonical collection and taken in their literal instead of their symbolic sense. But more of this will come out when we treat of the teachings under their separate headings.

As to Paul’s Epistles, it is evident that he did not teach the representative Christian doctrines of today. The Christ, for him, is an indwelling spirit in all men; he speaks like an initiated teacher, exhorting men to put off the old life of the flesh and to enter into the new life, wherein the Christ becomes alive and conscious in them. He is concerned with attainment and salvation in this life, not in some future life. He is evidently an adept teacher, unable to give out all he knows, especially in open letters, and doing his best to suit his message to the capacities of the various communities he is addressing.

## THE CREATION

The creation of the Universe and of man occupy a foremost place in all cosmogonies and may be said to form the first chapter in the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion. The word *evolution* would be preferable to *creation*, because the latter word is associated with the idea of a personal God creating the Universe out of nothing. The subject of the evolution of

worlds is treated of elsewhere, and we are concerned here only with showing it as found in the Christian Scriptures.

In the early chapters of Genesis (which means *becoming* or *begetting*), we find a rather confused and abbreviated version of what is to be found in fuller and more accurate form in older scriptures. It derives immediately from Chaldean scriptures of earlier date, some of which have been discovered by archaeologists; but it can be traced farther back to the sacred writings of ancient Persia and India. Similar accounts are to be found in China, in the mythology of ancient Scandinavia, and even among the records of ancient America. This is to mention only a few, for it is not too much to say that the same accounts of the beginnings of worlds and of the evolution of man are to be found all over the globe.

The word 'God' is in the Hebrew *elohim*, which is a plural word meaning *gods* or *spirits*, and refers to the creative powers. First there existed naught but chaos, void, emptiness, often spoken of as the Waters or the Great Deep. Over this the creative spirits brood, and the first creation is Light. From these beginnings are produced the worlds and all living creatures therein. As to the creation of man —

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

— Genesis ii. 7

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

— Genesis i. 26-27

As usual there are two accounts of the creation of man: he is first created a living soul (or, as more accurately translated, an animal soul); and then he is made divine. These two accounts have become transposed in the Authorized Version. Man has really a triple creation: first, out of the dust of the Earth; then this is animated with the breath of life; last, this animal being is endowed with divine faculty — made in the image of the gods (*elohim*). The plural word *elohim* has for some reason been translated God or Lord God; it means creative spirits, divine beings. This teaching of the twofold creation of man is very important, as it shows how man came by his dual nature, and in what way he differs from the animal creation.

As is stated elsewhere, the early Races of humanity were *mindless*, not endowed with the self-conscious mind; and at a certain stage in evolution, the innate divinity in man was called to life by the Mānasaputras or Sons of Mind, who incarnated in the nascent human race, thus making man a self-conscious responsible being.

The story is continued in the legend of the Garden of Eden. This Garden represents the sinless innocent state of man before he became self-conscious. He was without sin, but also without the power of progress; he knew neither good nor evil. Then comes to man what has been called the temptation. A Serpent, who is described as very wise, appears to man and persuades him to exercise free-will and rebel against God. To obtain this free-will he must eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. He does so, and forthwith loses his state of innocent bliss, and becomes self-conscious and distinguishes between good and evil. He is cast out of the Garden and begins a life of struggle in the outer world.

This teaching has been perverted by theology into a curse and a fall; and Adam is represented to have sinned, and thereby to have communicated to all his descendants his sin, so that all men are born in sin and need a special divine sacrifice to save them. But in the original teaching, the so-called fall and temptation is a necessary stage in the evolution of man. The Serpent (who has been turned by theology into the Devil) is merely God over again in another form; for this Lord God is not the supreme deity but those creative Spirits (*elohim*) who had made the first unenlightened man. And the Serpent is not the Devil but those Sons of Mind who, as aforesaid, enlightened humanity, showing him how to partake of the fruit of knowledge and to “become as Gods.” This mystery is found in the Greek mythology in the story of Prometheus who, rebelling against Zeus, brings fire from heaven to enlighten man. Both the Serpent of Eden and Prometheus are the same as Lucifer, the Light-Bringer, who has likewise been turned by theology into a devil.

Satan, or the Red *Fiery* Dragon, the ‘Lord of Phosphorus’... and *Lucifer*, or ‘Light-Bearer,’ is in us: it is our *Mind* — our tempter and Redeemer, our intelligent liberator and Saviour from pure animalism. Without this principle — the emanation of the very essence of the pure divine principle *Mahat* (Intelligence), which radiates direct from the *Divine Mind* — we would be surely no better than animals. The first man Adam was made only a *living soul* (*nephesh*), the last Adam was made a *quickening Spirit*: — says Paul, his words referring to the building or *Creation* of man.  
— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 513

It is the misinterpretation of this beautiful truth that has given color to the slander against human nature, whereby man is persuaded that he is naturally corrupt, is set at enmity with his own nature and made to mistrust his own intelligence and freedom of thought; it is thereby that man is cursed for performing a simple natural act, which is sinful only when perverted and associated in the mind with guilt and impurity.

This subject of the creation of man and his so-called fall connects naturally with the subject of Redemption and Salvation, another grand old

teaching which has become lost during dark ages, and which has been similarly perverted into something quite different.

## THE FLOOD

This is another sacred allegory common to all peoples. The story of a global deluge, as is well known, is found everywhere, and has been supposed to be a tradition of floods following the last glaciation of parts of the northern hemisphere. And while it is perfectly true that there was an actual physical deluge — one of many, as geologists will admit — there is much more in the legend than its merely physical aspect. Daniel Brinton, in his *Myths of the New World*, has brought together a number of the flood stories of various races of ancient Americans, north, central, and south; and what is remarkable about them is the very close similarity in such details as the ark, its resting on a mountain, the sending forth of birds.

In the Sumerian Epic of Creation, which dates one thousand years earlier than Genesis, the flood is placed before the fall. Flood stories, with arks, etc., are found in ancient India, the Norse Edda, the Finnish *Kalevala*, the Mexican *Popol Vuh*, among African tribes and Polynesians. The Greek story of Deucalion and Pyrrha, who escaped from the Flood, and repopulated the Earth by casting stones behind them, is familiar to classical readers. The Flood story is always connected with a purification of the Earth by destruction of the wicked, and there is always an ark or sacred vessel which preserves a few remnants for the founding of a new Race.

Is all this physical and historical, or is it allegorical? It is both; for the universal correspondences ordain that physical events shall be molded on spiritual events. There actually have been periodic alterations of the Earth's surface, accompanied by the sinking of lands and the upheaval of new lands, as indeed the geological records show. But these events have been but the physical accompaniments of great moral changes; they have been coeval with the ending of great Races and the beginning of new Races of humanity; and here we are using the word *Race* to mean one of the great Root-Races, each of which lasts more than a million years. While the Flood has this general meaning, the innumerable accounts referred to have usually a special reference to the last great Deluge, that which accompanied the submergence of the continent of Atlantis, or to the last remaining portions thereof. This was the habitat of the Fourth Root-Race, followed by the present Fifth. The Atlantean Race having reached the end of its cycle, many of them had descended into gross materiality and had become black magicians; they were of gigantic stature, which is referred to in the Bible narrative and has given rise to the universal tradition as to wicked giants. It was necessary that this corrupt society should be destroyed, and that the good should be preserved to form the seed of the new Race to come. Hence the stories of floods, arks, and the other features.

The Greek mythology abounds in stories of the semi-divine founders of cities and centers of civilization, and represents these founders as having migrated into Greece from the far west “beyond the pillars of Hercules”; and there is frequent mention of the sinking of lands beneath the ocean, and the rise of other lands, on which the immigrants settled.

The fact that these deluge stories, so similar to the one in the Bible, are so universally found, is conveniently kept out of sight by most Christians, and is a stumbling-block to others, who wish to regard the Christian revelation as unique and paramount; but the problem is cleared up when we remember how the Old Testament is a compilation of ancient sacred books, which had been preserved by the Hebrews from the still older sources whence they had derived them.

## REDEMPTION AND SALVATION

The drama of evolution, whether of worlds or of man, includes a descent from Spirit into Matter, and a reascent from Matter into Spirit. Man was at first spiritual, but mindless and undeveloped, living in a “Golden Age” typified by the Garden of Eden. Then he acquires the power of self-consciousness, which is aroused within him by Beings who possessed it themselves. The Fall of man is a fall in one sense, but in another sense it is the fulfillment of a vital step in his evolution. He loses for a time his contact with spirit, in order that he may enter on a career of incarnation in this world and pass through all its experiences. His new power of free-will he misuses and brings trouble upon himself; but eventually the divinity within him is destined to win through, so that man will rise again a much more glorious and complete being than before, because of all the added knowledge which he has garnered by his experiences. This is what is meant by Redemption and Salvation. It applies to the human race as a whole, to particular Races of humanity, and to individuals. In the case of individuals we must of course take into account reincarnation.

And so the world’s great teachers have at many times come into our world to preach anew the glad tidings, or rather to remind man of his forgotten birthright. For man is like some prince in an old story, who has been brought up among peasants so that he is unaware of his royalty; though even in dark ages there have always been a few mystics and intuitive minds who have perceived the truth. The Wise One who initiated Christianity (whoever he was) was one of these teachers; and even in the mutilated fragments of his teachings which remain to us we can see that he was proclaiming that old truth. Yet see what ages of spiritual darkness have made of it! Whereas the teacher proclaimed the divinity of man and showed to his hearers the age-old path to salvation, we are told today that we are essentially corrupt and that it is impious to rely on our own

resources — we, created in God's own image! Truly Theosophy has come to raise the buried Christ from the tomb wherein his disciples have cast him. For Theosophy is just such another revival of the Wisdom-Religion, two thousand years later; and what Jesus said of the Pharisees of his day might be applied to much that goes today under the name of religion.

The Atonement, or making *at one*, is theologically regarded as a reconciliation between God and man, due to the propitiation of his Son; but in the light of what has been said the word acquires a truer sense. It means the uniting of the human Ego with the spiritual Ego — the innate Christ, whereby man recognizes that this spiritual Ego, and not his personal Ego, is his true Self.

### SACRAMENTS: THE EUCHARIST

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. — Luke xxii. 19-20

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. — John vi. 53-56

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper means much to those who partake of it devoutly, but it might mean much more. Its sacredness and power are due to its august origin from one of the most sublime rites of the sacred Mysteries of old. Its frailty as a potent influence for good in the world, its role as a bone of bitter contention, are due to the attenuated and misunderstood form in which it has come down to us. If we study the ancient Mysteries, we find that bread and wine play a foremost part in the ritual of initiation, as also in the Lesser Mysteries which were displayed before the public. In the Greater Mysteries candidates were initiated into what Jesus calls the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven, into which he seems anxious that his disciples should be initiated. Wine is often spoken of alternatively with blood, and both signify spiritual life: the words are thus used in the New Testament. Over against these we find bread or grain, or alternatively flesh; and these words also are used in the New Testament. This latter signifies terrestrial mortal life, so that the two together mean the higher and lower nature of man.

The reference is to symbols which were used in the ancient Mysteries, in which there was a twofold initiation, symbolized respectively by bread and wine, or by flesh and blood. The candidate had to be pure in body and

the lower principles of his nature before receiving the baptism of blood or the wine of the spirit. These facts relative to the Greek and other Mysteries can be verified by reference to any encyclopedia or book on the subject. In the Bible we find frequent reference thereto. Besides the two quotations at the head of this section, we may cite the interview with Nicodemus in John iii:

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....  
Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Here we see the double birth: the first of flesh, the second of spirit. This doctrine of the second birth is of course the principal theme of Paul, and it is surprising that so little is made of it; at most it is regarded as referring to a state of mind or heart varying from mere self-satisfaction to a real holiness of character. But the real meaning is quite lost owing to belief in original sin and vicarious atonement and an ignorance of reincarnation.

These Ancient Teachings are immortal, which is why they survive through the ages, if only in form, until the time comes for them to be restored. The Eucharist is still celebrated as a means of receiving divine grace and as a commemoration, and some attach great importance to the faith in a miraculous transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the actual flesh and blood of Jesus.

### SACRAMENTS: BAPTISM

This is another rite derived from the ancient Mysteries. It was the outer and visible form of a purificatory process undergone by the candidate for initiation. Initiatory ablutions are common to all cults. In Christianity it means admission to the Church, and is regarded as cleansing from sin, affiliating with God, and the gift of the Spirit. That those who have not been baptized will suffer damnation is a formal article of faith with some. The idea is repugnant to the feelings of the present day; but if we can be saved without baptism, why be baptized?

Sacraments are defined in the Catechism as the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; they repeat physically what has already occurred spiritually, otherwise the ceremony is but an empty form. There are two baptisms: that of water and that of fire, corresponding with the two forms of the Eucharist already mentioned. It would seem that the candidate for baptism should be of an age suitable to the full understanding of the meaning of the ceremony. In these days, when our knowledge of Nature is so restricted to externals, we have lost sight of that intimate

knowledge of Nature, of man, and of man's relation to Nature which was possessed in more ancient times. The rites and customs of which we read in Greek and Roman history, or as practiced in ancient and Asian races, seem to us superstition because we do not grasp their real meaning; and it is quite likely that the Greeks and Romans themselves in later times had lost it also and continued the ceremonies merely from custom. But a further study shows that they originated in the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom. It is curious that we still go on practicing them; but there is an undying life in these ancient institutions which preserves them through the ages, like a seed under the snow, until the time comes round for them to be revived.

## THE BIBLE — FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS: 2

### REINCARNATION

As the doctrine of Reincarnation and its twin doctrine of Karma form so important a part of the Ancient Wisdom from which all religions have descended, it is important to know why we find so little of it in Christianity. The simple reason is that it has been expurgated. A learned scholar, the late Professor F. S. Darrow, writes:

The critical history of the doctrines of Pre-existence and Reincarnation has never been written, but the materials at hand for such a history are most extensive. I have in my library, without the slightest exaggeration, literally *hundreds* of volumes having to do with this subject. Many of the volumes deal entirely with that subject and nothing else.... The Theosophical teachings in regard to the pre-existence and rebirth of the human soul have been plainly and continuously enunciated in the Christian world from the very beginning of Christianity until the present day, but the recognition of these truths among professed Christians naturally has varied greatly from time to time in accordance with the degree of publicity permitted by the pendulum swing of the cycles.

The same author divides the subject chronologically into three heads: the period of early Christianity until the Synod of Constantinople in 553, which officially declared the teachings of the Church Father Origen in regard to the Nature and destiny of the soul to be *heretical*; from 553 to 1438, when Georgius Gemistus visited Florence and revived the philosophy of Plato; thence down to modern times.

So the only reason why this knowledge of pre-existence and reincarnation is not heard of is that it has never been studied; the literature is there in abundance, but having been banned as heretical it has been neglected. The reason why these teachings have been banned is easy to see. Their admission would open the door to so very much that is



incompatible with ecclesiastical Christianity. And so we have to get along with the absurdity that souls are created at a point in time, and yet live for ever; that they survive the body but did not pre-exist it; and the utter insignificance of a life of seventy years amid the ocean of eternity.

The Christian scheme, as generally understood today, affords no explanation for the inequalities and incompleteness of human life, other than attributing them to the inscrutable will of a personal deity. This denies to man his speculative instinct, his thirst for knowledge; thus leaving him to seek satisfaction therefor outside the pale of religion, and to have more than one religion at the same time, and a second god called Nature. His innate sense of justice rebels against what he has been constrained to believe; his study of Nature has given him the idea of law and order; but his religious teaching, instead of confirming, thwarts these — good reason for surmising that his religion has come down to him in adulterated form. Instead of discarding the whole thing, let him reinstate it, rejecting what is false and holding to what is true.

### THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost — three Persons and yet only one God. Such is the Christian Trinity; and bitter controversies have raged as to the exact nature of this triune God and the relations of the three Persons to each other. The entire Christian world, in Roman times, was divided by irreconcilable schism turning on the question whether the Son was of the same substance with the Father, or of like substance with the Father. Is the Son co-eternal with the Father, or was he produced from the Father? It is customary to accuse the disputants with raising a turmoil over trifles, but this is unfair, for great issues may turn on a very small point of symbolism, and this difference about the creed was the sign by which were distinguished from one another two bodies of Christians whose general attitude was antagonistic.

Why was the Deity thus represented as a Three-in-One? The doctrine is not to be found formally stated in the New Testament; it was devised by Church Councils who formulated the creed, and the terms used in the formula are not Biblical. But, once formulated, it could be justified by reference to the New Testament.

The fact is that such a triune deity is found at the head of all theogonies and cosmogonies, and philosophical systems usually begin with something equivalent. In the very beginning of the Bible it is represented as the Spirit of God, brooding over the waters of Space or Chaos, and bringing forth the Universe. This is the great creative trinity which stands at the head of cosmogonies: a Universal Spirit, Father of all; then comes the Chaos or the Great Depth or the Waters of Space, which is often called the great Mother. From these two proceed the Son, which is

the Universe. This philosophical trinity, which is indeed a necessity of thought, was naturally enough adopted by the Church; its adoption put them into harmony with all the other religions and philosophies, with Greek thought especially, and with various Eastern systems current in Asia Minor. The persons of this Trinity could then be readily found in the New Testament, for Jesus often speaks of the Father and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit which he will send.

But this Trinity is defective, for there is a Father and a Son, but no Mother. In one church this last is supplied by the Virgin, though she is not a member of the Trinity. The Virgin is taken from the Magna Mater, or "Great Mother," so much revered in many of the Asiatic religions prevalent in parts of the Roman empire; but indeed there is always a Great Mother, regarded as the consort of the Father, whether it is Hera, consort of Zeus; Juno, consort of Jupiter; Isis, consort of Osiris and mother of Horus; or what not.

In ordinary Christian belief the Father and the Son have been personalized, and the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is a somewhat vague conception. What is called inspiration is in many cases a mere neurotic excitement, with disastrous reactions; but there have always been Christian mystics who have attained to a higher realization of the meaning of inspiration. We are aware that some readers of this may point to the fine characters and noble lives of many devout and earnest Christians, but we prefer to attribute this to the innate nobility of human nature, which has enabled these persons to imbibe the true spirit of their religion in spite of its defects. Under a better understanding of Christianity there would be more of such people.

## THE CROSS

And he bearing his cross went forth to a place called the place of a skull... where they crucified him. — John xix, 17-18

The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. — 1 Cor. i. 18

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. — Matt. xiv, 24

The above are typical examples of the use of the word *cross* in the New Testament; it means the stake used in crucifixion, or the Christian doctrine, or a burden or sacrifice. This sacred symbol of Christianity is a perpetual reminder of its cardinal doctrine that Christ died for our sins, whereby we are saved. It is also used for the daily burden we take up in sacrificing our personal will to our faith.

But the cross is a universal religious and philosophical symbol, found in places as remote as Palenque in Mexico, India, and Tibet; well known in Egyptian symbolism, as in Hindûism; an emblem used in the sacred Mysteries of ancient Greece. Dr. Lundy, in his *Monumental Christianity*, says that “the Jews themselves acknowledged this sign of salvation until they rejected Christ”; and he speaks of a Hindû sculpture of ancient date, a human figure upon a cross, with the nail-marks on hands and feet — a pre-Christian crucifix in fact.

Theosophy shows that the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom were preserved in a universal symbol-language, which conveyed the leading tenets; and the cross is one of these symbols, which is why it is so universally found. The Sun, Moon, and Cross form a trinity of symbols, denoting respectively Father, Mother, Son; Cosmic Spirit, Cosmic Matter, and the Universe produced by their interaction. In the case of man, who is a miniature copy of the Universe, the cross denotes what John calls the Word made Flesh, the Son, the Christ, which is in every person and is the divine part of his nature.

In order to explain why such a symbol was chosen to represent this idea, we should have to go more deeply into matters than is appropriate here; but it may be stated that the two lines of the cross (speaking particularly of the Greek cross with four equal arms) stand for Spirit and Matter, and the fact of their crossing each other denotes the union or interaction of these two elements to form the manifested Universe. The Divine Spirit in man is said to be crucified, made into a cross, caused to dwell in a residence of flesh; and this crucifixion is destined to be succeeded by a resurrection.

It is also to be observed that a ceremony of crucifixion was actually performed upon the candidates for initiation into the sacred Mysteries, which still existed in some parts of the Roman world at the Christian era. These candidates, at a certain stage in their initiation, were fastened to a cross or cruciform couch, where they lay entranced for two days, while their liberated soul went through the necessary experiences and came to life again on the third day. It is possible that the story in the Gospels was founded on this. However, the Christians have taken over the cross and adopted it as their symbol; the other two, the Sun and Moon, are seen in the emblems of Japan and Islam.

But this meaning of the cross has become confused or blended with that of the Roman instrument of capital punishment, which was a stake, usually with a cross-bar near the top, to which the criminal was fastened. Whether there really was a teacher who, after a very short ministry, was apprehended, condemned, and thus executed, may be doubted. There is no historical record to substantiate it.

The crucifixion of the Christ is the symbolic name for a cardinal tenet of the Ancient Wisdom, but it has been materialized into the story of an

actual crucifixion of Jesus by Pontius Pilatus in the reign of Tiberius. Critical people, doubting the authenticity of this story, or doubting its importance even if authentic, have gone too far in their objections and thrown over Christianity itself, and even all religion; which shows how important it is to separate the *true* from the *false* and to avoid literal and materialistic interpretations of spiritual truths couched in symbolic language.

The sign of the cross has become a sacred *emblem*, a sign which has value through the association of ideas; and in the use of the pious and of mystics has been a potent means of invoking spiritual aid, though also at times a standard of war. To the above it may be added that the cross is a better symbol when drawn within the circle or with a circle joined to the upper arm {as in the Ankh}. The circle stands for spirit, and the cross alone denotes materialism, which may be said to be characteristic of the times wherein Christianity has been prevalent, these times being characterized, as said, by the interpreting of mystic symbols in a literal sense.

## THE MYSTERIES

In ancient Greece were the Mysteries of Eleusis and other schools of the Mysteries less well known, where candidates for initiation were received. Such schools existed also in Egypt, India, and several other places, and connections can be traced between the schools in these different localities, whereby confirmation is obtained of the fact that they taught a uniform doctrine. This was the Secret Doctrine or Wisdom-Religion of which Theosophy is the modern expression. As man is essentially divine, being a lineal descendant through evolution from divine beings, it is possible for him by a particular course of training to arouse the latent spiritual powers within him. This is called the Path of Wisdom, and is in fact Salvation in the real sense of that word. The Gospels contain sufficient evidence that the teacher whose words are quoted therein was aware of the existence of this Path and that he wished his disciples to follow it. He calls it the Kingdom of God. It is also stated that he gave his disciples secret instructions apart from the multitude.

At the time of the Christian era there still existed some of these Mystery-Schools in Egypt and parts of Asia, and their influence is evident in the doctrines of the Gnostics, Neo-Platonists, and similar cults, among which Christianity was developed. The process of selection and compilation which resulted in the canonical Gospels led to an inclusion of extracts from these teachings, and the putting of them into the mouth of the teacher called Jesus.

Paul, who seems to have written his epistles before the Gospel narratives were drawn up, interprets the Christian doctrines in a much more esoteric way. One would judge from his manner of speaking that he

himself was initiated, to some degree at least; but he was clearly under the necessity of adapting his teachings to the limited comprehension of his various hearers, and he often uses figurative language whose real sense would only be understood by a few of those whom he addressed.

## THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

From the Gospel narratives, and from what history tells us, we gather that there was among the early Christians a widespread and often very confident belief that Christ would really come again in the flesh, and that very soon, to destroy evil and set up a kingdom of the righteous on Earth. This idea was connected with the decay of the Roman empire, which figured as the evil dominion that Christ was to overthrow; and it is no wonder that these Christians excited the jealousy of Roman rulers.

The Jews too, who contributed so many Christians and whose influence entered so largely into Christian ideas, had their own prophecies of the return of one or another of their own prophets as the ‘Messiah,’ and this idea evidently contributed largely to the belief as to the return of Christ. Some Biblical critics are convinced that Jesus himself, at one time at least, believed this; but we have to bear in mind that the Gospels, as they have come down to us, were largely made to order.

A most indisputable instance of this is to be found in Matthew xxiv, 3, which the *Authorized Version* translates quite wrongly from the Greek, but which is translated correctly in the Revised Version, which was made by a body of divines and scholars in 1881. A comparison of these two renderings will show that the earlier translators have twisted the Greek original into a confirmation of their views about the second coming. The passages are as follows:

*Authorized Version:* And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

*Revised Version:*... the sign of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age?

This latter is the meaning of the Greek, and the former is a forced rendering. [While on this subject, it is worth noting that the passage Mark xvi. 9-20, does not occur in most of the manuscripts and is regarded as a spurious insertion. It contains the words: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”]

We see here an allusion to the doctrine of cycles, in accordance with which great Root-Races of Humanity succeed one another. The “consummation of the age” is when the present Root-Race has run its

course and humanity will be divided into those who have progressed enough to form the nucleus of the next succeeding Race, and those who have lagged in the rear of progress. This latter part of the Race will come to an end (as a *Race*) in the cataclysms which separate one Race from another; while the others will be 'saved,' as is figured in the allegory of the Flood and the Ark. Jesus in his answer says that the end is not yet, there will be wars, there will be many false prophets. The Coming of Christ means the reawakening of the Christ spirit in humanity or in as many as are able to receive it.

There are Christian Adventists who still expect an actual physical coming of Christ; and there are some who interpret the Books of Daniel and Ezekiel and Revelation in that sense. But though these prophecies do relate to great cyclic changes, and though the Adventists have the intuition that such changes impend, they are too literal and materialistic in their interpretation.

### THE GOLDEN RULE

This is often cited as characteristic of Christianity, but it is known to exist in all other religions. To the Theosophist it is more than a mere moral injunction; it is a necessary law of human nature. For man, essentially divine, having wandered away from the knowledge of his own divinity, has to regain it. His great obstacle is self-love; therefore he can only regain his lost kingdom by overcoming self-love. So he must somehow find out how to act from an impersonal motive. It is evident, therefore, that ideas of self-advancement, of gaining occult powers for his own satisfaction, or even the desire for personal holiness, will never suffice, because the indulgence of such desires is merely increasing the power of the enemy we wish to conquer. To exchange a weak personality for a strong one cannot be the way. But a large part of our daily lives is composed of actions into which self-love does not enter — disinterested actions, actions prompted by a genuine and uncalculating desire to serve another or others. Or perhaps, having witnessed the pain caused to others by some selfish action of ours, and feeling remorse, we have registered a resolve not to act thus in the future, a resolve prompted by no thought of self-benefit whatever, but simply by the desire to avoid wronging other people.

The motive which operates in these cases is that of love — not passionate love, but pure impersonal love. This is a cosmic force. It operates in the animal world; for that which we so disparagingly call *instinct* is truly a pure and simple manifestation of a great cosmic force leading the beast to sacrifice itself for its offspring, the dog to die unhesitatingly for his master. The Teacher in the Gospels upholds the simple — the beasts and birds, the lilies of the field, and the children — as well he might, and as we often feel disposed to do after experiences of human selfishness.

So the Teacher, in enunciating the Golden Rule, merely points out to those who aspire to fulfill the true destiny of man the law of the spiritual life, of the Kingdom of Heaven; which is harmony, not strife. This is a path which the individual may enter upon at any time, and which humanity in the aggregate must one day follow; though there will always be some who, having failed to attain the ideal, will miss their chance for one cycle and have to await another opportunity for progress. It has been said that the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are impracticable and would result in the dissolution of society; but they set forth the ideal, and it is precisely the possession of such an ideal which prevents man from sinking under the load of his difficulties. As for ways and means of reforming society, perhaps if we began by setting our own house in order we might thereby gain vision and power towards that end.

The Golden Rule shows the way of realizing the unity of living beings; and this is specially brought out in the injunctions to forgive our neighbor. But if this is only to mean that we suppress our anger towards him, while still continuing to imagine ourself his victim, the real forgiveness has not been achieved. In the greater fullness of life to which we aspire, and to which the teacher points the way, we shall see that our neighbor is actually part of our own Self, and then all feelings of animosity or conflict will seem absurd. In our present darkness we have falsely separated a unity into two halves, one of which is supposed to have been injured by the other. Forgiveness consists in the dispelling of this illusion.

This Rule is the prime maxim of conduct for the disciple in any system of practical religion or philosophy which aims at self-realization and which sets before the aspirant the Path of Wisdom and Attainment. And truly it must be so; for it is self-seeking which binds a man down to the illusions and frustrations of his mortal life; and to escape, it is necessary to give up this law of self-seeking in favor of a higher law. It may be said, perhaps, that the strict following out of such a law, in the way (for instance) of the Sermon on the Mount, is too much to ask of an ordinary man. But, while the heights may be left to the comparatively few who feel themselves ready to scale them, even the most ordinary man is every moment faced with the choice between selfish and unselfish conduct, and must choose one course or the other. With the ideal ever before him, and with an understanding of its rationality, he will be enabled to choose the right course, thus preparing himself for what awaits him in the future. For the day must come for every man when compromise will no longer be possible and he must choose definitely which path he will take. Never was the practice of unselfishness more needed than today, and it will help people to achieve it if they are not hampered by materialistic forms of religion and science which accentuate the lower aspect of human nature.

## THE IMMANENT CHRIST

This means the Christ that dwells in every human heart, as distinct from the man Christ who is said to have been crucified. The doctrine of the indwelling Christ is taught in the Gospels and in Paul's Letters, so it is to be found in the Bible and in Christianity by those willing to look for it. Those who prefer the anthropomorphized ecclesiastical doctrine of the crucifixion of a particular man will have to consider these Biblical teachings as figurative. Yet it would be a mistake to judge Christianity by its crudest forms, and it is true that many enlightened and broad-church teachers adopt this doctrine of the indwelling Christ, and that many devout Christians approximate in varying degrees to it. There are many to whom the life of Christ as represented in the Gospels has been an ideal and a pattern on which they have sought to mold their own lives, and saints and mystics have attained to high levels by contemplation of this ideal. But this is not enough; there still remains the notion that man is a weak creature, born in sin, and looking for salvation beyond the grave, and that it would be presumptuous in him to attempt really to imitate Christ. Yet in the original teaching, the Christ means the Divine Spirit resident in the core of our being, the Christ which has been sacrificed and entombed and has to be resurrected in us. Certain great teachers may be described in a special sense as Christs, inasmuch as they have attained to a self-realization to which the majority have not yet attained. But they do not set themselves up as the *only* son of God, but merely offer their lives as a pattern for other people to follow. In the real doctrine we are all sons of God in the same way as Jesus was, and can really achieve what he achieved, as he himself promises when he says:

He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. — John xvi. 12

This indwelling Christ is called “the Son”; and the Divine Spirit is called “the Father.”

No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

— Matthew xi. 27

On this point we may quote from “The Esoteric Character of the Gospels” by H. P. Blavatsky as follows:

The first key that one has to use to unravel the dark secrets involved in the mystic name of Christ, is the key which unlocked the door to the ancient mysteries of the primitive Âryans, Sabeans, and Egyptians. The Gnosis supplanted by the Christian scheme was universal. It was the echo of the



primordial wisdom-religion which had once been the heirloom of the whole of humanity; and, therefore, one may truly say that, in its purely metaphysical aspect, the Spirit of Christ (the divine *logos*) was present in humanity from the beginning of it. The author of the Clementine Homilies is right; the mystery of Christos — now supposed to have been taught by Jesus of Nazareth — “was identical” with that which *from the first* had been communicated “*to those who were worthy*,”...

These and other words used —

apply to all those who, without being Initiates, strive and succeed, through personal efforts to *live the life* and to attain the naturally ensuing spiritual illumination in blending their personality — the (“Son”) with (the “Father,”) their individual divine Spirit, *the God within* them.

Compare this with the Bible itself:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. — Romans vi. 3-8

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from Heaven. — 1 Corinthians xv, 47

As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.  
— 1 Corinthians xv, 22

*Adam*, in Hebrew, means “earthy”; it stands for the terrestrial nature of man; but the allegory has been literalized; the type figure has been turned into an actual individual. But Paul here uses it in the right symbolic sense. Contrasted with this is the heavenly man — Christ — the divine part of human nature. The one is mortal, the other immortal. But does this refer to a state of perfection after death? By no means, for the teaching is that we can attain it while on Earth. Earth is the place where man achieves; he is here to learn its lessons and to win victory over its forces. This state of attainment, whereby we cease to be dead with Adam, and become alive with Christ, is called the Second Birth.

In Matthew iii. 11, John the Baptist says:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.

Turn now to John iii, where a rabbi comes privately to Jesus, asking what is meant by the saying that a man must be born again, and is told:

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

But can a man enter the womb a second time? asks Nicodemus, and is answered:

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

It is needless to burden this book with multiplied quotations, but the frequent references to the Kingdom of God (or Heaven) are well enough known. It is evident that this expression refers to a state attainable by man while on Earth, and that the sayings in the Gospels, whatever their original source, are those of a teacher of the Ancient Wisdom. They have been construed to refer to a state of bliss after death, which is not sufficiently vivid to affect the minds of most people, and does not fit in with the general scheme of things which we infer from our knowledge of Nature and life.

## **CHRISTIANITY AND MORALITY**

People may wonder if the abandonment of Christianity (as ordinarily understood) will mean a loss of the basis of moral conduct and a consequent general, if gradual, lapse into profligacy of various kinds. This is a question which demands serious consideration and cannot be dismissed with a few bald assertions. Rationalists, Secularists, and others of that genus say that the fount of good conduct is in the human intelligence and instincts, that religion is rather a hindrance than a help, and that this fount will suffice for needs. But to this it can be answered that perhaps these rationalists are living on the capital of good habits accumulated by centuries of religious influence, that this capital would soon become exhausted, and that the human intellect and instinct, as conceived by rationalism, would not suffice to renew the stock.

Here indeed is the weakness of the rationalist and humanist position. Their philosophy lacks foundations; and if pressed on this point, they are too ready to take refuge in agnosticism — the view that these fundamental questions lie beyond the scope of inquiry, that they cannot be known, that it is needless to try to fathom them. We seem to detect here the scientific fallacy of confusing cause with effect: is morality a cause or an effect? Is it any use saying that morality is the effect of morality? Or if, to avoid such

tautology, we change the wording and say that morality is the effect of human intelligence and instinct, we have merely dodged the difficulty.

We need to know something about those mysterious powers in the human breast. By what are they inspired? Shall we define them as an enlightened self-interest? In that case we commit ourselves to the proposition that morality is sustained by self-interest, and that self-interest is the foundation of human conduct. The forces which rule in matter must themselves be immaterial, outside of matter; otherwise we are reasoning in a circle and have an engine generating its own steam, or a motor and a dynamo running each other. And so with the present problem. Human social conduct cannot be represented as a mechanism perpetually running by its own momentum; it could never rise, and would be much more likely to fall. It is clear that this 'Unknowable' which the rationalists admit but scorn to inquire into is the very mainspring.

Here is where religion comes in. The rationalists have thrown away the grain with the chaff. It is the *spirit* of religion, Religion itself, which keeps alive the eternal vitality of the human race, compelling obedience to the essential laws of moral health and preventing an utter collapse into destruction by unrelieved selfishness.

And this true Religion has its shrine in the human heart. But a pious, devotional, emotional attitude will not suffice to keep the fire alive in an age where the intellect is so acute. This intellect has been enlisted on the side of self-interest, with the results which we so much dread. Unless the scope of the intellect can be expanded so as to inquire into and learn about those parts of human nature which lie below the surface, we shall become morally bankrupt. To live healthfully in a physical sense, we must know the laws of hygiene and sanitation; we cannot go by blind faith and guesswork. And this deeper knowledge is what Religion can and should give us.

That Christianity has failed so much as it has in this respect is due to the great admixture of dross with the pure metal. We have sought in this book to bring out the essential truths in Christianity, and to explain them in a way which will be more vital and effectual in human life. We have not taken away from man anything needed for his support. Whatever can be said in favor of the influence of Christianity can be said with greater force with regard to the Theosophical interpretation of Christianity. We have expressly said that we have no wish to interfere with the faith of those who find in their religion what they need and who seek nothing further; and that our object is to help those for whom this is not sufficient, and who are earnestly seeking for the real basis of human welfare.

Religion which teaches man that he is essentially divine cannot be more immoral in its influence than religion which teaches him he is a miserable sinner. In the Theosophical interpretation of Christianity the moral law is the essential law of human conduct, by which alone man can

achieve happiness, self-realization, and harmony of his life with that of his fellows. It is this interpretation alone which unifies life and brings into harmony intellect and heart, so that all our faculties may cooperate towards the end of perfection.

## GOD

God is not a person standing outside the Universe. Nor is he apart from man. God is everywhere; there is nothing which is not God. God is the ultimate fact, the root of all existence, the spiritual foundation of all that is. Many thinkers have arrived at this conception of God, and have realized that the theological God is an anthropomorphized ideal. God, the Universe, man, are not separate from each other, but form a unity. We can approach God only by sounding the depths of our own being; for man himself is a manifestation of Divinity, and there are no limits to what he can attain through self-knowledge.

The manifold objections to the idea of a personal and extracosmic God are almost too well known to need mention. Such a God seems to manifest little interest in human affairs, and to be apart from Nature, which is a sort of secondary deity. It is little wonder that so many have abandoned the idea of God altogether, though it passes comprehension to understand how these explain the meaning of things. To abandon the idea of God does not mean that we must represent the Universe as a haphazard mechanism.

The doctrine of extreme materialism means nothing; agnosticism is a confession of ignorance and helplessness. We may call ourselves Humanists, and make man the center of things; but then what is man? Every person, studying the wonders of his own conscious being, knows that there is a profound mystery beyond the limits of thought. But to suppose that that mystery is utterly insoluble is to turn the whole Universe and human life into a horrible jest.

There have always been Christian mystics who have taught that revelation comes through self-communion. This is the only way to knowledge of God; and, as we have shown, Jesus points the way to the attainment of such knowledge. There are faculties in man which transcend the intellect (as we know it now) — not set it aside or abrogate it, but supplement it. Man little knows the sublimity of his own nature, though many of us have at rare moments obtained glimpses. Let us aspire to the highest we can attain, and forbear to limit our vision by giving it the form of a personal deity, which is in very truth creating a graven image.

## PRAYER

Supplication to a personal deity for favors desired is looking for help in the wrong place. It is presuming to dictate to deity and is based on the

idea that divine goodness and wisdom needs the help of our prayers. The climax of absurdity is reached when hostile armies pray for victory over each other. This brings out the truth that a personal God is usually partial, local, tribal. There is some sense in such invocations if we believe that each nation has its own special deity, as some peoples believe; but it becomes nonsense when such contradictory prayers are addressed to one and the same God.

Prayer means self-communion accompanied by high aspiration, and should be in the spirit of "Not my will, but thine be done." Prayer for specific objects is not right, because we do not know what is best for us. Prayer is communing with the Father in Heaven through the Son; reaching towards our own highest and best. Personal wishes must be cast aside, and the unity of life realized as much as possible.

### THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

People often vex themselves with the question how a good God can permit evil. Evil is imperfection, and this world is but an imperfect manifestation of Deity the All-Good. Contrast and opposition are found everywhere; they are necessary conditions of growth and experience. Evil has been defined as the shadow of God. Attempts to define good and evil philosophically have not much bearing upon duty and conduct, and usually serve merely to bewilder people. In actual life good and evil are as distinct as a good egg and a bad egg. Every person is naturally endowed with the ability to distinguish them.

The words good and evil are very vague, and confusion arises from their being used in varying senses. They may be taken to mean pleasant and unpleasant; but this obviously refers to our tastes, which are unreliable as criterions. What is unpleasant may be good for us; what is pleasant, evil. They may be taken to mean right and wrong, and here again the reference may be to moral law, or social law, civic law, etc.

As far as our own experiences are concerned, the true philosopher can arrive at a state where he recognizes that no evil can befall him because he accepts every event as a part of his equitable lot — the Stoic philosophy. So we see that in this case the terms good and evil imply a contrast which we have made in our own minds by classifying experiences as pleasant and unpleasant and speaking of good and evil fortune.

As long as a person makes personal pleasure an object, he is bound to bring pain upon himself by the same law which renders the glutton or the drunkard sick. Such pursuit of self-gratification upsets the moral balance, and Nature restores it by the complementary opposite experience. But what about our conduct to other people? This ought surely to concern most a person of heart and conscience; and it might be better if people spoke more about this aspect of the question than about their own luck and

ill-luck and merit and demerit, which are utterly trivial to anybody but themselves.

Can it be denied that we have the power to work evil upon our fellows? And if there is anyone whose mind has become so disordered that he can argue, "Whatever happens to a person is his karma; therefore I cannot injure him," and use this as an excuse for misbehavior; then we can only pity such a one. To do mischief in the world and leave it to the universal laws of harmony to clean up the mess we have made is but a sorry way of manifesting the divinity that is in us. So far as our conduct to others is concerned, there is an unmistakable difference between good and evil, and an inescapable obligation upon every individual who *is* truly human to choose the right. And if he *is* truly human, he will do the right despite all the religions and philosophies in the world.

As said above, in speaking of the Fall of Man, the making of Deity into a personal God has necessitated the making of a personal Satan as the adversary of God. But, as there stated, the Serpent of Eden was man's teacher, who awoke in him the power of intelligence; and when this Serpent is called the Adversary, it means that he was opposed to the first God who created man as an unintelligent though sinless being.

Satan is also a personification of our passions, which seek to lead us to destruction; but it is by fighting them that we learn and progress, so that ultimately they become our savior. But that is only on condition that we fight and overcome them; if we yield to them we are lost. There is no Devil with horns and hoofs, haunting us during life and preparing to torment us after death. But it is only too true that our passions, allied to our intellect, can create a kind of secondary evil self, which is our enemy whom we must conquer. It is also true that the Astral Light is full of destructive powers engendered by human thoughts and passions; so that the Astral Light, in one of its aspects, has merited the title of Satan.

## CONCLUSION

Our subject is so large that we have not attempted to comprehend it; and had we done so, we should but have wearied the reader's attention. However enough has been said to invite the interested student to further study of the subject. The evidences for the views taken here are abundant and will be forthcoming in future years; they have been ignored because they have not suited the plans of the custodians of sectarian religion. But once broader views prevail, as they will among the generations of divines that are growing up, these evidences will be brought to light and the gradual development of modern Christianity from its original sources in the Wisdom-Religion will be historically traced.

All religions in their origin teach the divinity of man; but this teaching is afterwards hustled out of sight, and in its place we have a credal system

supported by a hierarchy, by which salvation is made conditional upon the acceptance of certain doctrines and conformity to certain requirements. It is of course inevitable and necessary that there should be organization, since every spirit must have an embodiment of some kind. But the physical framework of a plant does not prevent it from growing and changing; and the outer form of religion must change from age to age to fit the growing needs of the human spirit. And lastly, we must be willing to recognize the claims of other religions, most of them older than Christianity.





# 13

## **Mahâtmas and Chelas**

Leoline L. Wright

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## WHO AND WHAT ARE THE MAHÂTMAS?

It should never be forgotten that Occultism is concerned with the *inner man*, who must be strengthened and freed from the dominion of the physical body and its surroundings, which must become his servants. Hence the *first* and chief necessity of chelaship is a spirit of absolute unselfishness and devotion to Truth; then follow self-knowledge and self-mastery. These are all-important; while outward observance of fixed rules is a matter of secondary moment. — H. P. Blavatsky, *Lucifer*, Vol. IV, p. 348 fn

The teaching about Mahâtmas is one the most important in the whole range of Theosophical study. The reason for this lies in the fact that to attain the state of Mahâtmaship is the object of human evolution and its culmination. Understanding something of what a Mahâtma is will show what we are going to be in the future ourselves. For the aim of man's evolution is to transform the ordinary human being into a perfected spiritual man, a Mahâtma. The word is a combination of two Sanskrit words: *Mahâ*, "great"; and *Âtman*, "soul." Thus the word Mahâtma means literally "a Great Soul."

If we look around us even in ordinary life we see that men are everywhere unequally developed. There are always the leaders in every department of human activity. In the business world there are those who are sometimes called 'captains of industry,' leaders in the development of industrial and economic life. The same is true in the world of politics, art and religion, in education and the realm of science. It is a Universal law that the organization of the lesser elements in any field under enlightened and active leadership is the basis of success in that field. Even among poets and painters, whose work depends upon individual freedom of expression, we find that they have their associations to promote their common objects and authority. How much, too, we owe to the great geniuses of the human race, such characters as Galileo, Shakespeare, and Florence Nightingale, and many others whose vision and power stand out above the common level of humanity as dazzling examples of what one may accomplish by leadership in the pursuit of truth.

This same basic law holds good in the field of human evolution. Even the elder Huxley, one of the pronounced materialists of the last century {nineteenth}, admitted that there must be in the Universe beings as much higher than man as man is higher than the black beetle. Such a belief springs logically and inescapably from the facts of evolution. But Theosophy offers this teaching to the modern world, to show that such perfected human beings are actually living now on this Earth and that they can be known and sometimes contacted.

Questions that spring at once to the mind of the inquirer will naturally be: What are such people like? What are they doing and where do they live? To the first question we answer in the words of G. de Purucker:

The Mahâtmas are highly evolved men, controlling powers over Nature's forces which they have gained through self-directed evolution during many, many lives in the near and distant past. Now they are become Masters of life; in former ages they were men like you and me.

— *The Masters and the Path of Occultism*, p. 9

In this short passage a number of important expressions are used. We may note that Dr. de Purucker calls the Mahâtmas “Masters of Life,” for that is what a Mahâtma is. He is a graduate in Nature's great university of evolutionary development with its immense ranges of knowledge — knowledge founded upon experience and “self-directed evolution.” Thus, the Mahâtma is the perfect flower of human evolution.

The existence and nature of the Mahâtmas show how and why our evolution is worthwhile. To become Mahâtmas is our goal, and Theosophy indicates the scientific path to achieve this goal. This goal is the result and reward for that student who will practice the lofty ethics and develop the rounded and perfect character which are necessary to attain it.

One of the first things we associate with the nature of a Mahâtma is the possession of great spiritual powers, and to understand the work of the Mahâtmas we must know a little about what these powers are. And in order to do that — to understand what they {these powers} are like and how he has acquired them — we must examine more closely the real nature of human beings and of the Universe which surrounds us.

We have referred already to our Cosmos as a great university of evolutionary experience, but most of us have a very limited idea of what the Universe consists of. We think of it generally as merely physical things. For us it means the rocks and the ocean, the trees and mountains, the stars, the Solar System and the galaxies, merely as physical phenomena.

But if we turn to something closer to ourselves we get a different picture. Consider for a moment some friend we love. What are real friends? Their body and physical appearance? No, for they may be quite plain, even unprepossessing. Nor is it these outer things that remain in the heart when death comes, as we think, to take them from us. What remains with us to cherish, what we love, are their qualities — their power to love and give, their intelligence, originality, goodness, or charm. These are all intangible qualities which cannot be seen, weighed, or measured. We can only feel and love them by means of our own intangible perceptions and sympathy. After their death, the picture in our minds of their physical appearance may grow dim with the lapse of time. Not so with their character. The real person never fades away from our hearts.

So we see how it is that the physical is not the real. Man's body is governed by physical laws, but the mind and soul are governed by psychological and spiritual laws. Can it be different with the Universe of which we are a part? Can the part be greater than the whole? Can there be something in the flower which was not latent in the seed? Can the seed of

a thistle produce a fig tree? And can the Universe produce a soul if it is itself soulless?

From this point of view we realize that the most important parts of the Universe around us are invisible and cannot be contacted by our physical senses. Indeed, the Universe is like a human being, who is a miniature Universe, a microcosm of the macrocosm. In both there are ranges or planes of being which we can know only by the faculties within ourselves, perceptions belonging to those various ranges of being.

Like us, the Universe has first a physical aspect with which we are familiar. Then, within this and blending with it in its lowest levels, is the astral or ethereal world. Above and within this are finer and still more ethereal worlds. Here the psychological energies that embody the laws and activities corresponding to our mental and emotional life have their activity and sway. Beyond and within the psychological realm is the spiritual plane where dwells and is active our own Âtman-Buddhi. Here on this immensely high and powerful plane of the Universe are celestial beings whose unseen energies and activities govern all the planes and worlds below them.

It can now be perceived how undeveloped we are. For all we know of ourselves and the Universe around us is a limited knowledge of the physical world of our senses plus a still more limited and ineffectual perception of our mental and emotional life. But of our astral, ethereal, or spiritual ranges of inner being we know practically nothing, while to the average man and even to the greatest of our scientists, the higher realms of the Universe remain a sealed book at present.

With the Mahâtmas it is far different, although Theosophy tells us that within all people lie sleeping organs of perception belonging to these unknown planes of their being. Through these now latent perceptions, if developed, we might become conscious of these inner worlds of the Universe where we might be as much at home as we are on this physical plane. The Mahâtmas are humans who have awakened and developed these sleeping faculties. And it is from their training of these faculties that they derive their transcendent powers. As we cannot truly conceive of the work done by the Mahâtmas without some understanding of what their powers are, we will next devote a few pages to the subject.

## THE SPIRITUAL POWERS OF A MAHÂTMA

A Mahâtma endowed with power over space, time, mind, and matter, is a possibility just because he is a perfected man. Every human being has the germ of all the powers attributed to these great Initiates, the difference lying solely in the fact that we have in general not developed what we possess the germ of, while the Mahâtma has gone through the training and experience which have caused all the unseen human powers to develop in him, and conferred gifts that look god-like to his struggling brother below.

— W. Q. Judge, *The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 11-12, orig. ed.

Two things are involved in the development of great spiritual powers. First, a man must understand himself. Then he will be able, in the second place, to comprehend the Universe of which we are a part. It is the same with any student. He who would research in a scientific laboratory must begin by learning the theory and then how to use the equipment with which to conduct experiments.

No door opens without the right key. Man's knowledge of his own constitution, of his own capacities and powers, is the key which will unlock the door to the inner worlds of being, which lie within and behind and beyond the physical world. Here we find the meaning of the expression, "self-directed evolution." The world lags in its evolution, suffering and confusion prevail, because for so long we have been taught to look outside ourselves for strength and spiritual wisdom. Religion tells us to rely on a vague and distant God, while science offers the barren idea of a ruthless Nature as the great evolutionary force.

But Theosophy says: Man, know thyself; for within lie all the wisdom and potencies of the Universe. The urge to evolution through self-expression and experience does not come from blind physical Nature. It comes from our own higher Spiritual Self, so only within ourselves can we find the knowledge and the power to achieve the aims of evolution. Without our own vision, will-power, and courage we could never get anywhere. A child can be helped and guided by parents and teachers. But only it can make itself walk, eat, study, or use its physical and mental faculties.

So one of the passwords of Theosophy is *self-directed evolution*, which puts into our own hands the science of self-knowledge. It teaches what the seven basic elements of our constitution are. It gives us the spiritual laws by which we can most quickly and completely understand, control, and direct these elements. But only we ourselves can apply this knowledge in our daily lives to bring about a higher and quicker evolution of our own natures. Therefore a Theosophist {the student} no longer looks outside of himself for the strength to accomplish this. He becomes at last his own savior, powerful enough to make of himself a god in human form.

Did not Jesus tell us, in those instructions which have been so neglected by theological Christianity: "Know ye not that ye are gods?"; "Greater things than these shall ye do"; and "the kingdom of God is within you," — thus pointing the way to the spiritual basis of self-directed evolution?

It is this kind of self-directed evolution that a Mahâtma has been practicing for many lives on Earth. When we too grasp its importance and start to apply it practically to ourselves, we shall be putting our feet on the path that leads to the goal of human evolution, Mahâtmaship.

Some of the highest forms of mahâtmic powers exist even now in all of us. There is the creative imagination, the power to visualize what we

want or need or wish to do, and then give it {mental} form and direction in our minds. Men who are successful in business inevitably possess this power. Artists and scientists are all highly gifted with creative imagination. Yet everyone has it in some degree. And it is one of the first lessons in the occult life to recognize and develop it in ourselves. Katherine Tingley wrote:

Visualize! Visualize! You touch a mystic law when you create in imagination the picture of mighty things, for you open a door to new powers within yourself.... If you aspire, visualize your aspirations. Make a mind-picture of your spiritual ideals, a picture of the spiritual life as you know it to be, and carry that picture with you day by day.

— *Theosophy: The Path of the Mystic*, p. 49

The next great power most men possess is will-power. Without a strong and active will the creative imagination is useless. There are people of talent everywhere who are yet so irresolute and procrastinating that they go through life without accomplishing anything. There are also those like Beethoven. With his impairment of total deafness he yet had the courage and indomitable will which enabled him to bring into being those superb masterpieces which later he could not even hear.

In a Mahâtma the creative imagination and the *spiritual will* have been raised to their ultimate in human development. The words “spiritual will” are emphasized, for the personal will, actuated as it generally is by selfish desires and narrow personal interest, will not get us far. It too often results in a form of mere willfulness that may injure others and make bad karma for the man himself. The personal will cannot serve us in the inner spiritual realms of Nature where the Mahâtma works, but must first be purified and made impersonal. Only then does it become a *spiritual* power. It must be trained and actuated by impersonal love.

One of the first things a student of Occultism has to learn is the meaning and might of impersonal love. And it should also be explained here that Occultism is practical or applied Theosophy. One may be a student of Theosophy without becoming an Occultist. For example, one may be convinced that Karma and Reincarnation, as theories, offer a completely satisfactory explanation of life — and let it go at that. Another, once he is convinced of the truth of these teachings, will use this belief to change his thoughts and actions. He will be using creative imagination. Such a man as this latter has begun to be an Occultist. He is making practical use of Theosophy.

But many students will see that such an attitude is still inadequate *spiritually*. This motive of taking care of his own karma is still personal. No matter how justly it leads him to deal with others, he is still doing it for himself. It is a personal, not a spiritual, motive.

The spiritual nature in man is Âtman-Buddhi-Manas. Âtman is the spiritual essence at the center of us, the root of being which is the same in every creature. It is therefore universal, common to all things. Buddhi is the spiritual vesture, the highest aspect of Soul. Through Buddhi, Âtman is stepped down to the individual, Manas, the Thinker. Âtman, clothed or ensouled by the Buddhic vesture, is a pure ray of the Cosmic Self. It is an emanation of the Great Self of the Universe. People must visualize their Âtman-Buddhi and aspire to it. Until they have felt in their hearts the throb and thrill of the Universal Âtmic spirit they cannot understand and practice impersonal love.

It is not enough to love just our children, parents, and friends, and be willing to sacrifice our interest to theirs. This is fine, and of course it is the first beautiful step on the Path of Occultism. It is a step which all students must take before they go farther. But to reach higher levels in Occultism one must still go farther. It is comparatively easy to love our own children and to sacrifice for them. What is more difficult is so to work that the good of other people's children may not be endangered for the well-being or happiness of our own.

This is the beginning of impersonal love. And when we have expanded our love and sense of responsibility to the whole world we live in, then we are beginning to be true Occultists. We are sacrificing the personal to the spiritual will. We become gradually incapable of using even our own intellectual powers in any way that might harm any living creature.

The thoughtful seeker will admit that such genuinely practiced thought and action demands an intense, continuous, and arduous self-training. But its rewards are beyond price. We lose all fear for ourselves, all worry over our own success. We are able to train our children to a higher level of service and happiness, and to save them from many of the mistakes and sufferings caused by selfishness. We acquire a broader wisdom in all the relationships and circumstances of life. That is because we are bringing the Cosmic Universal Light of Âtman-Buddhi to illumine our minds and hearts. It was this that Jesus meant when he told us to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and "all these things" shall be added unto us.

The Mahâtma has been training himself along these lines for ages. He has so changed, developed, and transfigured the very atoms of his whole being that he is complete responsive to the Divine Intelligence and the Will of the Cosmic Universal Self. He no longer lives for himself in any way. This would not only no longer be possible for his changed nature; for him it would be returning from the range and freedom, the peace and bliss of Cosmic harmony and power, to the fevers and petty rivalries, the limited and ignoble aims of personal life. One who has even in the slightest degree experienced the wondrous happiness of impersonal living can understand

this. And he will soon bend his spiritual will towards attaining such freedom and peace.

We now have a better idea of the spiritual powers of a Mahâtma. Having finally allied himself with the Universal Soul of Nature, all its many realms — spiritual, psychological, psychic, astral, and physical — lie before him like an open book. Perhaps we may make a picture that will give us a clearer idea of his state of being. Think of one who for a lifetime has lived in a narrow shut-in valley. And then as old age approaches he gets the idea that he would like to see what the world is really like. He determines to climb the mountains that hem his valley in. So after great labor he reaches the almost inaccessible peaks. For the first time he sees the Earth spread before his gaze — its plains and valleys, rivers and forests, its mighty cities. Over his head stretches the immensity of the sky where at night he can see a whole universe of wheeling suns and the far-scattered constellations of the Milky Way. It is a magnificent revelation to his dazzled eyes and to his mind that had never been able to think beyond the narrow valley where he lived so long. For the first time he begins to understand the nature of the world at large.

So with the human soul. Dwelling for long in the dark and narrow limitations of the personality, but at last aspiring through awakened imagination, he turns to the mountain peaks of the Mystic East. And calling upon all his powers of strength and endurance he toils long and often painfully upward. Then at last this soul can stand upon the inner heights of its own spiritual nature, seeing and understanding what a different universe it is from the one seen before from the dark, narrow valley.

So the Mahâtma too, stands at last at a summit of his own universe, where he has brought himself by the use of creative imagination and spiritual will. The forces of occult Nature are now his to use. And it is through the powers he has attained by this slow upward progress, that he can employ these forces of occult Nature to produce phenomena that to the ignorant seem like miracles. But they are in fact only an enlightened and impersonally directed use of these powerful and hidden energies of Nature.

Better still, he can now see clearly the causes of human misery, and has the ability to help. He has reached wisdom and has the power which enables him to send currents of spiritual energy into the thought-atmosphere of humanity. Many of the most beneficent movements in history are the result of these spiritual thought-currents broadcast by the Mahâtmas among humanity. These currents touch here and there people who are ripe for spiritual activity, and great ameliorations for humanity are the result. For example, some of the most beneficial and far-reaching discoveries of modern science are said to have been due to the help given to their discoveries by the Mahâtmas. We quote here a reference from



Charles J. Ryan's *H. P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement*, page 163:

Professor Crookes, the chemist to whom science owes the great discovery of 'radiant matter' as he called it (now known as 'ionized' matter), which led directly in his and other hands to the modern atomic theories and the 'New Physics,' became a councilor of the London Lodge, and, it is said, received communications from the Master Morya, who took great interest in his work. The Master's attention was attracted to him by the moral courage he showed in daring to investigate psychic phenomena [which at that time were ridiculed by materialistic science and those who 'dabbled' in them ostracized], and in publicly declaring that they were facts, scientifically demonstrable, whatever their interpretation might be. Crookes suffered bitter persecution from many of his scientific colleagues, but even under the strongest pressure he never modified his statements or withdrew his records.

The student of the history of our own times and the events of past centuries will be interested in tracing where the influences of the spiritual thought currents broadcast by the Mahâtmas may have been at work. The influence of the writings of the so-called Dionysius the Areopagite is a case in point. He was a mysterious writer who lived in the third century A.D. His ideas had a remarkable influence in shaping the thought of early medieval Christianity, preserving much of Neo-Platonic thought in Christian theology which would otherwise have been forgotten. No one knows who he actually was, but his writing molded Christian thinking into a far more spiritual form than it would otherwise have taken. He has been called the founder of Christian mysticism.

The thinkers and philanthropists and scientists influenced by the Mahâtmas are not of course used by them like puppets — not at all. That would be an utterly unjustifiable forcing of the free-will of people, something entirely contrary to every teaching and law of Occultism. It is only that some people, and especially searchers for truth and a way to help the world, have made themselves ready to be touched and inspired by these spiritual light-waves, sent out constantly from the heights where the Mahâtmas watch over and encourage and inspire all who are advanced enough to feel them.

## **THE ELDER BROTHERS OF HUMANITY**

We have partially answered the second question as put by the inquirer, "What are the Mahâtmas doing?" The answer to this question is further implied in the above heading. The Mahâtmas are our Elder Brothers in point of evolution and spiritual relationship. Therefore, a great part of their work consists in watching over and stimulating spiritually the life of the

human race. In *The Ocean of Theosophy* by William Quan Judge we are told that man has never been without a friend. It has always had

... a line of elder brothers who continually watch over the progress of the less progressed, preserve the knowledge gained through aeons of trial and experience, and continually seek for opportunities of drawing the developing intelligence of the race... to consider the great truths concerning the destiny of the soul. These elder brothers also keep the knowledge they have gained of the laws of nature in all departments, and are ready when cyclic law permits to use it for the benefit of humanity. They have always existed as a body, all knowing each other, no matter in what part of the world they may be, and all working for the race in many different ways.

— Ch. 1, p. 3

The nature of their work may be better understood if we take the expression above quoted, “they have always existed as a body, all knowing each other,” etc., and consider all that the words imply. The *body* referred to is what is known in Theosophy as the Brotherhood of Compassion or sometimes as the Lodge. Theosophy tells us that from the very earliest ages of humanity on this Earth, there has always existed an organization or brotherhood of advanced souls. These advanced souls, the Mahâtmas, became perfected human beings in former periods of evolution, for this Earth and everything connected with it is a reïmbodiment of a former and less developed world. In that world we who are now men were passing through lower stages of life. But there lived then — as there live now and always will — those who were further along on the course of evolution. They had already reached perfection as men when our Earth and everything on it came to be reïmbodied in this present globe which we call Earth. That reïmbodiment was the beginning of the immense period of evolution through which everything is passing now.

At the beginning of this present period of evolution the human race was but an infant humanity. Like all infants it needed constant care, help, and guidance. And this help and care came from these advanced souls, Mahâtmas who had become perfected human beings in that former world. So they were ready to act as Teachers of Humanity; just as our teachers in ordinary life are people who have completed their education in periods of schooling preceding our own.

In those early ages the Mahâtmas lived among men. They guided and helped them openly. But the life of the Race is very much like that of every child. The time comes when youth must begin to think and act for itself, use its own initiative, cultivate its own will-power, and make its own mistakes. When that time comes, young people generally rebel against the council of their elders. As they lack experience, self-knowledge, and wisdom, they go wrong in ways that they often find it impossible in one life to remedy.

It happened very much like this with early man. At that time humanity was far more ignorant than the peoples of today. This was only to be expected. For man was then but just beginning to learn the moral lessons that many of us today find are instinctive in our characters at birth. Present day people have been learning through the experience and suffering of many incarnations. But in those early times the great majority were still undeveloped as human beings. They were inconceivably blind and greedy and willful. So that great wrongs were committed. War, and what we call *sin*, appeared, and if you read what H. P. Blavatsky tells us in *The Secret Doctrine* about Atlanteans you will get a picture of how dark and wicked were {some of the} early civilizations which humanity developed in those forgotten, prehistoric times. And at last people grew so selfish and material that the Mahâtmas were no longer sought as guides and teachers by the great mass of humanity.

It was then that the Brotherhood of Compassion, to which all these great sages and seers whom we call the Mahâtmas belonged, retreated into the background and began their occult or hidden work for the Race — work which up to that unhappy time they had been able to do openly, moving more or less freely among men. The chief reason for their withdrawal lies of course in the danger of entrusting their great knowledge to people who would selfishly misuse it and so bring disasters upon themselves and others. And the same restriction still unfortunately prevails. For though men have progressed enormously, they have not yet learned the folly and the dangers of selfishness.

The Mahâtmas, then, in those far-off times, began special work with individuals here and there who were more promising than humanity in its unevolved masses. For of course at that time too, there was the same inequality of development among men that prevails everywhere today. Some Egos are older than others and therefore more advanced in character and intelligence. It was these advanced Egos that the Mahâtmas singled out and gathered into schools or colleges in different parts of the world. Every great country in antiquity had one or more of these occult schools for the study of the Spiritual Sciences. These colleges have always been called in called in Theosophical teachings the Mystery-Schools.

Two important points should be brought out here. One is that even among the Mahâtmas themselves there are many grades of development. Some of them of course — just as in every other phase of evolution, spiritual or otherwise — are of higher degree than others. The Brotherhood of Compassion is a hierarchy. We quote here a passage explaining this hierarchical principle of being:

Thus it is that the Great Sages, the Mahâtmas or Masters, form one stage or degree on the evolutionary scale or Ladder of Life, and just above or superior to us men of average evolutionary development. There are other still greater and more evolved beings on the Ladder of Life, who are very

properly to be called the Teachers of these Great Sages or Seers themselves, and who are also Superior, or still more highly evolved, Men than the Great Sages themselves are. Higher even than these Superiors just spoken of there are yet others still more fully evolved, who may with propriety be called Human Gods; they are Nature's Controllers, Governors, of our own planet, Earth. — G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, pp. 942-943

It will readily be seen that many of these godlike celestial beings above mentioned are too far beyond our plane of consciousness to be conceivable to us. And being so, they cannot directly influence us. This brings us to another of the services our Elder Brothers, the Mahâtmas, perform for humanity. That service consists in 'stepping down' or transforming the vitalizing energies of these Celestial Beings so that they can be assimilated by human nature.

Probably most of us know what the work of a transformer is in the use of electricity. For those who do not it may be explained that a transformer is an apparatus, a special coil, for reducing or stepping down a high voltage current to a lower one when that higher voltage might be too great for the small apparatus to use. It is like this way with the gods and humanity. To be brought into direct contact with the energies of the gods would burn us up, so to speak, as in the mythological tale of the youth who ventured to raise the veil of Isis in order to look directly upon the face of the goddess and was slain by a vision he had not power to sustain. So our Elder Brothers act for us in the nature of benign transformers and step down for us the vitalizing currents of the Celestial Beings who, in the background of visible creation, govern and sustain our Universe.

The second point to be marked by the student is the fact that we should not confuse the Brotherhood of Compassion with the Mystery-Schools. The latter are related to the Brotherhood of Compassion itself much as a preparatory school is related to a university. The Mystery-Schools are lower in grade because composed of chelas or students in occultism. The teachers in a genuine Mystery-School must of course all have passed certain tests and undergone definite occult training, but in this day and age are not Mahâtmas, though in the earliest prehistoric Mystery-Schools already referred to were often were conducted by the Mahâtmas themselves. But the Mahâtmas are today in the background and watch over this work. It is the privilege of students in a Mystery-School to participate in spirit in the great initiatory periods which still take place during certain sacred seasons of the year at favored points somewhere on our Earth.

All men are related through their spiritual principles to this Brotherhood of Compassion — for we derive our Âtman-Buddhi-Manas from a common divine source — but the chelas of a Mystery-School are still only in training under their adept teachers. And this training will enable them ultimately to become consciously an active part of that Brotherhood as the Mahâtmas and their agents already are.

In the Mystery-Schools, first founded as described in past ages, the Mahâtmas in those early days taught their pupils the truths of the archaic Wisdom-Science called by such titles in history as the Secret Doctrine of the ages, the Esoteric Tradition, and other such designations, which we today know under the name of Theosophy. This has been defined by Dr. de Purucker as follows:

It is, as a body of doctrines, the formulation in human language of the essential truths of the Universe. It comprises the facts regarding the nature of the Universe, visible and invisible, spiritual, intellectual, psychical, ethereal, astral, and physical. It comprises also the teachings regarding the structure and operations and laws of the Universe. It also includes teaching a man to find himself, *i.e.*, to discover and uncover from its enshrouding veils, the god within him. — *The Masters and the Path of Occultism*, p. 39

The teaching and training of these pupils, however, was but one phase of their work, for they were also the Founders of the world religions. From time to time they sent out from their midst some of the highest among them. These Great Souls incarnated in different Races and the different eras of history, when they taught anew the ethical laws upon which all life must be based if it is to endure. It is characteristic of the human race to forget its divine origin. Men become so engrossed in the pursuit of personal and selfish ends and the treasures of this world that every religion grows dim as the centuries pass away. The purity of the Founder's teaching becomes clouded and fades in human memory. Then the religion deteriorates and becomes a vehicle for the ambitions and power of priests and theologians. This has always happened in the case of every religion in the history of man. So it becomes necessary again and again for these ethical fundamentals to be restated in a fresh form.

The earliest of these teachers which history speaks of sent out by the great Lodge of the Mahâtmas is Krishna in India. He struck anew for the world of his day the keynote of these same ethical teachings. They are imbodied in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* and other scriptures of the Hindû religion. About 2,500 years later came Gautama the Buddha to correct the abuses which had crept into Hindûism and to give the ethics of life a simpler expression, one which the common people could easily understand. After him came Śankarâchârya. To Persia was sent Zoroaster, who did the same for mid-Asia. To China were sent Lao-Tzu and Confucius, and to the modern world {the Mediterranean and European world} Jesus the Christ. These great souls all taught the same fundamental ethical truths, but in each case these truths were adapted to the characteristics and the points of view of the people and the period they came to teach. The basic doctrines of all world religions are identical. And this is because they are all but different expressions of the same Wisdom-Religion of the ages.

Another aspect of this work as time flowed on was the founding of ever more Mystery-Schools all over the world. Every large country had its own Mystery-School. The clearest historical picture we have of these Mystery-Schools of antiquity is in ancient Greece. Orpheus was the traditional Savior or Great Teacher of the Mediterranean peoples. He appeared in archaic or prehistoric times and is credited with the Mysteries of Eleusis near Athens. Another of the original Greek Mystery-Schools was the celebrated one at Crotona established by a Messenger from the Lodge, the Greek Pythagoras. Another was the Mystery-School at Samothrace. Like their parent-school, the Lodge of Mahâtmas, these schools sent out in turn their agents, men like Plato with his Academy at Athens in the fourth century B.C. Plato too was an initiate and has had an immense spiritual influence upon both ancient and modern thought, being almost as much admired and studied today as in his own times. Some of the greatest dramatists of Greece, such poets as Aeschylus and Sophocles, were students of these Mystery-Schools. Their dramas are true Mystery-plays depicting the trials of the human soul in its pilgrimage to perfection.

Similar Mystery-Schools are heard of in all the countries of antiquity. Plato, for example, is said to have visited and studied at one in India, the members of which were called Gymnosophists, and Herodotus, the Greek historian and traveler, is said to have visited one in Egypt.

The work of the Mahâtmas is thus not only to watch over and inspire and stimulate the progress of humanity as our Elder Brothers, but to keep us in touch with the divine energies of the Cosmos. They are also teachers and personal guides to all who are ready for the intensive and arduous training in the occult life. But as the proportion of people who are ready bears a ratio of about one in ten million of ordinary people, their actual pupils are very, very few. But sooner or later all pupils of a Mahâtma will become teachers in their turn. Then they seek out others whose souls are awakened to listen and learn. Thus the work and influence of the Mahâtmas is not confined to the spiritual thought-currents above mentioned. It follows more individual and definite channels, reaching out in particular and special ways through the work of their agents to inspire and guide all who are looking to higher and better things for the world. For there are thousands of bewildered hearts now seeking for some way out of the sorrows and miseries which oppress all classes and peoples of this modern world.

Another aspect of the Mahâtmas' work consists in safeguarding Occult Truth from exploitation and misuse by the evil and ignorant. Only such portions of the Archaic Science are openly taught as will prove of benefit to humanity. Here is one great sign of their wise beneficence as our Elder Brothers. Today a few of our greatest scientists realize the mischief that can and has been unfortunately done by the use of scientific knowledge for destructive and cruel purposes. And at last scientific bodies

are beginning to take belated steps towards arousing public conscience in this matter through the channels of education.

The forces physical science has put into mortal hands, powerful as they are, are but feeble when compared to the powers and energies of Occult Nature. And the knowledge of these powers and energies must be guarded from the insatiable curiosity and selfish use of the undisciplined. Man must first learn, as scientists admit, to develop his ethical and social conscience, to become a selfless power for good in the world, before he can be safely trusted with secrets of {occult} power. One has only to look into the subject of the use of Occult powers in the world today, to see what harm is being done by dabbling even in the lower psychic forces, such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, mediumship and the like. H. P. Blavatsky's writings and *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* contain material illustrating this point. When the student has thought seriously about the matter he will realize what the consequences would be to most of us if the control of the secret and mighty forces of Occult Nature were to become available to unscrupulous ambition.

All down the ages the great seers and sages have protected humanity against itself, as far as that is possible without interfering with the freedom of the human will. And this is a phase of their work can be done by no other agency.

So now we begin to see an outline of the great spiritual hierarchy of Beings who link the human race by graduated stages of consciousness to the supreme Hierarch of our own solar Universe, the Cosmic god at the invisible spiritual heart of our Sun. Every planet has in its turn a celestial ruler or hierarch who embodies the summit of consciousness on that planet. This is equally true of the Earth. The ruler or hierarch of our planet Terra is the head and heart of the Brotherhood of Compassion which as a body cares for and oversees the evolution and well-being of all Earth's creatures. The Mahâtmas we are now thinking about are the perfected men who link the mass of humanity with this Brotherhood of Compassion. They do its beneficent work as the Elder Brothers and spiritual Teachers of the human race.

## THE MAHÂTMAS AND THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

We come now to what is, for us, a most interesting and important and well known part of the work of the Mahâtmas. That is the Theosophical Movement. The word *movement* is used here instead of the word *society*. And for the reason that the Theosophical Society is only one phase of the immense and ancient Theosophical Movement itself. The Theosophical Society dates but from 1875. The Theosophical Movement extends

backwards into prehistoric time. The matter is explained by G. de Purucker in the following passage:

To put it briefly: there has always existed in the world for almost innumerable ages, a completely coherent and fully comprehensive system of religious philosophy, or of philosophical, scientific religion, which from time to time has been given out to man when the world needed a fuller revealing of spiritual truth than it then at such time had. Further, this wonderful system has been for all those past ages in the safe guardianship of the relatively perfected men [the Mahâtmas]...

— *The Esoteric Tradition*, pp. 33-34

To this statement the words of H. P. Blavatsky should be added:

... I must tell you that during the last quarter of every hundred years an attempt is made by those “Masters,” of whom I have spoken, to help on the spiritual progress of Humanity in a marked and definite way. Towards the close of each century you will invariably find that an outpouring or upheaval of spirituality — or call it mysticism if you prefer — has taken place. Some one or more persons have appeared in the world as their agents, and a greater or less amount of occult knowledge and teaching has been given out. If you care to do so, you can trace these movements back, century by century, as far as our detailed historical records extend.

— *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 306 orig. ed.

Some indication of these different aspects of the Theosophical Movement in each century has already been given. To us, of course, one of the most interesting of these chapters in mystical history began in the Egyptian city of Alexandria in the third century A.D. with Ammonius Saccas and the Neo-Platonists. It was then that the word *Theosophy* was first applied to the teachings of the Secret Doctrine or Wisdom-Religion. H. P. Blavatsky calls Ammonius Saccas “a saintly adept.” He seems to have been the first of the public agents of the Mahâtmas to what we know as modern {Western} civilization. [See the opening chapters of *The Key to Theosophy* for an interesting account of this era and its great Theosophists.]

We must remember that in every ancient civilizations the work of the Great Teachers of the Brotherhood of Compassion was well understood. For all of them had their Mystery-Schools. And the teachers connected with these had been Initiates of the Brotherhood and taught its age-old system of ethics and spiritual science. But in the early years of our Christian Era the Mystery-Schools in Greece, which had been the chief source of all spiritual Light in the antique world around the Mediterranean, had been gradually deteriorating. Their teachers had lapsed from their high calling. They becoming faithless to the teachings and were no longer true initiates of the Secret Doctrine. Among them Spiritual self-discipline and selfless devotion to truth and impersonal love had been gradually replaced



by love of power and privilege. He who would know the doctrine must first live the life — this is a fundamental principle of Occultism. The influence of these Schools was therefore waning. And a little later in the sixth century A.D. the last of them was closed in Athens, at the request of their own teachers, by the Emperor Justinian.

An interesting point may here be touched upon. This is, that after the termination of the Mystery-Schools the Theosophical Movement was obliged, because of the prevailing religious bigotry of the times, to follow more or less concealed channels. It became almost completely hidden, or occult. From the sixth century to the nineteenth, there was a period of thirteen hundred years during which only a few teachers and some secret societies, such as the true Rosicrucian Order, could be used by the Lodge of Mahâtmas as their agents to keep the Secret Doctrine alive in the Western world. The last of these secret agents we know of were Count Saint-Germain and the celebrated Cagliostro near the close of the eighteenth century. The latter, who was called by H. P. Blavatsky the “last of the Rosicrucians,” made an attempt to found a Mystery-School through his work with occult Masonry. But he was more or less defeated by the bigotry of his day.

We come now to the founding of the Theosophical Society in New York City in 1875. Ostensibly it was started by H. P. Blavatsky herself, assisted by a group of students whom she drew around her, including Henry Steel Olcott and William Q. Judge. But she has often told us how she was sent to New York by her Teachers a little in advance of the opening years of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. She was told by them to start an organization through which could be restated in a form suited to the type of intelligence and to the needs of our modern world the ancient truths of the Wisdom-Religion. The Mahâtmas themselves say:

One or two of us [the Brotherhood or Lodge of Mahâtmas] hoped that the world had so far advanced intellectually, if not intuitionally, that the Occult doctrine might gain an intellectual acceptance, and the impulse given for a new cycle of occult research... We sent her [H. P. Blavatsky] to America... and the trial began.

— The Mahâtma M. in *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 263

And H. P. Blavatsky tells us:

*Orders* received from India direct to establish a philosophico-religious Society and choose a name for it — also to choose Olcott. July 1875.

— From one of her Scrapbooks, Blavatsky's *Collected Writings*, 1:94

“From India direct” meant in her case but one thing — from the Mahâtmas.

The evidence showing their work in connection with the founding and progress of the young Theosophical Society can be read in their own letters as published in *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*. Here the student can find a complete and detailed picture, and also, scattered here and there among these interesting records of their activities will be found hints on other lines of work — what we may perhaps call their more esoteric lines of spiritual activity behind the scenes of human affairs.

As time went on and H. P. Blavatsky established in 1888-9 with the active help of W. Q. Judge her Esoteric Section, the first step was taken towards the revival of the Mystery-Schools. As exoteric Theosophy for the public brought back to humanity the long forgotten Wisdom-Religion of the ages, so the renewal of the ancient Mystery-Schools restored the ethical-scientific study of Occultism, and established that study as a living force in the modern world. The old sacred relationship of spiritual teacher and his disciples pledged to live and work for the spiritual welfare of humanity — in other words, of Mahâtmas and Chelas — became once more a vital factor in humanity's spiritual education.

Evidence that the Mahâtmas were behind H. P. Blavatsky's work in establishing the Esoteric Section can be found in abundance in H. P. Blavatsky's *Collected Writings*. A brief, comprehensive and interesting account of the history of the modern Theosophical Movement where the above mentioned facts are more fully described can be found also in Charles J. Ryan's *H. P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement*.

## CHELAS AND THE CHELA LIFE

Perhaps enough has already been said about the Mahâtmas and their disciples to give some idea of what Chelaship means. The Sanskrit word *chela* is used in Occultism because it has a more specific significance than the words *pupil* or *disciple* as understood today. To be a chela implies a peculiar degree of loyalty to one's chosen teacher and to the principles underlying his teachings. It also, and more particularly, implies a realization of the sacredness of the bond between the chela and his spiritual teacher, or to use again the Eastern word, his *guru*. We might helpfully quote a couple passages in this connection:

*To the earnest Disciple his Teacher takes the place of Father and Mother, for, whereas they gave him his body and his faculties, its life and casual form, the Teacher shows him how to develop the inner faculties for the acquisition of the Eternal Wisdom.*

— From the *Book of Discipline* in the Schools of 'Dzyan'

Now this relation is an extremely sacred one, because... the Teacher, the Guru, the Master... acts as the midwife, bringing to birth, helping to bring into the active life of the disciple, the hid part of the disciple, the soul

of the man. — G. de Purucker, *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, pp. 527-528

Even a teacher of ordinary subjects has a responsibility to his pupils in his influence upon their developments and ideals. And the pupils have an obligation of gratitude to a teacher who has been an inspiration and perhaps opened to him doors of vision and resolve. But how much deeper is this bond of responsibility and gratitude between pupil and *spiritual* teacher — one who can show us how to solve all our apparently unsolvable problems and how to recreate ourselves and our lives.

But such a spiritual relationship goes deeper even than this. For a genuine Occult teacher is one who can open for us the inner realms of being. It is not so-called religious instruction that he gives, though ethics and morals are the foundation of all genuine spiritual teaching. He does what religion as we moderns know it can never do. He not only gives knowledge but actually quickens the human soul, much as the flame of Manas {mind} was quickened in the early Races of humanity by the Mānasaputras {or Promethean light-bringers}. A real spiritual teacher literally raises his chela from the dead. For unless a man be born again we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; and as Jesus said, the Kingdom of Heaven is within you.

There are two broad divisions in chelaship. There are, first, lay or probationary chelas. Second, there are those chelas who through long self-discipline, perhaps in many former incarnations as well as in this one, have proved themselves worthy. They are then accepted by the Mahâtmas themselves for intensive occult training. Lay chelas, or probationers, train themselves. They are given the fundamental doctrines of the Wisdom-Religion, particularly those that explain the scientific basis of ethics. The degree of earnestness and devotion with which they study and apply these teachings constitutes the first test on the chela path. To the extent that the student sincerely applies himself to determined self-training and self-discipline in the practice of ethics and oneness will the period be longer or shorter which leads to his being accepted by the Mahâtmas as a chela pledged irrevocably to the service of humanity.

Every sincere and devoted student of theosophy is in this sense a probationary chela. He may not be conscious of it, but his real progress in impersonal devotion to family and friends, to his fellow Theosophists, and to work of the Theosophical Movement for humanity will be registered karmically. And as this good karma accumulates, the chela will be led ever nearer to the presence of the Mahâtmas.

There is an ancient saying that discipline precedes the Mysteries. And when we consider the real nature and objects of a Mystery-School we understand why this must be so. The teachings in a Mystery-School comprise a knowledge of the actual and tremendously powerful laws upon

which the Universe and life are built. To be able to smash the atom and release titanic forces, with all the dangers which attend such power, gives a faint idea of the potencies and possibilities for either good or evil which a knowledge of occult Nature bestows. So, necessarily, moral and spiritual discipline of a most serious kind must precede the student's admission into this sacred arcana. Besides, unlike what is popularly known as Science, the Occult teachings are not experimental. They never veer and change from guess to guess, and from theory to theory.

Why is this? From whence do the Mystery-Schools derive their certain knowledge about these hidden things? The following passage answers:

Great intellects, titanic spiritual Seers, have sent their consciousness behind the veils of the outward seeming deep into the womb of invisible Nature, and have brought back what they have seen, and have formulated their knowledge into a grand system of thought. This system of thought we today call Theosophy. It is the Mother of all the great religions and great philosophies of the past time, and will be so of those of the future; for this reason: that every one of these other great systems of thought has been founded upon the teaching of some great spiritual Seer and Sage.

— G. de Purucker, *The Masters and the Path of Occultism*, p. 19

What are some of these deeper teachings revealed to chelas in the Mystery-Schools? For a detailed description the student is recommended to read *The Esoteric Tradition* by G. de Purucker. But a brief outline of a few of them may here be given. He is taught among other things the real origin of his spiritual nature, his spiritual heredity, so to speak. He learns how and why he is actually a child of the cosmic gods. The door to the inner worlds of being is opened for them and they are gradually introduced to a knowledge of the circulations of the Cosmos and the journeys of the spiritual Monad along those cosmic highways into the “vast and inner and invisible Worlds and Spheres,” to quote from the above mentioned book. Indeed *The Esoteric Tradition* is so full of passages packed with occult hints and information that one or two paragraphs which illustrate the foregoing and suggest the basic lines of chela training are quoted here:

One of the main objectives in such training is the arousing and stimulation of the moral sense to become so strong in the life of the disciple that the voice of conscience thus highly developed and trained becomes the instant and relatively unerring monitor indicating which path at any moment the disciple should follow.... Coincident with this is the training of the mind and of the intellect to become keen, polished, instant in action, and, under the guidance of the moral sense, virtually unerring in judgment.

— *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 1056

The whole attempt of inner training is to attain self-identification in progressive and ever enlarging stages with the great Spiritual Powers on which the Universe itself is constructed and with which it is molded — strange as this manner of phrasing the wonderful truth may seem to the Western mind, untrained in matters of esoteric philosophy and its deep science. — *Ibid.*, p. 1055

This expression about the “spiritual powers” refers to the Cosmic and Solar gods from which man’s Âtman-Buddhi-Manas {our immortal Self} is radiated or, more correctly, emanated. Chela training under a Mahâtma opens to the chela the path to self-conscious union with his spiritual parent, his own inner god. And when the pledged chela has been well prepared by his guru or spiritual teacher and is ready for the supreme trial he then embarks upon the sacred and wonderful adventure of initiation.

## INITIATION: THE GOAL OF EVOLUTION

There is a road, steep and thorny, and beset with perils of every kind, but yet a road, and it leads to the heart of the Universe. I can tell you how to find Those who will show you the secret gateway that leads inward only, and closes fast behind the neophyte for evermore. There is no danger that dauntless courage cannot conquer; there is no trial that spotless purity cannot pass through; there is no difficulty that strong intellect cannot surmount. For those who win onward, there is reward past all telling: the power to bless and serve humanity. For those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come. — Editorial in *Lucifer*, Vol. IX

The purpose of all initiatory ceremonies — ... the aim of all initiatory teachings of the ancient Mystery-Schools was... *the evocation of the higher self, of this inner being*; and it is possible to do it. A strong and indomitable will is the first requisite. Purity of life is the second, mental purity above everything else. And absolute loyalty and devotion to the teachings of the Esoteric Wisdom and to the Teacher, is the third.

— G. de Purucker, *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 361

Perhaps the greatest boon that Theosophy bestows is the conviction that at last we actually know where we are going. Unlike the unhappy, drifting, bewildered mass of human beings, the earnest and sincere student of Occultism has a definite objective. No matter how far in the future it may be, the student knows that sometime, as surely as the Sun rises every day, the privilege of trying for initiation into the mysteries of occult Nature will be his. And so he moves confidently forward to the radiant moment of reunion with the Higher Self. Never again will he be really uncertain, or lazy, or morally incompetent. He has something absorbingly interesting and worthwhile to work for. And his is the opportunity to press joyfully onward, serving with those noble Helpers who are in advance of the human

race, towards that spiritual perfection which shall enable him to draw the whole of humanity itself with him a fraction farther onward along our difficult evolutionary way. The Sun, moving ever forward through its steadfast orbit draws all its planets year by year into new spaces of the Universe. So does man, steadfastly following the path of occult progress, draw forward with himself all those who are united to him in the bonds of spiritual oneness. Every human problem and every human sorrow will be just that much clearer and lighter because the he as an individual has been able to make the goal.

Furthermore, in following the Path of Initiation the chela, either lay or accepted, is embarking upon a splendid adventure. Life for the average person is so dull. There is hardly one man or woman in a million who is not more or less a slave to some crippling limitation of environment. Aldous Huxley says somewhere that modern man is everywhere intensely bored with life. And does it not seem logical to conclude that the prevalence of crime amongst the young is largely due to these crippling environments which offer no scope for individual initiative, and which surround the effervescing energies of the young with little but the intensely commonplace?

Now, in exchange for this drabness, what does initiation offer us? To reiterate the words of a Teacher, it shows us how to invoke the peace and power and guidance of the Higher Self. It changes us “into becoming the bird of eternity.” In other words, it sets us free. It opens the doors out of the cage of our personality. It shows us how then to spread our spiritual wings — which now lie so feeble and closely folded from disuse — and, escaping from our physical and psychological limitations, to fare forth upon the highways of the Cosmos.

To the highest Initiate there are no closed doors in the Universe. The inner worlds, with all their strange and fresh and wondrous realms, lie open before him. For his training has developed in him that piercing spiritual vision to which G. de Purucker so often refers. His are the strong faculties and the mighty spiritual pinions that can carry him to the very innermost portals of the Spiritual Sun.

A further passage may be quoted to show in slightly more detail what Initiation implies. The writer begins by describing the greatest event in the history of our globe — the awakening in man of self-conscious humanhood in the Third Root-Race by the Mānasaputras:

This our “awakening” was called by H. P. Blavatsky, the *incarnation of the Mānasaputras*, or the Sons of Mind, or Light. Had that incarnation not taken place, we indeed should have continued our evolution by merely “natural” causes, but it would have been slow almost beyond comprehension, almost interminable; but that act of self-sacrifice, through their immense pity, their immense love, though, indeed, acting under Karmic impulse, awakened the divine fire in our own selves, gave us light and

comprehension and understanding; so from that time we ourselves became the “Sons of the Gods”; the faculty of self-consciousness in us was awakened, our eyes were opened, responsibility became ours; and our feet were then set definitely upon the path... leading inwards back to our spiritual home.

... initiation is in fact a quickening process, but it is also something else; it is a copy, an endeavor to copy, what was done by the incarnation of those Lords of Understanding, Sons of Light. It is an attempt to stimulate, to awaken into activity, the inner Spiritual Self, to enliven us more quickly, to enable us to see and understand, saving those who successfully pass through the tests aeons and aeons of suffering and strife, and, noblest of all, enabling those whose minds have become enlightened, themselves to do the same for their brothers who are less progressed than they. — G. de Purucker, *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, pp. 258-259

Moreover, in following the Path of Initiation under a spiritual Teacher who is part of the Brotherhood of Compassion, we knit ourselves into the Great White Lodge and its work. To the extent that we then become chelas in spirit and try sincerely to live the chela-life, we become a vital part of that Brotherhood. We have ceased to be wanderers. We have found our true place in the universal plan. We learn who we are, where we came from, whither we are bound and, the best and quickest way to get there. Suffering no longer daunts us, for it becomes a gateway to freedom.

Even beyond all this, however, is the immediate power Initiation will give aspirants to help and bless others. Not only will their mere presence spread protection and balm and inspiration, he will eventually become a part of the living Guardian Wall which surrounds humanity. The significance of this statement will be clear from the following:

These Sages are sometimes called the ‘Guardian Wall,’ for they form in fact a living, spiritual and intellectual ‘wall’ of protection around mankind, guarding men against whatever evils men themselves are unable, because of ignorance, to ward off or to neutralize. Yet such guarding is always in strict accordance with, and always has in view, the dominant karma of humanity; for against this, the humanly racial karma, even the great Sages can no more work than against any one or against all of the other ‘laws’ of Nature. They are what they are because they are in utter fidelity the Servants of the Universal Mother in her spiritual, causative functions. They help men, they inspire, they protect, they succor, whenever they can, and in such fashion as their profound knowledge of the karmic chain of cause and effect in which humanity is entangled permits them to do. Thus it is that they serve the humanity over which they stand as Elder Brothers and Guides. This is their Great Work; this is their sublime Duty.

— G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 914

From the foregoing pages it will easily be seen that for the various stages of initiatory training an Adept-Teacher is necessary. Even the student of mere physical science must have long preparation, with help

and guidance from an expert, if they aim to do serious research work in a well-equipped laboratory. So likewise must the advanced chelas, who aspires to the difficult and perilous occult highways which lead to initiation, have the guidance and help of a spiritual expert or Adept to watch over and direct their progress. He must of course do the work himself. A child must learn to walk, and talk, and use its own faculties no matter how much help it may have. The chela must himself develop the higher spiritual and the lower psychic clairvoyance and the other inner senses and powers which enable him to adventure and learn in these new fields of life. But in order that he may not go astray and that his efforts may be of the highest efficiency, he will naturally need the suggestions and guidance of a Master of Life.

All this may seem very remote to those who, like you and me, regard ourselves as quite average and commonplace people. Yet does not our intense determination to find the meaning of things lift us out of the average? Most assuredly it does. It is because of that determination that many are members and workers in the Theosophical Movement. There has reached the inner ear of every sincere Theosophist {searcher?} a whisper from the Heart of the Universe. No one who has once heard that still, small voice — “the Voice of the Silence” — and known the divine nostalgia which it inspires in the soul, will ever again be content with the husks of material or merely intellectual satisfactions.

And one of the most beautiful things about a knowledge of these truths is that they exalt the commonplace of everyday. No matter how difficult or uninspiring may be the daily grind, when one thinks and lives and feels in the atmosphere of Occult Truth, every form of drudgery will be suffused with the Buddhistic splendor. No matter how tied down or weary the body, the man himself will be free. The very act of doing faithfully and impersonally each small duty will itself be a first step on the Pathway of Initiation. For all that a student of occultism does will be self-consciously dedicated to impersonal service. In addition, he will know why he is doing it. And not having any egotistical demands as to the result, he will be able to do it a hundred percent better than formerly he could. Understanding Reincarnation and Karma; knowing that his feet are set irrevocably upon the Right Path; possessing in his mind and heart the esoteric keys to the Sanctuary — the man or woman so humbly and faithfully working is literally a companion and co-worker with the gods.

## **HOW CAN WE REACH THE MAHÂTMAS?**

One of the most frequent and most natural questions of the inquirer is the one at the head of this page: “How can I meet a Mahâtma? How would I know one if I were to see him?” The teaching about our Elder Brothers is so consoling, and holds so much inspiration and purely novel



interest for a seeker that the first impulse is to reach out like doubting Thomas and assure himself by means of his senses that the Mahâtmas actually exist. He longs to meet them, to secure their attention and guidance. And of course it is right for anyone who has lived the life and complied with the conditions they set for their chelas, to aspire and hope for such ultimate personal relationship with them. He naturally longs to find his Spiritual Teacher and devote his life to the service of humanity.

Yet the whole of this Manual, and indeed all of our more profound and detailed literature will have been written in vain if the student does not soon learn that he must first earn the right to come under direct personal notice. As one of the Mahâtmas wrote long ago, in the very beginning of the Theosophical Society, to an applicant for chelaship:

If you really want to be a *chela*, i.e. to become the recipient of our mysteries, *you* have to adapt yourself to *our* ways, not we to *yours*. Until you do so, it is useless for you to expect any more than we can give under ordinary circumstances. — *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 235

And of course it is not only a question of having the right, it is more than all a question of individual development. If any one of us were to pass a Mahâtma on the street, the chances are 1000 to 1 that we would not recognize him as such, unless the Master chose to reveal his presence to us. The reason for this lies in our own undeveloped spirituality. It is rare almost to the point of impossibility to find anyone in whom the inner spiritual sense necessary to detect the presence of a Mahâtma is yet unfolded. For his mere physical appearance will not necessarily proclaim the inner Self. It is the developed spiritual nature, not the body, which makes the Master of Life.

“But,” you may reply, “if the Mahâtma is so far ahead of us, why is his body too not different from ours?” It is different, certainly, but in what way is it different? Simply in the *quality* of the atoms and molecules and cells which build it. The material of our bodies, soaked as most of them are with fatigue poisons, and often with the germs of disease, or disturbed by nervous and emotional instability, could not be used by a pure and exalted being such as a Mahâtma. He has long, long ago so refined and transmuted his physical atoms that his body is built only of the finest and purest materials. The essence and vibration of all his atoms and molecules are of an inconceivably higher order than ours. He could no more live and breathe in such a body as ours than a bird could live under water, or a butterfly exist in its discarded chrysalis. And this very unlikeness in essence and vibration would make it extremely unlikely that we could sense his physical presence. The same thing is true of his psychological apparatus — his mind and human feelings. They are all entirely different from ours, and that difference is as invisible to our mental apprehension as the ultraviolet ray is to our eyesight. Of course the higher we go in thinking

of his constitution, the more remote the possibility that there could be any casual *rapport* between an ordinary person and a Mahâtma.

Just here we may answer the third question asked previously: Where do the Mahâtmas live? The inner and highest Lodge of the Mahâtmas is situated in a region untrodden by the mass of humanity. Here they may live in an atmosphere, physical and spiritual, that makes their work possible. Moreover, here they can be uninterrupted. Even casual thought will show that if they lived where they could be easily reached, their work would suffer, as much from friends as enemies. Think what a long struggle Science has had through three hundred years to earn its freedom for untrammelled investigation and research. And today we see that freedom again menaced. This will easily suggest why Mahâtmas find it expedient to isolate themselves. They are powerful enough to neutralize the attacks of bigotry, curiosity, and all other kinds of investigation, opposition, and interruption, but they are too wise to waste their energies in this way. Why expend energy to protect their work against the hordes of human passion when by just withdrawing to the solitudes they can live and work at their easiest and best? This is another reason why it is almost impossible for an ordinary, spiritually undeveloped man or woman to meet a Mahâtma.

These facts have their parallel within the world at large. Remember how some people of great commercial enterprises are protected against intrusion. It is almost impossible for anyone but important and favored individuals to work through the cordon of office employees, and secretaries, who surround and cut off such a person from the public. The same is true of many important and highly placed people. These people have such responsibilities and important work to do under so much intensity and strain that they feel they have to be protected against impractical and inefficient contacts. So we see that the Mahâtmas are not so different in their need for quiet and seclusion in their spiritual retreats. But there is of course with them with them the all-important difference that they are always in *inner* and sympathetic and ministering touch with all humanity and its problems.

With a Messenger of the Lodge it is of course different. They are necessarily more like ourselves, at least in their physical bodies, so that if we will, we can recognize the agents of the Lodge by our own intuitive vision. Yet — how many are there who can do even this much? Thousands of people contacted H. P. Blavatsky, who was one of the greatest of their agents. How many of these thousands recognized her for what she was? If one cannot discover behind the personality of a man or woman the presence of a real spiritual Teacher, how then shall he be able to recognize a Master and Teacher-Adept?

Happily, the Masters can see *us*, for they have developed spiritual and psychic clairvoyance which enables them to overlook the whole world, and particularly the Theosophical Movement. Every act on our part of

genuine self-mastery and unselfish devotion to the interests of another brings us nearer to their recognition and help. The following passage will prove of interest here:

...yet constantly as the slow ages pass, one by one, individuals will be discovered by the Masters showing unmistakable signs in their thoughts and feelings and in consequent action of the birth of the Buddhic Splendor in them; and such individuals then and there become objects of the personal attention of the Great Teachers who do what they can under karmic law to stimulate a greater growth of the inner light in such individuals, and gently to lead them on towards the moment when they may become self-conscious chelas or disciples preparing for initiation.

— G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 1036

This, then, is the first step in reaching the Mahâtmas — so to live that the inner Light kindled in our hearts and minds will bring us to their attention. We may be sure that they are looking eagerly for disciples. From what has already been said, we know that the salvation of humanity is dependent upon ever more and. More of us becoming pupils in their great Brotherhood of Compassion. If humanity is to be saved from the lower forces of its own nature, then this Brotherhood which we call the Lodge must gradually spread its wings to take in as many of the human race as can make the grade in this great period of evolution, called a Manvantara.

The Theosophical Society, with its inner School of study and development {now closed}, was founded for that purpose. It was intended as a real nucleus of Universal Oneness. This means that its aim was not only to establish a knowledge of our spiritual oneness as a fact in Nature, but a training school in the *practice* of universal oneness. We must not only know that oneness is a fact, we must prove that fact by living it. We as Theosophists should set such an example of solidarity to the world that all will recognize that oneness can be demonstrated as not only abstractly true, but possible to be lived.

One way of more closely approaching the Mahâtmas is to lend our help in the work of demonstrating and establishing universal oneness. Certainly anyone can gradually and slowly work through the ages for the recognition of the Masters. Everyone has their help. If this were not so then the doctrine of oneness would be but an empty claim. All humanity is under their care and protection so far as individual and national karma permits. And in the course of evolution everyone can, if he try hard enough, reach the point in individual development where he may come into direct contact with them.

The eager and dauntless in their search for Truth will not be satisfied to drift with the general current of human evolution.

It cannot be said too often that the Mahâtmas founded the Theosophical Society in order to bring about human solidarity. As they said themselves:

The *Chiefs* want a “Brotherhood of Humanity,” a real Universal Fraternity started; an institution which would make itself known throughout the world and arrest the attention of the highest minds.

— *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 24

And again:

... the chief object of the T.S. is not so much to gratify individual aspirations as to serve our fellow men. — *Ibid* p. 7-8

This Brotherhood is not a mere association of congenially thinking people, like a club, or a church, or a political or social fraternity. One does not become a member of that Brotherhood by signing a printed form or receiving a diploma. To become incorporated in this Brotherhood means that one must have to some extent changed one's nature into the same kind of psychological and spiritual *stuff*, so to speak. Only this can so change a man that he becomes an actual living cell in the tissue of this Brotherhood. It can almost be called a matter of alchemical or spiritual chemistry. You cannot combine into one substance two chemical elements which have no real vibrational affinity. You may bring them together under all sorts of conditions, but you cannot fool Nature. Utterly disparate elements will not combine under any conditions. And a man's mind and soul must be in harmony to some extent with the Nature of the Brotherhood of Compassion before he can, as a member of the T.S., be absorbed into it.

Of course nearly every searcher has already something in his nature of this spiritual affinity with the Mahâtmas. Otherwise he would not be attracted to Theosophy. Does not this very attraction show a spiritually magnetic inner vibration which is in some degree in unison with the nature of the Brotherhood of Compassion? If he then goes on as a constantly more impersonal and selflessly devoted worker he will find the very atoms of his mind and body changing. And this change will still further knit him into its living organism.

One's personality no longer floats like a helpless insect caught in the web of his own and the world's karma. A man gradually disentangles himself from that web by uniting ever more closely his personality with its immortal Higher Self, Âtman-Buddhi-Manas. And then as he changes he becomes instead like a strand of light, an indestructible ray woven into that refulgent tissue of spiritual Light which surrounds and permeates and supports with its love and succor the toiling world of men. For that tissue of Golden Light is the Brotherhood of Compassion.

There is yet one point more that may prove of real human interest. It has not always been the case that the Mahâtmas have needed to live in strict seclusion. Nor will they need to do so in the future. There have always been epochs in the cyclic rise and fall of evolution when the level of spirituality of the Race was high. At such times the Great Teachers can mingle with a certain amount of freedom in the outer world. And there have also been times of extreme crisis or spiritual emergency when they have felt compelled to appear in person to give counsel or aid. Yet such rare appearances have generally been *incognito*, so to say. There are many fascinating historical legends which have grown up around these appearances. W. Q. Judge, on page 31 of *Echoes from the Orient* reports one such incident said to have happened to Napoleon before he began to degrade through personal ambition. And there are many other such instances scattered through the pages of history.

The time is not too far distant when the Mahâtmas will find conditions in the world favorable to their occasional reappearance amongst us.

As a final keynote to this whole subject of Mahâtmas and Chelas we may quote the following from the Mahâtma Morya on page 252 of *The Mahatma Letters*:

How many times had we to repeat, that he who joins the Society with the sole object of coming in contact with us and if not of acquiring at least of assuring himself of the reality of such powers and of our objective existence — was pursuing a mirage? I say again then. It is he alone who has the love of humanity at heart, who is capable of grasping thoroughly the idea of a regenerating practical Brotherhood who is entitled to the possession of our secrets. He alone, such a man — will never misuse his powers, as there will be no fear that he will turn them to selfish ends. A man who places not the good of mankind above his own good is not worthy of becoming our chela — he is not worthy of becoming higher in knowledge than his neighbor.



## The Mystery-Schools

Grace F. Knoche

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In 1999 Grace F. Knoche published the book entitled *The Mystery-Schools*, by Theosophical University Press. It is an updated version of this manual. For more info see: [theosociety.org](http://theosociety.org).

## FOREWORD

A Mystery-School is a school or university of the soul, in other words a school for the study of the *mysteries* of the inner nature of man and of surrounding Nature. By understanding these mysteries, the student perceives his intimate relationship, if not ultimate union, with Divinity, and strives through discipline, traditionally imposed, to become at one with his Inner God.

This Manual is an attempt to present to the student certain fundamental lines of teaching which as a whole will give a picture more or less clear of what a Mystery-School really is. We might say that full and specific knowledge of the Mystery-Schools, where they have been, where now they function, what their chief characteristics, is not given publicly, but the student of Theosophy with the help of the philosophy as given to us by the Theosophical Leaders, can find a generous amount of information scattered here and there in the literatures of the past, and can build up for himself a coherent picture of the pageantry of the Mystery-Schools, a picture which will turn into the reality of experience only as the student becomes prepared through lifetimes of devotion to Truth and the study of the Ancient Wisdom.

That which can be discovered by the sincere student may be likened to our knowledge of the atom of science. Who, for example, has ever seen the atom? What microscope has penetrated the dark secret of its existence? Yet science today knows more about the atom with its electrons, than has been revealed for centuries.

Invisible to both eye and lens, man yet can photograph the flash of the electronic track, its 'way of light'; through self-sacrificing labor the scientist has studied this way of light, until through inference and evidence the structure of the atom and its electrons, its modicum of intelligence, its almost spiritual origin, have been revealed.

Thus with the Mysteries: as we look at the pages of history, and farther into the mist of unrecorded time, we do not see the Schools themselves, but through study and devotion we glimpse the 'flash of their track,' their 'way of light.' From inference and spiritual testimony we can trace the pageantry of the light-bearers as they have passed from age to age, inaugurating the grand religions and philosophies of the Race. Some of these lights shine with immense glory, others with less strength; while still others are but fitful gleams of half-understood truth.

The physicist cannot point to his atom, yet he knows it exists as the basis, the foundation, of all matter; the student of Occultism cannot show you a Mystery-School, yet he knows it exists as the heart or 'atomic center' of the spiritual and intellectual life of the planet.

How then dare assert the non-existence of the Mysteries, of this strong invisible atom of esotericism, when the electrons of luminous



power are to be seen scattered all over the world? If our physical bodies are rooted in invisible ‘fiery lives,’ why should not the spiritual, intellectual, and moral bodies of man likewise have their origin in the spiritual and intellectual ‘fire-mist’ of the planet?

An uninterrupted history of the occult network of the Race is not available for the ordinary student, for such records are the guerdon of the pledged disciple; but the Theosophist with the powerful lens of the Ancient Wisdom can study the ‘way of light’ flashed forth by each light-bearer of the centuries, can recapture the atmosphere of the ancient temples; can discern the purpose of the Schools; their methods of teaching; and last but not least, can learn of the strong discipline imposed upon the candidates seeking initiation into the knowledge of their secret origin and their still more secret destiny.

## FOUNDING OF THE BROTHERHOOD

Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility; the wise who see the truth will communicate it unto thee, and knowing which thou shalt never again fall into error.... There is no purifier in this world to be compared to spiritual knowledge; and he who is perfected in devotion findeth spiritual knowledge springing up spontaneously in himself in the progress of time.

— *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*, ch. iv, śl. 34, 35, 38 {Judge Recension}

Millions upon millions of years ago in the darkness of prehistory, humanity was an infant, a child of Mother Nature, unawakened, dreamlike, wrapped in the cloak of mental somnolence. Recognition of egoity slept; instinctual consciousness alone was active. Like a stream of brilliance across the horizon of time, divine beings, Mānasaputras, Sons of Mind, descended among the sleeping humans, and with the flame of intellectual solar fire lighted the wick of latent mind, and lo! the Thinker stirred. Self-consciousness wakened, and man became a dynamo of intellectual and emotional power: capable of love, of hate, of glory, of defeat. Having knowledge, he acquired power; acquiring power, he chose; choosing, he fashioned the fabric of his future; and the perception of this ran like wine through his veins.

Knowledge, more knowledge, and still greater knowledge was required by the growing {maturing} humans who looked with gratitude to the godlike beings who had come to awaken them. For many millennia they followed their guidance, as children lovingly follow the footsteps of their mother.

As the ages rolled by, a circulation of Divine Instructors succeeded these primeval Mānasaputras and personally supervised the progress of child-humanity: they initiated them in the arts and sciences, taught them to sow their fields with corn and wheat, instructed them in the ways of

clean and moral living — in short, established primeval schools of training and instruction *open and free to all* to learn of things material, intellectual, and spiritual. At this early period there were no Mystery-colleges: the Ancient Wisdom was the ‘common heirloom’ of all humanity, for as yet there had been no abuse of knowledge, and hence no need for schools kept hid and sacred from the world of men. Truth was freely given and as freely accepted in that Golden Age. [See also H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. XIV, pp. 248-249.]

The Race was young; not all men were adept in learning. Some through past experience in former world-periods learned quickly and with ease, choosing intuitively the path of spiritual intellection; others, less awake, were good though wayward in progress; while a third class of humans, drugged with inertia, found learning and aspiring a burden and became laggards in the evolutionary procession. Spiritual death {apathy} to them was preferable to spiritual exertion.

Humanity as a whole progressed rapidly in the acquisition of knowledge and its subsequent use. Some obviously wrought evil — others good. What had been latent spirituality, now became active good and active evil. Suffering and pain became Nature’s most merciful method of restoring the heart to its primeval instinct, that of spiritual choice. As mind developed keener potentialities and the struggle for mental supremacy overcame the spiritual, the gift of intellect became a double-edged weapon: on the one hand, the bringer of spiritual awareness and intellectual ecstasy undreamed of; and on the other, the wielder of a weapon of destruction, of horror, and in the worst cases of actual diabolism {deliberate spiritual wickedness}. As H. P. Blavatsky wrote:

The mysteries of Heaven and Earth, revealed to the Third Race by their celestial teachers in the days of their purity, became a great focus of light, the rays from which became necessarily weakened as they were diffused and shed upon an uncongenial, because too material soil. With the masses they degenerated into Sorcery, taking later on the shape of exoteric religions, of idolatry full of superstitions,... — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 281

Nature is cyclical throughout: at one time she is fertile in spiritual things, at another barren. At this period of the Third Root-Race, on the great continent of Lemuria, {now submerged,} the cycle was against spiritual progress. A great downward sweep was in force, when expansion of physical and material energies were accelerated with the consequent retardation and contraction of spiritual power. The humanities of that period were part of the general evolutionary current, and individuals reacted to the coarsening atmosphere according to their nature. Some resisted its downward influence through awakened spirituality; others, weaker in understanding, vacillated between spirit and matter, between good and evil: at one time listening to the whisper of intuition, at other

times submerged by the rushing waves of the downward current. Still others, in whom the spark of intellectual splendor burned low, plunged headlong downstream, unmindful of the turbulent and muddy waters.

As the downward cycle proceeded, knowledge of spiritual verities and living of the life in accordance therewith, became a dull and useless tool in human hearts and minds of men.

Such folly was inevitable in the course of cosmic events, and all things were provided for. Just as there are many types of men — some spiritual, others material, some highly intelligent, others slow of thought — so are there various grades of beings throughout the Universe, ranging from the Mineral, through the Vegetable, Animal, and Human Kingdoms, and beyond to the Head and Hierarchy of our Earth. During these first millennia the Occult Head and Guardian of the Earth had been watching, guiding, stimulating wherever possible the individual fires of active spirituality. Gradually, as knowledge of divine things became abused by those strong in will but weak in morality, the Truth was {increasingly} veiled. The Planetary Watcher now felt the need of selecting a band of co-workers to act as bodyguard and protector of the Ancient Wisdom. Alone a handful of spiritually illumined human beings, in whom the divine fervor burned bright, acknowledged wholehearted allegiance to their Planetary Teacher — the Spiritual Hierarchy of Humanity. Through the centuries strong-hearted men had been watched over and guided, strengthened, and tested in innumerable ways, and those who passed the fateful test of self-knowledge and self-sacrifice were gathered together to form the first association or ‘college’ of spiritual men {spiritual-divine human beings} — the Great Brotherhood. As described by G. de Purucker:

Then was formed or established or set in operation the gathering together of the very highest representatives, spiritually and intellectually speaking, that the human race as yet had given manifestation to;...

... the Silent Watcher of the Globe, through the spiritual-magnetic attraction of like to like, was enabled to attract to the Path of Light, even from the earliest times of the Third Root-Race, certain unusual human individuals, early forerunners of the general Manasaputric ‘descent,’ and thus to form with these individuals a Focus of Spiritual and Intellectual Light on Earth, this fact signifying not so much an association or society or brotherhood as a unity of human spiritual and intellectual Flames, so to speak, which then represented on Earth the heart of the Hierarchy of Compassion....

Now it was just this original focus of Living Flames, which never degenerated nor lost its high status of the mystic center on Earth through which poured the supernal glory of the Hierarchy of Compassion, today represented by the Great Brotherhood of the Mahātmās,... Thus it is that the Great Brotherhood traces an uninterrupted ancestry back to the original focus of Light of the Third Root-Race.

— *The Esoteric Tradition*, pp. 1048-1049 fn

There in the fastnesses of Tibet, {at Śambhala,} the Elder Brothers of the Race remain “the elect custodians of the Mysteries revealed to humanity by the divine Teachers... and tradition whispers, what the secret teachings affirm, namely, that these Elect were the germ of a Hierarchy *which never died since that period*” [*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 281] — *i.e.*, since the foundation and establishment of the Great Brotherhood some 12 million years ago. From this center for millions of years have been streaming in continuous procession rays of light and strength into the world at large and, more specifically, into the hearts of those whose lives are dedicated to the service of truth. From this secret retreat, have gone forth Messengers, Masters of Wisdom, to {inspire or} found the grand religions of the past, and they will continue to send forth their envoys as long as humanity requires their care.

## THE FIRST MYSTERY-SCHOOLS

Time marched on, and the Race waxed lusty in power. As Lemuria gave birth to Atlantis, the Third Root-Race to the Fourth, the fiercest battle was waged: the war between the Lords of Light and Truth and the Lords of darkness and ignorance.

Moral strength is not guaranteed by awakening intellect, nor by the possession of psychic and physical power. The Atlanteans at their acme of development were a civilization of vigorous intellect motivated by psycho-physical force, unreined, alas, by moral strength. Magic, which had been a natural gift of the Lemurians, in the hands of these giants became “matter-magic, psychical magic,” [*The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 1046.] and the Race plunged into an orgy of sorcery, the effects of which we are experiencing even today in a tragedy of hate and madness.

Not all the Atlanteans, however, were overpowered by their own strength; not by any means. Nevertheless, a great portion of them became sorcerers of evil and perished in their tracks. Others, in whom the light of spirituality was “seen as through a glass darkly,” became unhappy victims of the nefarious waves of unmoral power that swept over the continental system of Atlantis; in their confusion they wandered hither and yon, following false gods, unworthy guidance. A few — probably several millions, but few in proportion to the enormous population of the Atlantean continents — remained strong and clean throughout, morally illumined through contact with spirit. These became the chosen disciples of the Brotherhood, the stimulators of virtue and discipline in the land.

In the earlier millennia there had been no call for Mysteries, Truth having been the common property of humanity. With the increase of egoity,

selfishness was born out of desires and passions hitherto unknown, and but too often knowledge and power were abused, until finally it became necessary to limit the number of those *who knew*. Thus arose Initiation.

— “The Origin of the Mysteries,” Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, Vol. XIV, p. 249

To insure the safety of the Race, something had to be done. Civilization had come to such a pass that the only safeguard was to establish a spiritual center in each national unit which would act as a bodyguard, as it were, for the truths imparted therein, as well as a secret training center where men could be disciplined and instructed, and if found worthy, could learn Truth firsthand — *i.e.*, through initiation.

The Brotherhood, therefore, which had already established invisible lines of esoteric instruction even in late Lemurian times, wherein men sensitive enough to such could be trained and purified and made strong for the reception of Truth and the safeguarding thereof, now launched a systematic campaign. Chelas, disciples, messengers, went forth and inaugurated esoteric colleges, universities of the soul, special training centers, all for the select purpose of gathering into them the choicest men for discipline and instruction in the Mysteries of Nature.

Thus were established some four or five million years ago, when Atlantis was threatening to destroy itself through spiritual iniquity, the first Mystery-Schools. From these early centers sprang other Mystery-Schools in all parts of the Atlantean world, in every nation thereof. By the time the Atlanteans were in their heyday of *material* splendor, these Schools were working their hardest to stem the increasing tide of evil sorcery. Many — millions in fact — were saved through the establishment of the Mysteries.

The more superior of the Race intuitively sought training there, while the great bulk of humanity, though unable to partake in the sacred rites of Initiation on account of insufficient interior development, nevertheless were helped by the indirect radiation of spiritual force.

There were those, however, who had tasted of evil and found it to their liking, and whose hardening hearts led them to receive instruction in evil discipline. Simultaneously, therefore, with the establishment of spiritual centers of Light and Truth, there were schools of evil founded, whose pledged votaries became in time the left-hand Adepts. The Lords of Light and Truth united in a calm invincible force to

resist the terrible and ever-growing iniquities of the left-hand Adepts, the Atlanteans. This led to the foundation of still more Secret Schools, temples of learning, and of Mysteries inaccessible to all except after the most terrible trials and probations....

... The Mysteries were imparted to the elect of that Race when the average Atlantean had begun to fall too deeply into sin to be trusted with the secrets of Nature. — *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, pp, 251, 246

There now occurred the most dramatic moment — a moment millions of years long — in the whole history of this Round: the turning point of the cycle from matter to spirit. At the middle of the Fourth Root-Race in this Fourth Round the Atlanteans saw Spirit and Matter equilibrated: *Which way would the scales turn?* Towards light and spirit, and the eventual liberation of humanity? Towards darkness and matter, and the enslavement of humanity? A great tremor shook the earth: would innate spirituality prove stronger than the weight of acquired materiality? Would the Race {humanity} ascend the Luminous Arc or fall headlong into the pit of matter on the descending Shadowy Arc? Of the billions of human beings whose hearts must be weighed against the feather of spirit, each one had to pass the fateful test alone: failure, and the rush downwards into still greater materiality, unable to rise with spirit during the present great period of manvantara; Success, and the rise upwards in the general current of evolutionary progress until {self-conscious} oneness with Divinity may again be reclaimed.

The moment of a million years or so passed. Fortunately for the Race, due in large part to the efforts of the Mystery-Schools, the majority of men retained sufficient awareness of divinity to balance the scales in their favor. An unconscious choice for millions, but nevertheless a choice made by the better part of their natures — by what slender majority perhaps we shall never know.

## THE RAISON D'ÊTRE OF THE MYSTERIES

Cataclysm after cataclysm occurred, and the leaden slag of the Fourth Race sank to its doom, deluged by the waters of heaven and Earth as they flooded the lands according to karmic law. Along with the sinking of Atlantis, which extended over several million years, new lands had been rising in other parts of the globe, and these became peopled as time went by with certain of the Atlanteans who settled there in two or three great migratory waves. [See G. de Purucker, *Studies in Occult Philosophy*, pp. 16-25.]

Thus the Fourth Root-Race gave birth to the Fifth whose cradleland was the Desert of Shamo or Gobi and surrounding tablelands — a country whose present sandy wastes give no hint of lands once rich with verdure, where forests and lakes witnessed a succession of civilizations as grand as any the world has ever known. Here for many million years, while Atlantis was involved in her death struggle, seeds of the new Race were being sown in virgin soil.

Nature is beneficent in her workings. While the evil consequences of her human children must be met and faced by them through the working of karma and cyclic reïmbodiment, yet at each new racial birth she casts her seed in virgin territory, so that the child-Race may be conceived in

purity and nurtured in spirituality. Peopled thus with Egos who had remained clean and strong through the tests of Atlantean life, and helped again by the re-entrance into her life of semi-divine beings, the new Race became a focus of spiritual light undimmed by the iniquity of Atlantis.

As one of the Brother, the Mahâtma K.H. wrote:

the *highest* Planetary Spirits, those, who can no longer err... appear on Earth but at the origin of every *new* human kind; at the junction of, and close of the two ends of the great cycle. And, they remain with man no longer than the time required for the eternal truths they teach to impress themselves so forcibly upon the plastic minds of the new races as to warrant them from being lost or entirely forgotten in ages hereafter, by the forthcoming generations. The mission of the planetary Spirit is but to strike the KEY NOTE OF TRUTH. — *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter IX, pp. 40-1

Simultaneously with the establishment of the Mystery-Schools in Atlantis some four or five million years ago, the Fifth or Âryan Race was slowly coming into being, immensely aided by Egos of spiritual refinement attracted thereto by ties of divine kinship. Gradually the soil was prepared and, the work of striking the “Keynote of Truth” having been accomplished, the demigods retired to their superior spheres. One million years ago the new Race was ushered into adult existence impressed with the knowledge of spiritual things {eternal truths.}.

As the centuries passed and civilization succeeded civilization, the love of Truth once again became dimmed in the hearts of men, and the ancient precepts fell into disuse.

The Mysteries were withdrawn even more, so that the knowledge once universal became the prized guerdon bestowed by the great Brotherhood upon that choice minority whose lives were dedicated to Truth and Truth alone, unstained by weakness or selfish ambition.

With enduring consistency the ongoing *raison d’être* of the Mysteries has remained threefold in character:

(1) the persistent spiritualization of the thought-life of humanity so that knowledge of things spiritual may penetrate into the heart, and life in time may become a benediction of peace instead of a tragedy of conflict;

(2) seeding grounds of adepts, nurseries for future recruits, who through trial and initiation may become fit to receive the supreme dignity of membership in the great Brotherhood; and

(3) the preservation of Truth for future Races unsullied by human hand; and the polishing of the knowledge of truth through investigation by trained seers of the secrets of universal workings {Nature} in worlds visible and invisible.

The first of these aims is fulfilled by the periodic appearance of World-Teachers, the founders {inspirers} of religious and philosophical schools: Messengers from the Lodge who come forth at cyclic periods to

strike anew the Keynote of Truth. Hence every great religion, every noble philosophy, every flash of scientific discovery, was born from the Sanctuary, to become a *new* religion, a *new* philosophy, a *new* science: fresh and new for the age and the people, but ancient beyond time because nurtured in the womb of esoteric antiquity.

All that is good, noble, and grand in human nature, every divine faculty and aspiration, were cultured by the Priest-Philosophers who sought to develop them in their Initiates. Their code of ethics, based on altruism, has become universal. — “The Origin of the Mysteries,” Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, Vol. XIV, p. 256

The second of these aims is ages-long in accomplishment and deeply occult: to awaken the sleeping fire of divinity in the human soul, and through the kindling of that flame burn the dross of imperfection, sloth, and unworthy desire from the heart. One of the impelling aims of such discipline is to restore to humanity *inner* sight, to free him “from every danger of being enslaved whether by a man or an idea.” [H. P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, Vol. XIV, p. 251; see also *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, pp. 40-1.]

The disciple must become *vajradhara* (“diamond-bearer”), a title used for Bodhisattva Gautama, whose many-faceted heart was ever merciful in reflecting the sorrow of men, but whose spiritual essence was adamant like a diamond, unyielding as the core thereof, to the subtle disguise of Mâyâ (Illusion).

The third of these aims is made possible through the accomplishment of the second: the selection of new recruits into the Brotherhood, so that (a) Truth may be preserved untarnished by the folly of man {human selfishness}; and (b) that investigation into the arcana of Nature may go on unhindered, and the results of such occult examination by generations of trained seers be checked and rechecked, and recorded only then as occult fact for the benefit of humanity.

As far as the labor of the Masters concerns the Human Race in especial, the following written by one of their number in 1881, the Mahâtma K.H., speaks for itself:

If, for generations we have “shut out the world from the Knowledge of our Knowledge,” it is on account of its absolute unfitness; and if, notwithstanding proofs given, it still refuses yielding to evidence, then will we at the End of this cycle retire into solitude and our kingdom of silence once more.... We have offered to exhume the primeval strata of man’s being, his basic nature, and lay bare the wonderful complications of his inner Self — something never to be achieved by physiology or even psychology in its ultimate expression — and demonstrate it scientifically. It matters not to them, if the excavations be so deep, the rocks so rough and sharp, that in diving into that, to them, fathomless ocean, most of us perish in the



dangerous exploration; for it is we who were the divers and the pioneers and the men of science have but to reap where we have sown. It is our mission to plunge and bring the pearls of Truth to the surface; theirs — to clean and set them into scientific jewels. And, if they refuse to touch the ill-shapen, oyster-shell, insisting that there is, nor *cannot* be any precious pearl inside it, then shall we once more wash our hands of any responsibility before human-kind. — *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, pp. 50-1

Unthanked, unknown, unconsidered, the Masters go on in their compassionate work for humanity's enlightenment, a work that has never ceased in its outpouring of spiritual vitality for 12 million years, to continue another such period if necessity demands, until such time as humanity stirs from its lethargy and once again wills to unite its heart with truth. The Mahâtma K.H. continues:

For countless generations hath the adept builded a fane of imperishable rocks, a giant's Tower of INFINITE THOUGHT, wherein the Titan dwelt, and will yet, if need be, dwell alone, emerging from it but at the end of every cycle, to invite the elect of humanity to co-operate with him and help in his turn enlighten superstitious man. And we will go on in that periodical work of ours; we will not allow ourselves to be baffled in our philanthropic attempts until that day when the foundations of a new continent of thought are so firmly built that no amount of opposition and ignorant malice guided by the Brethren of the Shadow will be found to prevail. — *Ibid.*, p. 51

## THE PATTERN OF ESOTERICISM

To the spiritual eagle eye of the seer and the prophet of every race, Ariadne's thread stretches beyond that "historic period" without break or flaw, surely and steadily, into the very night of time; and the hand which holds it is too mighty to drop it, or even let it break.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 67

This thread of esotericism stretches further still into the dawn-time of the {human} Race, where "Truth, high-seated upon its rock of adamant, is alone eternal and supreme." [*Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, p. v] Where is this Truth, this Loom of esoteric history, and what the pattern of its fabric? In the recesses of Tibet, in the home of the Brotherhood, in Śambhala, stands this Loom, whose warp is the ancient threads of initiation held in occult tension by the sacrifice of Adepts, and whose weft or woof is woven century by century as each Nation {national unit} spins the luminous threads of esotericism in its Mystery-Schools.

Profane history reveals scarcely anything of consecutive value, except in so far as the relics of this mystic pageantry all point to an identic *motif*. To "have a consecutive and full history of our race from its incipient stage down to the present time," [*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, pp. 437-438.]

archaic records must needs be sought. By such alone can one trace even in dim outline the ancient pattern. Access to these, however, is the privilege of the Adept alone, for such “knowledge is only for the *highest* Initiates, who do not take their students into their confidence.” [*Ibid.*, p. 438.] Nevertheless, the student of Theosophy has received a priceless gift: the benefit of evidence gathered by those who have penetrated the veils of the *adytum* and have had the compassion to return and share with us a guarded portion of their vision. Study of their findings may at first reveal to the uninitiate only a broken pattern, but if faithfully pursued such study will point with unmistakable clarity to one universal source of Truth.

From Central Asia, whose lands comprised a vast territory, including the Desert of Gobi or Shamo, the mountains of Tien Shan and Kuen Lun, the regions of Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Persia, and Turkestan, went forth bands of emigrants, in large part glowing with determination to conquer, to subdue, and many were the battles waged in those primeval days. As efficient cause thereof, yet unrecognized as such by the multitudes, was the urge of the Brotherhood aided by Karma; the incessant need to carry the light of the Mysteries into other lands, to spread the Ancient Wisdom far and wide on the surface of the Earth. As G. de Purucker writes:

Not one people alone inhabited and built up these civilizations of Central Asia. They were recurrent waves of our present Fifth Root-Race.... each one of such civilizations being in its turn a cradle out of which grew children-colonies sent forth to carry light and initiation to what were then barbarous and uncultivated parts of the world, such as what is now Europe, what is now China, what is now Siberia, what is now India.

— *Studies in Occult Philosophy*, pp. 23, 22

To Bharata-varsha or India went forth the Âryas or *worthy ones* — India — marched a band of emigrants who founded a civilization and a culture as yet unrivaled in esoteric history, whose ramifications of spiritual influence extended to Egypt, Asia Minor, and Europe. Another band moved westward to Egypt, the “gift of the Nile” as Herodotus called her, and mixing with the aboriginal stock peopled her valleys. From this union sprang a princely civilization, the pride and glory of which remains after thousands of centuries; the more so as the influence of its Âryan-Egyptian Mysteries spread far and wide, as conquering nation after conquering nation became captive to the interior grandeur of Egypt. Persia, Babylonia, Judea and Crete, Greece and Rome, all trace their spiritual inspiration to the Egyptian and early Âryan cultures.

Furthermore, so immense in esoteric power were these primeval civilizations, that H.P.B. tells us:

there are records which show Egyptian priests — Initiates — journeying in a North-Westerly direction, *by land, via* what became later the Straits of

Gibraltar; turning North and travelling through the future Phoenician settlements of Southern Gaul; then still further North, until reaching Carnac (Morbihan) they turned to the West again and arrived, *still travelling by land*, on the North-Western promontory of the New Continent [the British Isles].

What was the object of their long journey? And how far back must we place the date of such visits? The archaic records show the Initiates of the Second Sub-race of the Âryan family moving from one land to the other for the purpose of supervising the building of *menhirs* and dolmens, of colossal Zodiacs in stone, and places of sepulcher to serve as receptacles for the ashes of generations to come. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 750

What was the mainspring of these civilizations but the Mystery-teachings? Teachings which penetrated into the very thought-life of nations, perhaps unknown of source, unrecognized by the multitudes as esoteric?, but actually constituting the inspiration of the artist in his search for divinity, the intuition of the poet in his yearning for truth, and the resounding harmony of the musician as he sought the ‘music of the spheres.’ It is no idle phrase to say that all things of spiritual, intellectual, and artistic value were born root and seed from the Sanctuary.

What are the stone and papyrus of Egypt but witness to knowledge of ancient truths long forgotten by man? The scenes of the ‘Weighing of the Heart’ against the Feather of Truth in the papyri of *Pert Em Hru* — the “Coming forth into Day,” commonly known as the *Book of the Dead* — portray in symbol and allegory what actually took place in the secret chambers of the Initiation-Pyramids, whose living testimonial is the Great Pyramid of Khufu or Cheops, which H. P. Blavatsky hints more than once may go back at least 75,000 years B.C., if not more. [See *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, pp. 432, 750.]

What of the Druids and their ancient ceremonies under oak and myrtle, with their stone monuments so oriented that the beams of the rising Sun touched the brow of the candidate as he rose from his couch of initiation “clothed with the Sun,” literally flaming with solar glory? Whence the training of their candidates in three degrees, a training which demanded absolute moral purity, spiritual vigor, and profound understanding of Truth?

What about Persia and her long line of Zoroasters, within whose mystic seven-chambered centers truths of great intellectual and spiritual value were taught to neophytes who underwent the traditional discipline of the Mysteries? Were the Magi born from any other source than the archaic mother of Occultism? What of the Orphic Mysteries, whose austere discipline and esoteric content perhaps more greatly the stamina of Greek culture than even the Eleusinian Mysteries, so popular for centuries? Did not Orpheus travel to India and receive initiation into her *âsramas* (or mystery-temples?) Did not Pythagoras and Plato likewise

travel India-wards and bring back to their disciples the identic pattern of esotericism?

Thus one might go on, with the Norse and Germanic mysticism, the Hindû and Chinese philosophy, the Greek and Roman ceremonial — all weavers of one pattern in one universal *motif* — a *motif* applicable to all times, to all nations, because capable of infinite variations without injury to the fundamental theme.

To describe one Mystery-School therefore is to describe them all — identic not in detail national interpretation, but in fundamental discipline.

What therefore is the test of Truth? *Its universality {is one}*: has it been taught by all those who have been “clothed with the Central Sun” of Initiation? Did Buddha Gautama instruct his disciples in the selfsame doctrine that Christ Jesus did? Did Śankarâchârya teach the same esotericism that Pythagoras and Empedocles did? Were Zoroaster and Tsong-kha-pa born in their Adephood from the same womb of the initiation-chamber as Apollonius of Tyana, Orpheus, or Lao-Tzu? Have Persia and Greece, China and ancient America, Iceland, Wales and Babylonia, all received a message which, stripped of its outer characteristics of national swabhâva {vestments?}, is one in esoteric content? Inevitably so, for such patterns have been woven on one loom — the ageless Loom of TRUTH.

In the words of G. de Purucker, these Mystery-Schools are not a unique system but, based on the spiritual structure of the Universe, they were

*established from the same motives of Compassion that presided over the acts of the Great Actors of the Primal Drama, the opening acts of our Manvantara. They copied, as it were in miniature, what took place in those primordial times, and what took place in actual life in the Hierarchy of Compassion on our earth, or that section, rather, of the Hierarchy of Compassion which we call the Great White Lodge. — G. de Purucker, Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy, p. 275*

One primeval Humanity, many children-colonies; one Mystery-teaching, many Mystery-Schools; one archaic pattern, many variations of color and texture as each nation contributes the woof of its national Mysteries. Three are the variants of *motif* as seen from the present:

(1) the original unveiling of Truth to infant humanity by Divine Instructors working in consonance with the Spiritual Planetary of our Earth who, through the early millennia, successfully gathered together the choice few into a center of esoteric light — the Great Brotherhood;

(2) the secondary unveiling springing directly as the fruit of the first: the spiritualizing influences uninterruptedly sent forth by the Lodge {Brotherhood}, and more specifically energized at cyclic intervals by their disciples, the Great World Teachers; and

(3) the third unveiling born as the progeny of (1) and (2): the penetration of Truth into human life through the Mystery-Schools, the centers of esoteric discipline, in whose inner chambers initiation of the *Elect* alone takes place, but in whose outer courts the world-at-large may seek entrance to learn fundamental verities so that *Life* may be ennobled and *death* accepted as naturally as is sleep.

Thus is the pattern of esotericism woven century by century on the loom of Truth.

## DUAL CHARACTER OF THE MYSTERIES

The whole essence of truth *cannot be transmitted from mouth to ear*,... [nor] can any pen describe it, not even that of the recording Angel, unless man finds the answer in the sanctuary of his own heart, in the innermost depths of his divine intuitions. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 516

How are those *innermost depths* to be sounded, so that knowledge of reality may be won? Through training, through discipline, through self-born wisdom. Such training and soul-discipline is the distinguishing mark of the Mystery-colleges, which since their inauguration have been divided into two parts: the *exoteric* form commonly known as the Lesser Mysteries, open to all sincere and honorable candidates for deeper learning; and the *esoteric* form, or the Greater Mysteries, whose doors open but to the few, and whose initiation into adeptship is the reward of those whose interior perfection enables them to attempt the solar rite. (See chs. viii and ix, for more complete data about this last).

Universal testimony of stone and papyrus, symbol and allegory, cave and crypt, all tell self-same story: the twofold trial of neophytes. Jesus the Avatâra spoke to the multitudes in parable, but “when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples” (Mark iv, 34).

The Essenes had their *greater* and their *minor* Mysteries, in the former of which Jesus of Nazareth is believed to have been initiated.

With proud fidelity the Chinese Buddhists hold to a well-loved tradition that Buddha Gautama had two doctrines: one for the people and his lay-disciples; the other for his Arhats. His invariable principle was

to refuse no one admission into the ranks of candidates for Arhatship, but never to divulge the final mysteries except to those who had proved themselves, during long years of probation, to be worthy of Initiation.

— H. P. Blavatsky, “The Doctrine of Avatâras,” *Collected Writings*, Vol. XIV, p. 370

Intensity of vigor marks the Hebrew Initiates in their shrouding of inner teaching. To the multitude they taught the doctrine of the Qabbâlâh

{the Torah, or *Law*}, but to the few they taught its unwritten interpretation thereof, the inner wisdom {Secret Wisdom, or *hokhmah nistorah*},

“in darkness, in a deserted place, and after many and terrific trials”... Delivered *only as a mystery*, it was communicated to the candidate orally, “*face to face and mouth to ear.*” — *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, p. 349

The Persian and Chaldean Magi also were of two castes:

the initiated and those who were allowed to officiate in the popular rites only.  
— *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 306 fn {and *The Kabbalah* by Christian D. Ginsburg, p. 86}.

Eleusis and Samothrace are limned in exquisite silhouette against the blue-black sky of history. Classical scholars tell us that the Lesser Mysteries were conducted in the springtime at Agria near Athens, while the Greater Mysteries were celebrated in the autumn at Eleusis. In the Lesser Mysteries the candidates, who were admitted into the preliminary degrees (*neophytes*), {were called *mystai* (the closed of eye and mouth)} and were allowed to witness the dramatic portrayal of the soul's descent into Hades. In the Greater Mysteries of the Eleusinian rites, the {the *mystai* became *epoptai* (the clear-seeing),} became the *perfect* ones — those who participated in the “mysteries of the Divine Elysium {Elysion}” — *i.e.*, communion with the Divine.

This with the Hindû Arhat, the Scandinavian Skald {Initiate}, and the Welsh Bard: all guarded the citadel {soul} of esotericism with the sanctity of their lives and the discipline of their sacred Schools.

Belonging to every temple there were attached the “hierophants” of the *inner* sanctuary, and the secular clergy who were not even instructed in the Mysteries. — *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, p. 306 fn

Further, Dr. de Purucker tells us that in all ancient countries “every *great* temple had its private or secret Mystery-School which was unknown to the multitude or partially known,” and which was attached thereto as a secret body. He further warns us that a Mystery-School is not necessarily a school of men situated at some specific place, with definite and fixed locality throughout time, and with physical conditions of environment always alike. Wherever the need is great, work must be done; and the “mistake of all scholars and mystics is to put too much emphasis upon *places* as Mystery-Schools.” [*Studies in Occult Philosophy*, pp. 635, 634.]

What about the temples of Greece and Rome, of Syria and Judea; the cave-temples of Elephanta and Karli in India; the dagobas of Buddhist countries; the pyramids of Egypt and Peru, Mexico and Yucatan? What of Stonehenge in England; Carnac in Brittany; Sippara in Assyria; Babylon,

Borsippa and Erech in Babylonia; Ecbatana in Media; Bibracte in Gaul; and last but not least, Iona in Scotland whose secret learning was as a jewel of wisdom set in the heart of the northern land? Where are they now? They are but names, relics, remnants of forgotten splendor — or so it would appear.

Hence a Mystery-School is not dependent solely on location; rather it is an association or brotherhood of trained men, of spiritually disciplined men bound by one common purpose, service to humanity, a service intelligently and compassionately rendered because born of love and wisdom.

It is an occult fact, nevertheless, that certain centers upon the surface of the Earth are more favorable to success in spiritual things than others. Why, for instance, were these ancient seats of the Mysteries almost invariably in rock-temple or subterranean cave, in forest or mountain pass, in pyramid chamber or temple-crypt? Because the currents of the Astral Light become quieter, more peaceful, cleaner, the farther removed from the madding crowd. Rarely will one find a seat of esoteric training near a great metropolis, for such are

swirling whirlpools... ganglia, nerve-centers, in the lower regions of the Astral Light" — *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 1026

Hence the locations of the Greater Mysteries were usually carefully chosen and

were those which paid no attention to buildings of any kind, mainly for the reason that buildings would at once attract attention and draw public notice, which is the very thing that these more secret, more esoteric Schools tried to avoid. Thus sometimes, when the temples were mere seats of exoteric ritual, the Mystery-Schools were held apart in secret, conducting their gatherings, meetings, initiations, initiatory rites, usually in caves carefully prepared and hid from common knowledge, occasionally even under the open sky as the Druids did among the oaks in their semi-primeval forests in Britain and in Brittany; and even in a few cases having no permanent or set location; but the Initiates receiving word where to meet from time to time, and to carry on their initiatory functions. — *Studies in Occult Philosophy*, p. 635

It is the places of quiet, of peace, of strong silence, where the Masters find themselves drawn, and where the secret or Greater Mysteries can most effectively function. There in the recesses of their initiation chambers the forces and currents are those of the higher Astral Light, the Âkâśa, the tenuous substance which responds to the higher currents of spiritual and intellectual impression. In this way does the Lodge-force transmit its strength and spiritual vitality to the initiation halls, and the candidate

whose seven-rayed soul is developed {attuned} may receive the divine imprint.

## DEGREES OF INITIATION

Every country has its own methods of preserving the knowledge and tradition of the Mysteries. At times, the degrees are variously reckoned, sometimes four, five, seven, and even ten; but whatever the divisions, during the days of their purity they all accomplished the one divine purpose of consummating the spiritual marriage of the Higher Self with the awakened human soul, from which union springs the Seer, the Adept, the Master of Life. Through the ravages of time and priestcraft, and the tangle of intrigue and ignorance in which exoteric rites have been clothed, one perceives the well-worn tradition.

In Asia Minor, Theon of Smyrna writes of five degrees in the initiatory cycle: (1) “the preliminary purification,” because taking part in the Mysteries “must not be indiscriminately given to all who desire it”; (2) “the tradition of sacred things” which constitutes the “initiation proper”; (3) the “epoptic revelation,” where the candidate may experience direct intuition of truth; (4) “the binding of the head and placement of the crown” — a clear reference to the mystical authority received with the crown of initiation to pass on the sacred tradition to others; and, finally, (5) “friendship and interior communion” with divinity — this was considered the highest and most solemn mystery of all, the complete assimilation of the enlightened mind with the divine self. [See Theon of Smyrna, *Mathematics Useful for Understanding Plato*, pp. 8-9; also *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, pp. xiv-xv, Vol. II, p. 101.]

In Persia during the time of Mithraism, when the Sun god was honored above earthly things, seven were the degrees, the candidate receiving a name in accordance with the stage of interior growth. According to the Graeco-Latin names that have come down to us, the first-degree neophyte was called *Corax* or Raven — the dark bird, one in whom the light of wisdom had not begun to awaken in great measure. It signified likewise a servant: he who must serve and give of his heart completely before receiving admission into the second degree, which was termed *Cryphius*, or Occult, one definitely accepted as a disciple of esoteric Occultism. The third was *Miles*, or Soldier, signifying one who had received sufficient training and purification to become a Worker for good. The fourth was called *Leo*, or Lion, as the lion is an emblem of solar power, the reference is to the entrance of the candidate upon the Fourth Initiation wherein begins the conscious solarizing of the nature through instruction and specialized training. The fifth degree was called *Perses*, or Persian, signifying to the Persians of the time one who was becoming spiritually Human — Mânasaputrized, {mind-born} so to say. The sixth, *Helio-*



*dromus*, or Messenger or Runner of Helios, the Sun, is a distinctly occult reference to Mercury or Budha, as Messenger between the Sun in the Cosmos and the Sun in man: the bloom of Buddhi. The final and seventh was called *Pater*, or Father, having in mind “the state of a *Full Initiate* or *Masterhood*.” [See *The Ancient Mysteries, A Sourcebook*, Marvin W. Meyer, editor, pp. 200-1; also *Esoteric Tradition*, p. 864.]

The Hindûs likewise had various names for their neophytes {disciples} as they passed from one degree to another. In one school the candidates received the names of the ten Avatâras of Vishnu. The first-degree neophyte was termed *Matsya*, or Fish: one yet low in the scale of occult mastery. The second-degree was *Kûrma*, or Tortoise: one step higher in evolutionary development. The third-degree was called *Varaha*, or Boar, a further advance in individualization, while the fourth-degree was termed *Nara-simha*, or Man-lion. This fourth stage marks the turning point, as it were, between the preliminary degrees of the Lesser Mysteries and the occultly important {more advanced} degrees of the Greater Mysteries. This title of *Man-lion* is significant as pointing to the choice demanded of the neophyte between dominance of ‘animal soul’ qualities and the supremacy henceforth of the truly ‘human attributes.’ Success in this degree insured the entrance into the fifth-degree which was called *Vâmana*, or Dwarf, in which the neophyte {candidate} assumed the robes of occult Humanhood, though such humanhood was as yet infantile compared to full Mastery. *Parasu-Râma*, or Râma with an axe, was the name of the sixth-degree neophyte, suggesting one capable of hewing his way with equanimity through the worlds of spirit and matter. In the seventh-degree the chela becomes fully Humanized, receiving the name of *Râma*, hero of the *Râmâyana*, an important epic of Hindûstân.

The last three degrees, the eighth, ninth, and tenth, are called respectively: *Krishna*, the Avatâra whose death ushered in the Kali Yuga some 5,000 years ago; *Buddha*, whose renunciation of Nirvâna brought light and peace to a sorrowing world; and the final and tenth, *Kalkin* or *Kalkî*, the “white-horse” Avatâra who is yet to come. {As noted in the *Vishnu Purana* (Bk. IV, ch. xxiv), he is destined to appear at the end of the Kali Yuga or Iron Age, seated on a white horse, with a drawn sword blazing like a comet, for the final destruction of the wicked, the renovation of creation, and the restoration of piety {purity}. [See Dowson’s *Hindû Classical Dictionary*, p. 38.] In ancient symbology the horse symbolized the Sun, hence the tenth Avatâra will come riding the steed of solar glory to usher in the New Age clothed with the Sun of Spiritual Illumination.

Seven was the number of degrees usually contained in the Mysteries, to which the chela was admitted; in the Hindû system of ascribing the names of the ten Avatâras to the neophytes, the sevenfold system would seem to hold good, for the last three degrees above referred to actually belong to initiations of so lofty a character that the human mind has

difficulty in grasping their esoteric import. In his *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, Dr. de Purucker hints of three higher degrees than the seventh, but so exquisite are these in spiritual refinement that it is for Masters alone, and for the highest and most spiritualized of these advanced beings, to comprehend and hence to undertake these Divine Initiations. Rare indeed are those who become Avatâra-like, Christ-like; rarer still, “as rare as are the flowers of the Udumbara-tree” are the Buddhas. As for the tenth and last — such can leave unmarred by description.

## THE LESSER MYSTERIES

The Lesser Mysteries are a preparation of the neophyte, through various degrees of purification and discipline combined with training in intellectual and spiritual perception, for initiation in the Greater Mysteries. Seven were the degrees usually reckoned, the first three comprising the Lesser Mysteries. The fourth degree is the turning or deciding point: in this degree the discipline and training undergone in the preliminary stages are put to the test of *actual experience* in self-identification. If the candidate passes this fourth trial successfully, then he enters upon the sterner {more stringent} discipline, the far greater purification, and the more intimate relationship between teacher and chela. Henceforth, he is a pledged disciple, his will is set firmly to do or die, and thus to pass successfully the fifth, sixth, and seventh degrees which comprise the Greater Mysteries.

The trials of the Lesser Mysteries are comparatively simple in the first degree; but as the disciple proves his earnestness and ability to stand the probationary tests, more rigorous becomes the training more severe the demands upon his nature, more heavily the hand of karma deals with error.

Two particular features mark the Minor Mysteries: (a) instruction in the deeper sciences of the Cosmos; and (b) dramatic presentations of that which the neophyte must *experience in actual fact*, and endure without outside help, in the Greater Mysteries. In the Eleusinian Mysteries, for example, the neophyte himself took the main part in the sacred drama, which acted as a spiritual aid in stimulating the yearning for actual experience in these higher things; as well as familiarizing him with the routes, so to say, of the initiation-chamber. To take the part as an actor in a drama is quite a different thing from suffering actual experience, yet such participation acted as preliminary fortification to the neophyte when the time actually came for the Greater Initiations.

The Lesser Mysteries have been known and recognized by the keenest minds of all ages, as institutions of higher learning wherein candidates were allowed to take the first initiation only after they had proved themselves worthy and fit to pass higher.

From the Mystery-Schools, knowledge of Truth permeates the mental strata of surrounding country, as initiates in the preliminary degrees pass out again into the world of men. In Greece and Rome, it might be said that nearly all the great men of historic note were initiates of one or more degrees of the Lesser Mysteries. This does not, however, refer to {murderers or} conquerors by the sword, for almost universally these were not initiates of the Mysteries, though in the declining days of the Roman Empire many applicants of indifferent caliber who underwent the preliminary rites in a more or less perfunctory fashion.

In fact, the Mysteries in olden times were regarded so highly that preparation for entrance was deemed the most royal gift a father could bequeath to his children. At the age of seven years, young children were received and disciplined in heart and mind, so that on reaching adulthood they either took their place in the world and exerted an spiritual {edifying} influence among the people; or if they were especially favored by right of inner fitness, they remained within the Sanctuary and passed as far as they could go into the Greater Mysteries. Certain ones were trained for the sole purpose of returning among men and teaching the laws of life in seats of higher learning; others received the preliminary rites in order better fit themselves to govern the State with equanimity and honor. Still others underwent the discipline and purification of the first degrees and then devoted their lives to bringing beauty to men, whether in sculpture or color, in verse or harmony. Thus did these early civilizations ripen in spiritual things under the guidance of initiated philosophers and statesmen, artists, and musicians.

Many branches of both art and science were taught in the Lesser Mysteries: notable among these were Geography, Astronomy, Chemistry, Physiology, Psychology, Geology, Meteorology, as well as Music, the “most divine and *spiritual* of arts” [*The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter xxivb, p. 188]; similarly Art and Architecture were studied, whose lost “canon of proportion” immortalized the Greek temples. These sciences were held as secret studies of the Mysteries, not because they would not have been understood if taught as our schools and universities teach them today, but because such sciences and arts were studied from their *causal* rather than their effectual aspect.

Much derision has been cast on the ancients for withholding knowledge, when “even a child can understand the simpler forms thereof.” Certainly the simpler forms were taught {openly} to the multitude, but the *occult* background thereof was kept rigidly secret (as it is even today, though the world at large little dreams of this fact) as fit only for those who would not misuse the knowledge obtained. Can as much wisdom be shown today, when as soon as scientists discover some new device, opportunity is instantly found by the unregenerate to turn that invention to diabolic {destructive} uses? One is driven to admire the strength and wisdom of

the ancients who knew better than to turn knowledge over completely {indiscriminately} to those lacking in moral control. Even yet, with all our boasted superiority, we have not yet caught up on all lines with the ordinary scientific knowledge of our ancient forebears. As H. P. Blavatsky wrote in 1877:

If modern masters are so much in advance of the old ones, why do they not restore to us the lost arts of our postdiluvian forefathers? Why do they not give us the unfading colors of Luxor — the Tyrian purple; the bright vermilion and dazzling blue which decorate the walls of this place, and are as bright as on the first day of their application? The indestructible cement of the pyramids and of ancient aqueducts; the Damascus blade, which can be turned like a corkscrew in its scabbard without breaking; the gorgeous, unparalleled tints of the stained glass that is found amid the dust of old ruins and beams in the windows of ancient cathedrals; and the secret of the true malleable glass? And if chemistry is so little able to rival even with the early mediaeval ages in some arts, why boast of achievements which, according to strong probability, were perfectly known thousands of years ago? The more archaeology and philology advance, the more humiliating to our pride are the discoveries which are daily made, the more glorious testimony do they bear in behalf of those who, perhaps on account of the distance of their remote antiquity, have been until now considered ignorant flounders in the deepest mire of superstition. — *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, p. 239

In the Mysteries, Geography was not merely a study of topography, the location of rivers and mountains, valleys and plains; rather were the periodical risings and sinkings of continents the subject of investigation in accordance with the cyclic events of racial history; secret centers of the Earth were learned of, and our intimate relation to the two poles and the four points of the compass. As H.P.B. suggestively hints:

The two poles are called the right and left ends of our globe — the right being the North Pole — or the head and feet of the earth. Every beneficent (astral and cosmic) action comes from the North; every lethal influence from the South Pole. They are much connected with and influence “right” and “left” hand magic. — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 400 fn

Meteorology was the study of the currents of wind and rain, etc., not from the effectual standpoint, but as bearing streams of vital energy from all parts of the solar system {and beyond}. Lightning and thunder, etc., were not merely electromagnetic phenomena — words that sound imposing, but unless occultly understood convey little more than a statement of effects produced. When considered from the causal aspect these are seen to be but outer manifestations of interior forces bursting from cosmic space into our atmosphere and affecting the lives of Earth.

In Chaldea, Egypt, Mexico and Peru, Wales, Iceland, and India, Astrology was regarded with veneration. Its deeper teachings were transmitted from ‘mouth to ear,’ so sacred and profoundly spiritual were they then considered. Mere fortune-telling and other similar trifles were held vulgar in the eyes of the hierophants. The recognized influences of the Sun and planets upon the men of Earth, were not considered merely mechanical reactions compelling individuals to this and that mode of conduct or of character. Such interchange of planetary and solar life energies among terrestrial beings was understood as springing from a common heritage of solar birth. The septenary nature of the planets was taken into account in reckoning the septenary nature of man, and hence the intermingling of life-atoms from the various planetary systems with the Earth, and *vice versa*, constitutes one of the major studies of esoteric Astrology. Furthermore, the science of prediction of tremendous cyclic occurrences was mastered not only in India to a fine hair’s breadth [see the *Sūrya-Siddhānta* of Asuramaya, the oldest treatise of astronomy extant. {Also *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 326}], but likewise in ancient Chaldea, whose modern representatives of some four and five thousand years ago still held archaic Astrology as the strongest characteristic of their secret Mysteries. The famous ziggurat or *high tower* of Borsippa in Babylonia is clear testimonial to knowledge of the sevenfold planetary influences on Man. Called the “Stages of the Seven Spheres,” each of its stories bore a different color, representative of one of the seven sacred planets. At the top {of the ziggurat} was a sacred shrine, often with a table or *couch* of gold.

Thus what looked to the multitude as mere astronomical observatories, were secret training centers within whose inner recesses esoteric Astrology formed one of the important studies of the Lesser Mysteries. Medicine and Surgery, Physics and Alchemy, Poetry, Mathematics, and Philosophy likewise were studied from their occult {inner} standpoint. This instruction consists not in the learning by rote of scores of formulae, but in the inner perception of occult rationale, so that knowledge benevolently applied for others {may in time} become wisdom.

However fascinating to the imagination and of whatever degree of intellectual and psychic stimulation to the neophyte, these studies, were not the major aim of the Mysteries, for behind all training of the mind was the *impelling urge for soul purification through discipline and contemplation*. As stimulus and guidance, dramatic presentations were given of the descent of the chela into the Underworld, his trial in the nether regions through meeting and conquering himself; his ascent into the stream of life and light, culminating in final communion and *friendship* with the divinities. So effective were the dramatic rites that participation therein actually constituted a part of the initiatory training in preparation for the Greater Mysteries.

Comparison of the ritual of the Lesser Mysteries, as practiced in the Mexico, in Peru, in Egypt, Greece and Rome, in Wales, Persia and India, with slight variations of detail, reveals the universal story of the descent into the Underworld in the symbol of the wheat- or corn-goddess. The seed and the grain represents the candidate or chela. As the seed enters into the dark regions of the moist earth, many are the difficulties of soil and environment to contend with; it ‘dies’ in giving birth to root and stalk. Finally, as the period of germination expires, tender shoots of the grain sprout above the surface of the Earth, and in time the ‘seed’ that was, bursts forth in flower with the aid of Sun {and rain}. Thus the candidate must ‘die’ in the regions of the Underworld, the lower spheres, where he meets and conquers the difficulties of environment; shedding his impermanent self he ‘dies’ in giving birth to root and stalk of budding masterhood. At the appropriate hour, the chela that was, rises to the spheres of light and life; taken into the presence of other ‘plants’ of divinity, he finds friendship with the gods and blooms into the full flower of Adepthood. Thus is dramatized in esoteric imagery the spiritual travail of those “*giving birth to themselves*” [see *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 559] — as an ancient manuscript of occultism describes the birth of the Adept within the chela, the supreme Initiation.

## THE GREATER MYSTERIES

The Greater Mysteries entered upon by the neophyte, after the successful consummation of the preliminary degrees, constitute the *becoming* by individual experience, that which had been learned in the Lesser Mysteries. In this higher department of esoteric training, no quarter is given. The neophyte must face himself and conquer — or die. All the stretches of his complex nature, from the divinely inspired to the grossly material, must be investigated and controlled. By this time the aspirant must have developed sufficient spiritual stability to withstand Reality. He must *become* Nature in her lower and higher regions, must pass the supreme test of self-identification, and yet retain his soul-integrity.

Even as late as the second century of our era, the rites of the Egyptian Mysteries, however modified by Greek influence, were carried on with due and appropriate reverence. Disciples from surrounding countries sought initiation there as a fitting advancement following their own ceremonies. Apuleius, the Latin Platonic philosopher, describes in his *Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass*, the initiation in the Mysteries of Isis of one Lucius Patras, now uniformly believed to be Apuleius himself.

Hear, then, and believe, for what I tell is true. I drew nigh to the confines of death, I trod the threshold of Proserpine [Hades], I was borne through all the elements and returned to earth again. I saw the sun gleaming

with bright splendor at dead of night, I approached the gods above, and the gods below, and worshipped them face to face. Behold, I have told thee things of which, though thou hast heard them, thou must yet know naught.

I will recount, therefore, only that which may without sin be imparted to the understanding of the uninitiate. So soon as it was morning and the rites were accomplished, I came forth clothed in the twelve cloaks that are worn by the initiate, a raiment that is most holy.... The precious cloak hung from my shoulders down my back, even to my heels, and I was adorned, where-soever thou mightest cast thine eye, with the figures of beasts brodered round about in diverse colours.... [The reference to the twelve cloaks, and the “figures of the beasts” is quite clearly a veiled manner of suggesting the mystic passage through the twelve signs of the Zodiac.] This cloak the initiates call the cloak of Olympus. In my right hand I bore a torch flaming with fire, and my head was garlanded with a fair crown of spotless palm, whose leaves stood out like rays... adorned as the sun and set up like to the image of a god. — Quoted by Lewis Spence, *The Mysteries of Egypt*, pp. 70-71

In the Greater Mysteries, the passage into the Underworld ceases to be a mere ritual of the Lesser Mysteries in which the chela takes the chief part in the dramatic rite. He must now approach “the confines of death” with full knowledge, and in the garment of soul-consciousness pass beyond the veil of visible nature into the arena of worlds invisible. As Dr. de Purucker expresses it:

It is one of the fundamental teachings of Occultism and of our Esoteric School, that nothing can be *truly known* which is not *experienced, lived through*.... different stages or degrees of initiation are really a kind of “forcing-process,” for certain chosen spirits, certain chosen souls, who have proved themselves worthy:... These different stages or degrees of initiation are marked by preparatory purifications first. Then came the “death,” a mystic death. The body and lower principles, so to say, are paralyzed, and the soul is temporarily freed. And, to a certain extent, it (the freed inner self) is guided and directed and helped by the initiators while it passes into other spheres and to other planes and learns the nature of these *by becoming them*, which is the only way by which knowledge thereof roots itself into the soul, *i.e.*, into the ego: *by becoming the thing*.

— *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 219

This “mystic death” constitutes the Fourth Initiation, [See *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 275.] which consists not only in one’s ability to receive Spiritual Light, but likewise in one’s power to face with equanimity and awakened morality the darkness of evil. To *become a thing* is actually to unite one’s cognizing intelligence with the essence of the being or thing become. In other words, to *take on the nature of* such entity for the time being. Hence, to weld one’s consciousness with beings in spheres *lower* than the human is greatly to test the stamina of the individual: will the malefic fumes of the lower spheres stifle the delicate

petals of the budding adept? Will the sensuous delights of the lower hells have any attraction for the neophyte stern in his resolve to face all? Conversely, to assume the nature of beings in spheres *higher* than the human calls for an equally tempered constitution. Will the brilliance and splendor of Truth undimmed blind the soul? Will vision of Reality shatter the awakening Eye of Dangma, the Eye of Wisdom?

This Fourth Degree may be considered a prelude to, a minor reflection of, the final and Seventh Degree, in which latter initiation the neophyte-initiate must undergo the trial of identification with *all* the spheres of being.

To complete the full initiatory cycle, therefore demands the awakening and strengthening of *all seven* principles in man. The chela must have so tuned his seven-stringed lyre, so energized it with spiritual harmony, that it will vibrate in perfect synchrony with the *spiritual* essence of the seven principles or spheres of the Cosmos. As Mahâtma K.H. wrote to A. O. Hume in 1882:

The degrees of an Adept's initiation mark the seven stages at which he discovers the secret of the sevenfold principles in nature and man and awakens his dormant powers"

— *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter XV, p. 99

Of these higher degrees scarcely aught of precise detail has been vouchsafed to us. This is but natural, and indeed is inevitable; for how could words describe that which can be understood only by the Initiate? How could that which is essentially esoteric be revealed, and still retain its mystic integrity? Important hints, however, have been given regarding the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh degrees, and in order to preserve the esoteric content intact, we shall quote liberally from Dr. de Purucker in his *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*.

In the Fifth Initiation, the neophyte

*meets his own god-self face to face, and for a longer or shorter time becomes one with it*" — p. 283

This degree was called by the Greeks *Theophany*, a word signifying 'divine appearance' or 'showing forth of a divinity,' *i.e.* the appearance or manifestation of

man's own Higher Self to himself. And while in the average candidate this sublime moment of intellectual ecstasis and high vision lasted but a short time, with further spiritual progress of the candidate the Theophanic communion became more enduring and lasting, until finally, ultimately, man knew himself, not merely as the offspring spiritually of his own inner god, but as that inner god itself, in his essential being.

— *Ibid.*, pp. 386-387



The Sixth Initiation was consummated as the inevitable course of events following upon the successful spiritualization of the entire nature. This was called *Theopneusty* by the Greeks — a Greek word literally signifying ‘god-breathing’ or ‘divine inspiration’ — where the disciple

felt the inbreathing from his own inner god and became, thus, inspired, the very word inspiration meaning “inbreathing.” With the passing of time and the greater purification of the soul-vehicle, which is man himself, this inbreathing or inspiration became permanent. — *Ibid.*, p. 386

Or, as Dr. de Purucker describes it on page 242 of the same work, in this degree

the inner god of the candidate breathes down into him, for a longer or shorter time, depending upon his advancement, the wisdom and the knowledge of all the universe...

and on page 220 the following suggestive hint is given:

in the Sixth Degree, instead of one’s own Higher Self, the initiate meets another One, a matter which we will tonight pass over in silence.

Then comes the Seventh and last of the Degrees of Initiation before Masterhood is achieved. This Initiation usually took place at the Winter Solstice, when the Sun starts again on its northward journey. The ancient Pagan initiates considered the four points of the year, the Winter and Summer Solstices and the Spring and Autumnal Equinoxes, as representative of holy workings in the Cosmos. The birth of the Sun at the beginning of the year symbolized to them the mystic birth of the Initiate, and it is significant that nearly all the great World-Saviors, such as Jesus the Christ, Krishna the Avatâra, Apollonius of Tyana, and others, celebrate their ‘birthdays’ at this sacred time of the rebirth of the Solar Deity.

This Seventh Degree, which is called *Theopathy* — a Greek word meaning “god-suffering” or “divine-enduring” — is the

most sublime mystery of all,... the initiate, the candidate, suffered himself to become, abandoned himself fully to be, a truly selfless channel of communication of his own inner god, his own Higher Self; he became lost as it were in the greater Self of his own Higher Self. — *Ibid.*, p. 386

Few indeed are those whose soul-strength is so great that they can suffer in fullness the presence of Divinity. This is the reward of the Highest Adepts, those whose sacrifice and wisdom surround humanity with a Guardian Wall diamond-like in compassion and adamantine in protection.

In the Seventh Degree, the neophyte passes the portals of the Sun;

*he becomes for a passing moment the Wondrous Watcher himself*

— *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221

— the Solar Initiation is complete: the chela dies and the Hierophant is born.

## ROUTES OF INITIATION

In the deeper Mystery-training, the chela must not only learn to build the ‘mystic vessel’ of awakened consciousness which will carry him from plane to plane, but in the process of such individual becoming, must rediscover for himself the ageless routes of Initiation.

In wisdom and foresight, Nature is consistent throughout: one law, one plan, one structure. With charming thrift she rehearses the pathways of Initiation through the cycles of sleep and death. To understand even in minor degree the Greater Mysteries, one must have a thorough grounding in the teachings of Death. Hence Death and its processes form the heart and core of the Initiation-doctrine {Greater Mysteries}: through death of the inferior the superior finds birth. Except the seed die, the flower cannot bloom; except the flower die, the seed cannot form. “He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt. x, 39).

Sleep is an incomplete death — unconsciously performed; Death is a complete sleep — unconsciously performed; Initiation is a self-conscious *sleep* or *death* of the lower elements, with a fully conscious liberation of the Spiritual soul along the pathways of sleep and death.

In sleep, the body is cast aside, *dies* imperfectly, for the golden cord remains linked in spiritual protection over the slumbering body. If the soul is not weighted with material desire, then a natural paralysis {quiescence} of the terrestrial elements ensues. During the brief hours of nightly sleep, if the karma be favorable the freed spirit-soul may ascend out of the sphere of Earth along the invisible magnetic pathways to higher realms. The ascent is instantaneous, followed by the return along identic pathways until the soul once again enters the sleeping body and a new day dawns.

The pathways of sleep traversed night after night constitute an *unconscious* journey along the routes of Initiation. Such momentary and unrecognized contact during sleep is not wasted; the very repetition of the self-same process acts as an invisible spur to the ordinary man. If the aspirations be continued and the life made purer, faint impressions of beauty and grandeur will penetrate the dulled soul, intuitions will manifest, and the aspirant will find benediction sweeping into his days through nightly communion with higher spheres.

Death is the following of the same processes of sleep, only perfectly so. The body is cast off permanently and falls apart {dissipates}; the golden cord is withdrawn, and the soul, freed of its terrestrial elements,

enters the spheres of temporary purgation. Liberated and cleansed of earthly dross in the Kâma-loka, the soul ascends to its spiritual parent, the Higher Self, and in peace and bliss undreamed of, travels the identic journey of sleep. In each of the mansions of Space, a stop is made, shorter or longer depending upon the links of affinity formerly made through past experience of the spiritual soul, until, strengthened by divine contact, it once again rethreads the ancient pathway, and a child is born on Earth.

Thus in death the age-old routes of Initiation are followed in conscious recognition by the spiritual Monad, but as yet in unconscious appreciation of inherent values by the ordinary human soul.

Man is many-sided: he has within him a divine Monad, a spiritual Soul, and a human soul which works through his vital-astral-physical nature. We must guard against dominion of the lower {gaining} over the higher, and particularly in our discussion of these holy things, we must carefully watch ourselves lest we become fascinated by their beauty and intellectual splendor, and forget the essential strength of the Mysteries: that of Ethics. Unless a man has made ethics the foundation of his character, then his heart and mind will be continually shaken by the storms of desire.

The multitude who care for little beyond the needs of the ordinary mind and body, will have no attraction to deeper things, but those who have begun to think and feel intuitively may find themselves irresistibly drawn to the study of the Ancient Wisdom. It is to these who are already stirring from the sleep of matter, that particular warning is given against entertaining the notion that initiation is just waiting around the corner. One must defend the heart against selfish desire for so-called 'occult powers' as one would defend oneself against the bite of the serpent. The Initiations referred to herein, are not *described*, but only alluded to in vague words, as hints of what some day the worthy disciple may find himself fortunate enough to experience.

Over and over again the journey of Initiation is traversed: in sleep imperfectly, in death perfectly; nightly by the soul in sleep, periodically by the soul in death. Unconsciously performed, Nature thus rehearses that which the soul must one day follow with will and consciousness fully active. This latter process is the journey of Initiation: the deliberate paralysis of terrestrial influence followed by the self-perceptive journey through every plane and sphere of the Cosmos.

In connection with the progress of the Spiritual Monad after death, Dr. de Purucker writes:

The purpose of the passing of the Monad postmortem through the various planetary chains is to allow it to free itself on each such planetary chain of the integument or habiliment or vehicle which belongs to the vital essence of such planetary chain. It is only thus that the Monad strips off from itself one after the other the different 'coatings' with which it has enwrapped itself during its long evolutionary journey; and thus when it has freed itself

from all seven 'coatings' it is then ready, because freed and in its pure and 'unclothed' state, to enter into its own native spiritual Home. When the return journey towards Earth's planetary chain begins, the Monad then passes through all these same seven planets, but in reverse order to that by which it had ascended through them, and in each such planet that it visits... it picks up and re-assumes or clothes itself in the life-atoms forming the 'coatings' that it had previously dropped or cast off in each one of these seven planets respectively. — *The Esoteric Tradition*, pp. 869-870

So important is this journey that the Greater Mysteries dealt almost entirely with processes of the mystic death. The Fourth Initiation comprised a partial descent into lower spheres, accompanied by a partial ascent into superior spheres. The soul as yet has not developed sufficient strength to withstand the full revelation of the Universe.

[There is an exquisite legend of Babylonia which points to an identic tradition of esotericism to be found in one guise or another in all lands, in all countries, in all Mystery-Schools. Ishtar, bereft of her lover Tammuz through death, descends to the Underworld to restore him to life and immortality. Arriving at the gates of Arallu (Hades), Ishtar stands, beautiful and royal in mien. The archaic decree, however, demands that none may enter the dread precincts of the Underworld who are not bare of garment or jewel.

Therefore at each of the successive gates through which Ishtar must pass, the keeper divests her of some garment or ornament: first her crown, then her earrings, then her necklace, then the ornaments from her bosom, then her many-jeweled girdle, then the spangles from her hands and feet, and lastly her loin-cloth. — Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. I, p. 238]

[Free and pure she enters Arallu {the Land of No Return}. Her sister, Ereshkigal, full of jealousy, sends against Ishtar diseases sixty in number. Passing the tests of the lower world, Ishtar releases Tammuz, through whose love and self-sacrifice he now receives immortality. Triumphant, she retraces her steps through the seven gates, receiving in reverse order those garments or jewels which she had cast aside on her descending journey. First her lion-cloth, then her spangles for hands and feet, third her girdle; fourth her breast-pins, fifth her necklace, sixth her ear-rings, and finally as she ascends into the regions of light she is adorned with the seventh jewel, the crown of her spiritual glory. One need make no comment of interpretation but leave such to the intuition of the individual student.]

This descent is not an automatic process, but a willing, *spiritually* willing, decision to undertake the journey as a supreme test of intellectual and spiritual integrity. If the candidate succeed, union with the divine and glory {bliss} supernal will be his; if he fail, then death or madness lies in store. Far better that he who fails had never ventured upon these initiations, for fearful indeed are the trials. If the inner Self through austerity and utterly benevolent devotion, discipline and learning, become as gold in the fire, then swift and sure will be his passage through the lower worlds.

With the strength and spirituality burning within, the successful candidate will rise, and in the boat of his own making, sail to the spheres superior, where the passage from mansion to mansion is made with full awareness of heart and mind. Passing the supreme test, the chela, now

become Master, returns through the spaces to Earth, and once again picks up his entranced body. The Guardian of the Initiation-Chamber who has watched with patient and loving care the body of his chela, now is filled with joy: the final initiation is complete, his chela has not failed.

## THE CLOSING OF THE MYSTERY-SCHOOLS

Fourteen centuries ago sounded the death-knell of the Mysteries in Europe when the Emperor Justinian, acting on behalf of the petition of the Pagan Initiates themselves, closed the Mysteries of the Roman Empire which at that time comprised Thrace, Macedonia, Crete, Syria, and Egypt. So degraded had the rites become, so decadent the spirit of the once sacred gatherings, that the few remaining Pagan Initiates refused to accept further candidates. That which had once been held as beautiful and holy — the dramatic ritual of the union of the Higher Self with the aspiring soul — now became orgies of the most degraded sort.

Fifteen centuries ago the death knell of the Mysteries in the West sounded when Emperor Theodosius II banished paganism from the Roman Empire, which at that time included Thrace, Macedonia, Crete, Syria, and Egypt. The final blow came less than a century later, in 529 AD, when Emperor Justinian closed the last philosophical school of Athens, the Academy founded by Plato. Aside from the suppression of everything non-Christian, much of what had once been held beautiful and holy in the Mysteries — the sacred ritual of the union of the aspiring soul with the higher self — had become orgies of the most degraded sort.

Never, never in the history of Occultism, past, present, or future, can it be said that the Mysteries — *in their purity and spiritual integrity* — cater to the personal and emotional side of man. It is precisely to free the soul of limitation, to purify the heart of conflict, to discipline the mind from wandering, that the Mystery-training is so severe, for in Initiation only spiritual strength, only diamond-caliber can withstand the searching ordeal.

Birth, growth, maturity, and senescence are the inevitable processes of Nature in all her departments. The old age of a Mystery-School need not be a *degraded* senescence, any more than the declining years of a man need be marked by degradation. But alas, as with men the seeds of degeneracy and ambition are too frequently sown in the heyday of material success, so likewise in the glory and power of a flourishing Mystery-center, if the trial of spiritual growth be not met with ever greater austerity of heart than in days of probation, the venomous seeds of inner decay take root and grow. Degradation usurps quiescence, and the School decays. The spirit of the Brotherhood retreats, the rind of ritual remains.

The efficient {or real} cause, therefore, of the closing of the Mystery-Schools is the *inner faithlessness* of the guardians of the Temple. Never

would the light die out if the hierophants remained loyal to the {timeless} archaic principles of the School, for the Brotherhood watches with ‘eagle eye of the seer’ for every burning light, and when the call is strong and the cry for truth and light powerful, the Mysteries remain *ipso facto* pure and clean, because freshened perennially from the Fount of Light, the Brotherhood of Tibet.

As Dr. de Purucker writes:

When the human race, or any branch of it, or even an individual, makes the spiritual and intellectual appeal in terms so strong, with spiritual energy so vibrant, with the very fiber of the inner life so to say, it actually operates with the spiritual magnetism of a Teacher, and the call is heard in the Great Brotherhood invariably, and an Envoy or Messenger appears in the world as its representative. The Mysteries have always degenerated because men became involved more and more in selfishness and the self-seeking ways of the material world, and lost the inner touch, the inner consciousness of communion with the spiritual Powers mentioned above.

— *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 1053

There are only two paths in Occultism: the Right-hand path of White Magic and spiritual progress; and the Left-hand Path of black Magic and spiritual retrogression. No third Path of cessation or rest exists. If one go not forwards, then one will remain behind, in automatic (if not deliberate) retrogression. The stream of evolutionary progress is upwards, toward the light of spirit and truth. If one travels not this path, one falls by the wayside; the caravan moves on, the idler remains below.

The further one proceeds on the path of esoteric training, the sharper must be the line of demarcation between the two paths; yet, paradoxically enough, just because of the richer development of the chela, the finer sensitivity to right and wrong, the greater are the depths sounded as well as the heights attained. The middle line of wisdom becomes ever more and more elusive as progress in spiritual things is made. It is not the gross pitfalls of former lives that the chela need guard against, but the subtle refinements of *Mâra*, the “tempter,” who with cruel and insidious measure tries the soul with relentless insistence. There is an ancient proverb in Eastern occultism which says that between the “right and the left hand [Magic] there is but a cobweb thread.” [H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. XIV, p. 106.] He who would remain on the path must cling with all strength and courage of the Divine to that cobweb thread of Wisdom.

One of the most effective weapons of the dark forces is doubt — doubt of oneself, of one’s aspirations, doubt of one’s inherent strength. This {doubt} is a natural and inevitable reaction of chelaship; but a highly dangerous state while it lasts. If not checked with the stern resolve to conquer or die, and to keep on keeping on, *no matter how often one fall, or how grave the error*, then self-pity obtains mastery, and the door to a

graver peril is opened: doubt of the Teacher, doubt of the School, doubt of the Brotherhood. Herein flourishes the fatal seed of interior disarray, which if not cast out from the heart will grow into the weed of Infidelity, strangling the candidate with its rank growth.

Terrible are the tests of chelaship, and severe have been the warnings to the over-eager aspirant to Adeptship. As K.H. wrote to A. P. Sinnett in 1881:

*those who engage themselves in the occult sciences... must either reach the goal or perish.* Once fairly started on the way to the great Knowledge, to doubt is to risk insanity; to come to a dead stop is to fall; to recede is to tumble backward, headlong into an abyss.

— *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter VIII, p. 31

There were three results of initiation: (a) success and glory illimitable; (b) failure which meant death; and (c) partial failure which usually meant madness. [See *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 249.]

It is for this latter reason that Masters and their disciples have repeatedly warned their disciples against an undue rushing into Occultism. Far safer to remain in the outer courts of the Temple of Wisdom as earnest and sincere aspirants for greater knowledge, as learners therein, striving with all the strength of their souls to practice the age-old rules of the Sanctuary: loyalty, duty, and selfless fidelity to the cause of humanity. If these three are cherished in the heart, and held to through all the trial and heartache of human existence, the time will inevitably come when help will be forthcoming, and the aspirant will know that he has been chosen. Until such time, wiser to live a noble life in the position karma has ordained, than to live an ignoble one, because of innate incapacity to do better in such an exalted state, in places superior to one's nature.

Unwise ardor for spiritual discipline, however, is not half so dangerous as selfish desire for occult training merely for the gaining of power. It was in this latter aim that simulated the rush for 'occult powers' which laid the foundation for degeneration of the Mystery-Schools in the early centuries of our era. For hundreds of years the Mysteries had been slowly losing their sanctity; many had been received into the preliminary degrees not by virtue of inner development, but for temporal reasons. The rites became perfunctory observances, and perception of interior worth diminished. Dogma, ritual, and priestcraft waxed lusty, the spirit of Truth and Esotericism waned. The few — and they were too few indeed — who had remained faithful to their sacred pledge, fled the precincts of the Mysteries which had become in later Roman times so degraded as actually to repel from their chambers those whose hearts sought {genuine} Esotericism.

The Light was withdrawn, but so compassionately does the Brotherhood work that the truths have been preserved in symbol and stone,

in allegory and mythos. As H. P. Blavatsky describes in this regard to Egypt:

Her sacred Scribes and Hierophants became wanderers upon the face of the earth. Those who had remained in Egypt found themselves obliged for fear of a profanation of the sacred Mysteries to seek refuge in deserts and mountains, to form and establish secret societies and brotherhoods — such as the Essenes; those who had crossed the oceans to India and even to the (now-called) New World, bound themselves by solemn oaths to keep silent, and to preserve secret their Sacred Knowledge and Science; thus these were buried deeper than ever out of human sight. In Central Asia and on the northern borderlands of India, the triumphant sword of Aristotle's pupil swept away from his path of conquest every vestige of a once pure Religion: and its Adepts receded further and further from that path into the most hidden spots of the globe. — H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. XIV, p. 294

Thus periodically is accomplished the work of the Brothers of the Shadow, the destruction of the *outposts* of the Mysteries, but the core and heart thereof, the great Brotherhood of Light, remains unscarred by defeat. Never, never will the hand of darkness lay hold upon the heart of esotericism which beats as strongly today as it did some 18 million years ago, and will continue to pulsate in undiminished power till the death of our Solar System — and beyond. The Light of Truth is the light of the Spiritual Sun of our Universe. As long as its rays gleam down into the world of Earth, so long will the rays of Spirit warm the hearts of men. In the words of the Mahâtma K.H. to A. O. Hume:

Fear not;... our knowledge will not pass away from the sight of man. It is the “gift of the gods” and the most precious relic of all. The keepers of the sacred Light did not safely cross so many ages but to find themselves wrecked on the rocks of modern skepticism. Our pilots are too experienced sailors to allow us [to] fear any such disaster. We will always find volunteers to replace the tired sentries, and the world, bad as it is in its present state of transitory period, can yet furnish us with a few men now and then.

— *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter XXVIII, p. 215

## LINE OF OCCULT SUCCESSION

The Greeks were adept in the use of imagery to convey profound esoteric truths, often using the form of sport; or, conversely, they would read into the exercises of the stadium occult significance. One of the most charming instances of this was their portrayal through the ‘Torchbearer Race’ of the mystic line of succession of Great Teachers.

In the torch-race, the torchbearer ran from post to post. On reaching the end of his stage he handed the lighted torch to the one there waiting, who immediately took up the race and in his turn handed it to the one waiting for



him. This exercise of the arena or stadium was taken by many Greek and Latin writers as symbolizing the carrying on of Light from age to age, and as pointing to the spiritual Torch-bearers who pass the Torch of Truth from hand to hand throughout unending time. — *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 1071

This handing on of the Light of Truth ‘throughout unending time’ has formed the theme of nearly all Mystery-parables. The Greeks also referred to this spiritual succession as the “Golden Chain of Hermes” which they believed to stretch far into the realms of Olympus, to

Father Zeus downwards through a series or line of spiritual beings and then through certain elect and lofty human beings to ordinary men.

— *The Esoteric Tradition*, pp. 1070-1071

Ancient Vedic thought described this mystic succession as the *Guruparamparâ* — a Sanskrit compound literally meaning “teacher beyond beyond.” The term signifies a line of teachers reaching ‘beyond the beyond,’ through past, present, and future, whose sublime purpose is ever the same: the work of spiritualization.

The ancient Mystery-Schools of every country of the globe and of whatever epoch, have had each one a Succession of Teachers authorized by their training to teach in their turn; and as long as this transmission of the light of Truth was a reality in any one country, it was a truly spiritual institution. — *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 1071

One of the most outstanding examples of this ancient transmission of authority is the succession of ‘Living Buddhas’ of Tibet, which up to the present

is a real one, but of a somewhat special type, and it is by no means what Occidental scholars mistake it to be or have frequently misunderstood it to be. — *Ibid.*, p. 1071

Further, Dr. de Purucker reminds us that in the Eleusinian Mysteries of Greece,

Hierophants were drawn from one family, the Eumolpidae, living in Athens, and the Torchbearers were drawn from another family, the Lycomidae, living in Athens; and we have reason to believe that the Mysteries of Samothrace, the seat of an older rite, and which were, like the Mysteries of Eleusis, a state-function, were also conducted in the same manner by the passing on of the tradition held sacred and incommunicable to outsiders; and the bond of union between the initiates of these so-called Mysteries was considered indissoluble, impossible of dissolution, for death merely strengthened the tie.

— *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 245

In Egypt, Persia, as well as Greece, we find this line of occult succession manifesting in another form. There were the thirteen or more Zoroasters whose esoteric contribution to Persia's history was the inspiration of that once mighty civilization. In Egypt, Hermes Trismegistus (Hermes the 'thrice greatest') stands out from the long Hermes line, whose writings and teachings were founded on the ancient Mystery-doctrine. In Greece again, we find the Orphic Mysteries, from whose halls of esoteric instruction came forth many who bore the name of their Master, Orpheus. [The following remarks which appear in the May Theosophical Forum, for 1940, under the 'Question and Answer' section, throw illumination on the mystery of the Hermes, Orpheus, and Zoroaster series. Speaking of Zoroaster in particular, Dr. de Purucker writes: "The number of Zoroasters who have appeared from time to time is confusing, so long as we consider, and wrongly consider, these Zoroasters to be reïmbodiments of one single ego, instead of different egos embodying what we may interpret from the occult records as the 'Zoroaster-spirit.' The truth of the matter is that in the scheme and terminology of Zoroastrianism, every Root-Race and sub-race, and minor race of the latter, has its own Zoroaster or Zoroasters. The term Zoroaster means in Zoroastrianism, very much what the term Buddha does in Buddhism, or Avatâra does in Brahmanism. Thus there were great Zoroasters, and less Zoroasters — the qualificatory adjective depending upon the work done by each Zoroaster, and the sphere of things. Hence we can speak of the Zoroasters as being thirteen in number from one standpoint, or fourteen from another; or like the Manus in Brâhmanism, or like the Buddhas in Buddhism, we can multiply each of these by seven again, or even fourteen if we take in every little branchlet-race with its guiding Zoroaster-spirit." — *Studies in Occult Philosophy*, p. 636]

What impelled these pupils to take the names of their teachers? Why did they sign their names {to their work}, or give oral instruction, in the name of Orpheus, Hermes, or Zoroaster? Was it a kind of spiritual plagiarism, or was it rather because of a compelling gratitude to the Teacher who had given them ALL, who had lighted the flame of esoteric fire in their hearts? Surely the latter, for whatever message they had of inspiration and light they deemed not theirs, but "his who sent me" "As we have received it from the Teacher, thus shall we pass it on." This system is distressing in the extreme to later historians who struggle always to attach correct labels to things, yet one cannot help but love these old disciples for that loyalty of the heart which banishes all thought of *individual* greatness.

The relationship between chela and teacher is a most holy, most sacred bond of spiritual intimacy. Gratitude wells up from the disciple commensurate with greatness of his heart: the little of heart feel only resentment when guidance and protection are offered; but the large of heart burn with the flame of loving and inextinguishable gratitude. The links in this Golden Chain of Hermes of Spiritual Succession are joined by gratitude. As each link is coupled with its brother-link, heart is linked with heart, teacher with pupil, pupil with teacher; each teacher a pupil to the one above, each pupil a teacher to the one below — all chained by unbreakable links of love, fidelity, and gratitude to the teacher, to the Brotherhood, to the Esoteric Wisdom.

In the words of H. P. Blavatsky:

Like signal-fires of the olden times, which, lighted and extinguished by turns upon one hill-top after another, conveyed intelligence along a whole stretch of country, so we see a long line of “wise” men from the beginning of history down to our own times communicating the word of wisdom to their direct successors. Passing from seer to seer, the “Word” flashes out like lightning, and while carrying off the initiator from human sight forever, brings the new initiate into view. — *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, p. 571

This “long line of wise men” has been kept unbroken {since the middle of the Third Root-Race} by two methods: (a) the actual reincarnations of Adepts into the Brotherhood, allowing for succession of teacher after teacher; and (b) the birth of the Initiate out of the chela, the fruit of the Final Initiation. Thus the Lodge {Brotherhood} revitalizes its membership through the physical birth of Hierophants within the walls of the Sanctuary; and the spiritual rebirths {second birth} of recruits from the ranks of the Mystery-chambers. [See *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 1070.] The “Passing of the Word” was the final rite of the Solar Initiation: without it no transmission of occult authority could be made from Initiator to chela.

Hence the line of esoteric authority and wisdom advances in serial order through grade after grade of chelaship to the World Teacher:— from World-Teachers to high Mahâtmas; from high Mahâtmas to Buddhas; from Buddhas to Dhyâni-Buddhas; from Dhyâni-Buddhas to the Spiritual Guide and Protector of the Planetary Chain of Earth; from the Earth Planetary Spirit to the Heart of the Sun. Truly a line of luminous glory linking the humblest of disciple of wisdom with the Solar Logos itself.

## THE MYSTERY-SCHOOLS OF TODAY

The Brotherhood of Great Ones never desert men. Underneath and behind and within, there pulsates the Eternal Heart of Compassion. Withdrawal of the Mystery-Schools from public knowledge by no means indicates withdrawal of the ancient support of the Mahâtmas. Mystery-centers are to be found today all over the world, writes H. P. Blavatsky, for

the Secret Association is still alive and as active as ever”

— *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, p. 100

Guarded with jealous care by their Protectors, the precise location of these Schools is undiscoverable except by the worthy; but a veil of secrecy is not synonymous with nonexistence.

Does the physical body remain alive and functional if the heart ceases to pump blood into the circulatory system, if the organs do not receive their vital flow from the heart?

Thus with the spiritual body of the Earth, whose mystic heart is Śambhala, and from whose ventricles flows forth into organic centers the esoteric life-blood of the Brotherhood. Every Mystery-center is an organic focus, every man is a living cell, all owing allegiance in spiritual things to the central heart of Śambhala. Is it logical to infer that a heart beats in vain? Is it logical to infer that organs exist {function} apart from the heart? Such conclusions are against reason or experience.

Three are the distributions, as it were, of this esoteric life-flow:

(1) Through the “same system of Mystery-Schools,” the Exoteric and the Esoteric Mysteries. The Exoteric or Lesser Mysteries are now “largely replaced by the different activities of the Theosophical Movement” {which itself is exoteric as a Movement’}; [*Studies in Occult Philosophy*, p. 637.] Whereas the Esoteric or Greater Mysteries, because of the weight of matter blinding the world-consciousness, are at present far more carefully hid; though significantly enough, just because of the increased need for light and truth, they {the esoteric groups of Mystery-Schools} are “perhaps more numerous today than they have been for thousands of years.” [*Ibid.*]

This fact is of far-reaching importance for the Theosophist as for all seekers after Truth. Once the power and force of the Ancient Wisdom seizes the citadel of the heart, one may receive not only genuine spiritual uplift through contact with the Exoteric Mysteries but, more importantly, he places himself in direct line of inspiration from the Esoteric Mysteries, the seats or organic centers of the Lodge in Tibet {Brotherhood}.

(2) Through organic foci of national compass. In the circulation of spiritual things {influences} all countries are in magnetic and sympathetic vibration with Śambhala. Every great country has its esoteric centers, in fact,

every single National Unit of the globe, has its own secret spiritual protectors, who as a body form a true esoteric center. We can call these the Occult Guardians of a people. Thus Britain has hers, Germany has hers, Russia has hers, likewise so with Switzerland, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, China, India, Japan, the United States, Mexico, Canada, Brazil, etc., etc., etc.... a little country like the Netherlands might be the center of a secret Mystery-School whose ramifications and influence would extend over half of Europe. — *Ibid.*

These national occult Guardians do not meddle in political affairs; their work is

purely spiritual, moral, intellectual, and wholly benevolent, and indeed universal, and is a silent guide to the intuitive minds of the different races”

— *Ibid.*, p. 638

(3) The third channel of esoteric work is one of the most fascinating, yet least recognized: that of preserving the knowledge from age to age. As Dr. de Purucker expresses it:

There are actually groups whose sole business is forming occult centers of Initiation, preparation of students for esoteric work in the world, and for the safeguarding of priceless treasures, the heirlooms of the human race, treasures both intellectual and material. — *Ibid.*, p. 637

The generations of seers are not wasteful, nor are the grand systems of philosophy and religion lost in the darkness of receding ages. All that is of essential occult {spiritual} value is preserved in the secret archives of the planet. H. P. Blavatsky writes that:

There are, scattered throughout the world, a handful of thoughtful and solitary students, who pass their lives in obscurity, far from the rumors of the world, studying the great problems of the physical and spiritual universes. They have their secret records in which are preserved the fruits of the scholastic labors of the long line of recluses whose successors they are. The knowledge of their early ancestors, the sages of India, Babylonia, Nineveh, and the imperial Thebes; the legends and traditions commented upon by the masters of Solon, Pythagoras, and Plato, in the marble halls of Heliopolis and Sais; traditions which, in their days, already seemed to hardly glimmer from behind the foggy curtain of the past; — all this, and much more, is recorded on indestructible parchment, and passed with jealous care from one adept to another. — *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, pp. 557-558

Some day worthy explorers of spiritual depths, will recover the lost keys, and mystery after mystery will be solved; temples will be unearthed; secrets of the initiatory chambers revealed; the occult history of the planet and Races of men unfolded. When? At the appointed hour, an hour not fixed by whim or fancy, but brought into being as man's 'third eye' now "most carefully hidden and inaccessible" opens once again in esoteric birth.

{According to Purucker,} the chief of these occult centers has its home in Śambhala, with branches in Syria, Mexico, Egypt, the United States, and Europe, each one "subordinate to the mother-group of the Occult Hierarchy in Śambhala" [*Studies in Occult Philosophy*, p. 637.]

There is a wonderful description given by the Mahâtma M. in *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, of a secret 'retreat' in which his Brother and friend, K.H., enters the silence of further Initiation. Mahâtmas, though vastly superior to men, are still human beings — grandly human, but human nevertheless — and must undergo further testing, but such Initiations are of supernal character. Of the trial of his co-worker, Mahâtma M. writes:

Two days later when his [K.H.'s] "retreat" was decided upon in parting he asked me: "Will you watch over my work, will you see it falls not into ruins?" [his work for the T.S.] I promised. What is there I would not have

promised him at that hour! At a certain spot not to be mentioned to outsiders, there is a chasm spanned by a frail bridge of woven grasses and with a raging torrent beneath. The bravest member of your Alpine clubs would scarcely dare to venture the passage, for it hangs like a spider's web and *seems* to be rotten and impassable. Yet it is not; and he who dares the trial and succeeds — as he will if it is right that he should be permitted — comes into a gorge of surpassing beauty of scenery — to one of *our* places and to some of *our* people, of which and whom there is no note or minute among European geographers. At a stone's throw from the old Lamasery stands the old tower, within whose bosom have gestated generations of Bodhisattvas. It is there, where now rests your lifeless friend... — Letter XXIX, p. 219

There within the Sanctuaries of Tibet are “gestated generations of Bodhisattvas,” whose esoteric purpose is the illumination of men {enlightenment of humanity}. Through all the heartache and sorrow of the world, this strong network of occult vitality flows in unceasing rhythm along the invisible arteries and veins of the body-spiritual of our Earth. So profound is the Compassion of the Brotherhood, so untiring its labor, that not until the heartbeat of every man shall pulsate in harmony with the Heart of Śambhala {the heartbeat of the Great Brotherhood} will they lay down their work.

15

**Yoga and Yoga Discipline**  
A Theosophical Interpretation

Charles J. Ryan

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## THE YOGA OF THEOSOPHY

“Does the Theosophical Society teach or recommend what are popularly known as yoga practices such as breath control, the development of psychic powers, or astral traveling, for seekers hungry for spiritual wisdom and who long to help humanity?”

This natural question is often asked because it is well known that the Theosophical Movement was founded by Eastern teachers and was associated for a short time with certain demonstrations of occult forces, shown to help break down the rampant scientific materialism of the age. The answer is definitely No. Theosophy, indeed, offers a system of spiritual development or discipline suited to all people, regardless of creed or race; and if we like to call it *yoga* with the proper meaning of “union” or “yoking” with the Higher Self, it must be remembered that it has no resemblance to the lower psycho-physiological (and frequently commercialized) ‘yoga methods’ so widely advertised in the West, which attract the unwise who seek to gratify cravings for preternatural experiences. When closely analyzed, these methods are seen to be misleading when not positively dangerous, and only too often do they stand as impediments to spiritual progress.

The popular Western conception of yoga, with its stress upon phenomenalistic results, is not far removed from plain psychical research, only the latter lacks the Eastern appeal associated with the word yoga. The inferior so-called yoga may be regarded as mainly an organized system of psychophysical training developed in the East, but the true yoga, as taught by all the great spiritual sages and seers and emphasized in Theosophy, is well-ordered spiritual development, the training which leads to the discovery of the Inner God. This knowledge was practically lost in the matter-of-fact West, being manifested only by a few illuminated Christian mystics, and conditions prevented their teaching it in the more explicit and *scientific* manner of the great Eastern teachers; although even in Western lands methods were devised to meet the needs of various mental and emotional types. Salvation was to be attained by love, by devotion, and by works. The monkish practices of self-mortification and bodily torture resembled the methods for strengthening the will and perhaps obtaining a few supernormal powers of a low order employed by false Hindû ‘yogis’ who injure their bodies by various physical tortures — fire, knives, etc. Their hideous practices are sometimes, but quite erroneously, confused with what is called *Hatha-Yoga*.

Fifty (now over 100) years ago, even the genuine Eastern yoga was regarded in the West as a fantastic superstition, a fit subject for ridicule. In 1893 a sincere and eloquent Hindû *sannyâsin* preached a high form of yoga in the West, but it was inevitably misunderstood by most of the hearers, largely superficial thinkers and curiosity seekers who were attract-



ed by the Eastern glamour of what was to them the latest fashionable fad, promising mysterious revelations. The audiences melted away when they found that true yoga was not the practice of 'magic arts' but meant strenuous efforts toward self-control and self-purification.

When the more common forms of desire are overpassed, more insidious forms of egoism appear, such as the craving to obtain occult powers for personal gratification, however disguised under high-sounding names. Our motives are not always so pure as we cheat ourselves into believing, and the selfish personality is exceedingly cunning in using the lower mind to obtain what it wants. The yoga the world needs is founded on the love of Truth, Goodness, and Wisdom for their own sake: it makes unselfish work for others a habit and a joy. The neophyte in Theosophical yoga is told that "To live to benefit humanity is the first step," and he is asked, "Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?" (*The Voice of the Silence*)

Let there be no mistake: the Theosophical idea of spiritual discipline or yoga, by whatsoever name it may be called, is founded on that principle, and it is the only way to those golden gates which lead out of the prison of the lower self into the light of eternal day. It is pathetic to see intelligent persons who have been disappointed with the conventional answers to the deeper problems of life and human nature, grasping ignorantly for satisfaction in unprofitable, misleading and hazardous directions when the road is open, the landmarks clearly defined, and the guides ready to direct.

Among the lower yoga practices which the ill-formed West has begun to play with of late, the amateur experimentation with breath control or *prāṇāyama* (literally "death of the breath"), with bodily postures and other psycho-physiological methods, has done grave harm to many persons. It may not only seriously injure the body, but it may only too easily arouse strange elemental forces inimical to man, "dread dwellers on the threshold," which threaten and sometimes destroy reason, the moral nature, and even life. A partial expansion of the lower astral vision that may temporarily satiate the craving for a glimpse behind the scenes is not accompanied, in the case of the tyro, by the power to close at will the doors he has forced open.

To speak plainly, the would-be practitioner of the psycho-physiological yoga of the breaths, etc., opens a psychological door within himself through which molesting nature-spirits can enter and obsess him. These objectionable forces lurk on the threshold of the Astral Light, the regions sometimes entered in nightmares and other abnormal states. He may also be the prey of Earth-bound *Kāma-rūpas*, lingering, shadowy, and soulless vestiges of persons who have passed on to their peace and rest in Devachan. These 'spooks' are eager to taste the sensual pleasures of the world again, and they quickly seize the chance of indulging their unbridled passions through the senses of the unprotected intruder into the astral

region. Such entities are well known to the trained psychologists of the East, who take pains to keep them at a distance. Even some of the most skeptical Western psychic researchers have been forced to accept the reality of mischievous and often dangerous sprites which produce phenomena in haunted houses such as noises, violent displacement of objects, etc. These *poltergeists* may partake of the nature of either of the above-named astral denizens, but their energies are normally released in physical manifestations. The spiritually developed and trained disciple of a Master can safely pass into the dregs of the Astral Light if his duty calls, but it would be no pleasure for him.

The proverb about letting sleeping dogs lie should be heeded by one who is tempted to unlatch the door to psychic experiences. H. P. Blavatsky in her *A Bewitched Life*, and Bulwer Lytton in his *Zanoni*, present in brilliant fictional form the suffering and havoc wrought by trespassing on ‘forbidden ground’ on the part of well-meaning persons who had not given the right knock. Both occult writers had exact personal knowledge of their theme. In no way does amateur dabbling with the lower yoga practices resemble the tranquil process of a college course in modern psychology! No amount of intellectual training or Western scientific methods of research will make the venture secure, and this includes Easterners as well as Westerners, as the writer has reason to know.

Many cases are known to Theosophical students where dabbling with breath control and thereby disturbing the delicately balanced forces of the *prānas* on which life and health depend, has produced disastrous consequences, followed, alas, by bitter regret for the disregard of friendly warnings. Such tragedies usually come from ignorance of the dangers, but some minds, over-confident of their supposed security from harm, are willing to take any risk in order to steal forbidden powers — *forbidden* in the sense of being premature in this period of evolution, except for the very few who have earned the right to have them and have developed the power to control them. These powers are hedged around by Nature’s wise prohibitions, and the unfit becomes a victim instead of a master. H. P. Blavatsky says of such a victim that he is liable to “fall into sorcery and Black Magic, and through many incarnations heap up for himself a terrible Karma,” and even “risk the annihilation of the present personality.”

Attempts to get out of the physical body and travel in the astral plane are *not* recommended to students of the Ancient Wisdom. Although it is not a grateful task, we must warn our readers that the name of Theosophy has been misused in certain quarters by the approval of methods to disentangle the subtle body from its physical sheath and wander in the astral plane of strange and bewildering illusions, unknown perils, and hostile denizens. Specious promises were made that great good can be done that way. Such a course is entirely opposed to H. P. Blavatsky’s teachings and the wholesome Theosophical ideals of service to humanity; and even on

ordinary considerations of prudence cannot be too strongly condemned. Numerous cases, some personally known to the writer, testify to the disastrous mental and physical results that have fallen upon well-meaning but ill-advised persons who artificially released themselves from the protection of the body.

Warnings against irresponsible attempts to induce abnormal states of consciousness by breath control and other Hatha-Yoga exercises do not, of course, apply to the perfectly wholesome methods of breathing and physical exercise taught in athletic training.

It is unfortunate that misleading notions about yoga persist and that so many cunning sirens sing their alluring songs to entice the unwary by specious advertising of psychic powers, “arcane knowledge leading to success in life, privately given at so much a course,” etc. Some clairvoyants, more or less genuine, practice under the name of yogi, but they should be more properly called fortunetellers. For one serious and valuable book on the higher yoga *philosophy* of the East, dozens of spurious ones are foisted on the public which pander to an unhealthy curiosity about phenomena, the authors being careless whether the practices they recommend are dangerous or not — possibly being themselves ignorant in some cases — so long as they can produce a salable article. Some of the more unscrupulous offer correspondence courses for money, professing to awaken psychic centers in the body and prânic forces connected therewith which become dangerous to health and sanity when the natural balance is disturbed. Others promise ‘initiation’ for two dollars! Is it any wonder that the genuine schools of the Mysteries were (and are) sacredly protected from profanation?

Other forms of psychic yoga, though not so vulgarly commercialized, are far from being spiritual. They have what may be called a scientific technique to penetrate a little way behind the veil of material Nature, but it is no more spiritual or ethical than, say, chemistry, and it can, like chemistry, be used for abominable purposes. In the hands of those whose hearts and minds are not absolutely pure and unselfish — and how few such there are — it can prove as destructive as a combination of dangerous chemicals in the hands of an ignorant and inquisitive child. Mme. Alexandra David-Neel, the Buddhist scholar and authority on Tibetan occult lore, the Lama Yongden, and other qualified observers describe many cases where revenge, ambition or vanity inspired malevolent persons in Tibet to acquire this technique, regardless of consequences to others, and sometimes to themselves.

But far removed from such low ambitions, there are many sober-minded persons who renounce not only the ‘vanities’ of this world but its wholesome activities and duties in order to obtain personal success in the lower yoga technique. They mistakenly conceive this to be the only road to knowledge, and concentrate on their own ‘salvation,’ regardless of the

general welfare of humanity, which may get along as best it can for all they care. The same principle, we may remember, is not unknown under other aspects in so-called Christian countries, but in the long run it defeats its own ends.

Such a self-centered attitude is the last thing that any yogi worthy of the name Theosophical would approve, for it ignores the first principles of oneness. True yoga cannot exist without a sympathetic and helpful understanding of human nature and a genuine effort to lift the heavy burden of spiritual and intellectual ignorance in the most undeveloped, “even the least of these.” It has no *Untouchables*. In her *Studies in Occultism*, H. P. Blavatsky writes:

... true *Occultism or Theosophy* is the “Great Renunciation of SELF,” unconditionally and absolutely, in thought as in action. — I, p. 28

It is impossible to employ *spiritual* forces if there is the slightest tinge of selfishness remaining in the operator. For, unless the intention is entirely unalloyed, the spiritual will transform itself into the psychic, act on the astral plane, and dire results may be produced by it. The powers and forces of animal nature can equally be used by the selfish and revengeful, as by the unselfish and the all-forgiving; the powers and forces of spirit lend themselves only to the perfectly pure in heart — and this is DIVINE MAGIC.  
— pp. 4-5

This Earth of ours is, and long will be, our home, and it needs all the help strong souls can give. As we make progress on that line, all the powers — spiritual, intellectual, and even psychic — will come to our aid in natural evolution as they are called forth by right aspiration. Unselfish labor to arouse the spiritual intuitions of a discouraged and materialistic world is the only worthwhile yoga, the Yoga of Theosophy. We are challenged by one searching question: Am I becoming more useful, more willing and capable to give the service my conscience demands of me?

The Masters who established the Theosophical Society are perfectly familiar with the psycho-physical yoga system which makes certain bodily exercises and breathing processes (the lower Hatha-Yoga) the precursor or foundation of higher activities, but their experience has shown serious objections to it, and they have never permitted its introduction into the activities of the Movement, interesting as it may be to scientific students of abnormal psychology. Any tendency toward what is called ‘sitting for yoga’ has been firmly discouraged, and for excellent reasons. In this regard we may recall the experience of the Buddha, who began his search for truth by trying the lower yoga of extreme bodily asceticism. He soon found that it was a hindrance to progress, even in such an exalted case as his.

To the sincere aspirant for soul-wisdom the time comes when unusual psycho-spiritual powers and faculties begin to develop in a perfectly

natural way, and under such favorable auspices he will find no difficulty in meeting a real Teacher who can direct his further development. There is an occult saying, “When the disciple is ready the teacher will appear.” The Wise Ones are always on the watch for recruits to the army of Light and Liberation. Many examples are on record down the ages of the reception of such guidance by the worthy, regardless of religious or philosophical belief, and there are instances in the Theosophical Movement.

An outstanding case is that of an intellectually and spiritually advanced Hindû lad who came to H. P. Blavatsky’s assistance soon after she reached India and when she was bringing out her first Theosophical journal under great difficulties. This young man, Dâmodar K. Mâvalankar, abandoned his proud Brâhmanical caste and brilliant worldly prospects to devote his life to unselfish work for humanity through Theosophy. His sincerity and devotion attracted the notice of the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion who are behind the work of the Theosophical Movement; and gradually and without strain he found new powers, bodily, mental, and even psycho-spiritual, awaking and becoming available for the great opportunities for service which soon came to him. Dâmodar is a shining example of true discipleship. The faculties he developed were perfectly normal under the conditions he provided. They had not been desired for personal gratification, and they were never displayed as inducements to persons with selfish ambitions for psychic powers. Another and perhaps more noble example of a similar line of conduct within the Theosophical Society was William Q. Judge; and others are on record.

Such true devotees have visioned the path to the supreme goal of human evolution union — with the Inner God, the “Father in Heaven.” To step on this sublime path, to develop this spiritual clairvoyance, demands no physical processes or bodily tortures, and above all no withdrawal from contact with our fellow pilgrims on the uphill road of life. The experiences we need are found in the rough and tumble of the world, by cheerful endurance of what cannot be avoided, and by a sympathetic understanding of the karmic difficulties of others, who so frequently need help *to help themselves*. The Theosophical “Brahma yogi” is a man or woman to whom those in trouble will instinctively turn for advice, a peacemaker at home and abroad.

A devoted servant of humanity, William Q. Judge, sums up the yoga of Theosophy in these eloquent words:

What then is the panacea finally, the royal talisman? It is DUTY, Selflessness. Duty persistently followed is the highest yoga.... If you can do no more than duty it will bring you to the goal.... It is that boundless charity of love which led Buddha to say: “Let the sins of this dark age fall on me that the world may be saved,” and not a desire for escape or for knowledge.

It is expressed in the words: "THE FIRST STEP IN TRUE MAGIC IS DEVOTION TO THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS." — *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Vol. II

## A TIBETAN ASPECT OF YOGA

It is not long since reports of occult mysteries and magic in Tibet and elsewhere were ridiculed by serious Western scholars; they were not admitted into academic 'good society.' The deadly, intolerant persecution from which H. P. Blavatsky suffered in the nineteenth century arose partly from the contemptuous denial of such possibilities among the Western educated classes intoxicated by the materialistic theories and brilliant practical achievements of science. Even the allegorical interpretation of the bewildering legends of gods and heroes in the Hindû and Buddhist scriptures was rejected.

When Col. H. S. Olcott, then President of the Theosophical Society, discussed that subject with Professor Max Muller, the famous Asian scholar, about a little fifty years ago {now about 150 years}, the latter pleaded with him to advise the scholars in the Theosophical Society to abandon the claim that the Hindû scriptures contained such hidden meanings as the 'superstitious' pandits asserted. Today, however, we find a few Asian scholars who not only speak of such matters with more respect and intelligence but accept the fact that some yogis possess so-called supernatural powers. Some, like Mme. David-Neel, even claim a practical though limited knowledge of the *rationale* of certain Eastern psychomagical processes of an elementary nature. Dr. Richard Wilhelm, sinologist; Dr. Carl Jung, psychologist; Sir Wallis Budge, late Director of Egyptology of the British Museum; Dr. Alexis Carrel, writer of *Man, the Unknown*; and other distinguished scholars and travelers have given testimony to the existence of that occult knowledge which was regarded in the West as the grossest superstition until H. P. Blavatsky began "to break the molds of mind."

Mme. David-Neel's records of experiences behind the veil in Tibet have done much to open the eyes of the West to the fact that the life of the people of that mysterious land is permeated by psycho-occult activities which are no mere fancies, and Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz's scholarly works on Tibetan religion have drawn worldwide attention to the curious blend of advanced spiritual teaching with lower magical practices which flourishes in Tibet and its borderlands. The spiritual and philosophical side is practically the same as the fundamentals of Theosophy, which is not surprising as both come from the same source, the Ancient Wisdom-Religion, preserved by the Great White Lodge, whose chief esoteric center is the mysterious *Śambhala* in Tibet.

It is generally believed that about the seventh or eighth century of the Christian era, Buddhism was first introduced into Tibet. Padma Sambhava,

a noted Hindû teacher, is credited with being the chief exponent. His presentation of the teachings was, no doubt, a great improvement on the superstitious native Bön religion, but it was tainted with the lower Tantric magic, therefore far from the pure teachings of the Buddha. H. P. Blavatsky says, however, that the Buddha, foreseeing future dangers to Buddhism in India, sent some of his Arhats to the slopes of the Kailas Range in Tibet nearly a thousand years earlier to establish the kernel of his teaching, the true *Esoteric* Buddhism. She also says that the Tibetan population was too deeply steeped in sorcery at that time to accept the purer faith, and so it was not until far later “that Buddhism was finally engrafted with its two distinct Schools — the Esoteric and the exoteric divisions — in the land of the Bön-pa.”

It is known, however, from Chinese sources that some great Adept Teachers had long been living in the “Snowy Ranges of Tibet.”

In regard to Padma Sambhava, still much admired by many in Tibet, Col. Yule, the Asian scholar, says “he was a great master of enchantments,” presumably referring to his lower Tantric methods. H. P. Blavatsky distinguishes the lower from the higher Tantric in these words:

So little is known outside Bengal about Tantrik rites and ceremonies that space has been given this interesting paper [an article on Tantrik rites known as ‘Savasadhana’], despite the disgusting and horrid ceremonial it describes. As there are both magic (pure psychic science) and sorcery (its impure counterpart) so there are what are known as the “White” and “Black” Tantras. The one is an exposition, very clear and exceedingly valuable, of occultism in its noblest features, the other a devil’s chap-book of wicked instructions to the would-be wizard and sorcerer. Some of the prescribed ceremonies in the latter are far worse even than the *Savasadhana*,...

— H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. IV, p. 360

W. Q. Judge also speaks of the “noble philosophy” of many of the Tantric writings, but of course severely condemns the lower tantrism. It is most unfortunate that this “exceedingly valuable” exposition of occultism in its noblest features, as H. P. Blavatsky calls the ‘White’ tantras, has been so largely obscured by the prevalence of black magic among Tantrikas that the very name has become a reproach.

Unfortunately, in spite of various efforts to purify the state religion of Tibet, it was still adulterated by superstitions, magical practices, and excessive ritualism with its accompanying pride and pomp — human failings similar to those that have crept into other faiths. W. Q. Judge said that some day it will be the duty of Theosophists to clear up the situation. The favorable nature of Tibet as a field of work is shown by the fact that the most admired national heroes are not military men or even statesmen, but great spiritual Teachers and Reformers.

At various intervals reforms were attempted with some success, but it was not until the fourteenth century that the great Adept and Avatâra, Tsong-khapa, made a forcible revolution and purified the religious conditions by exiling 40,000 self-seeking monks and lamas who were making Buddhism a marketable commodity. Tsong-khapa is the noblest and wisest of the reformers of Northern Buddhism, and though he was originally an apostle of the semi-reformed “Kargyütpa” School, he attached himself to another Order, the “Khadampas,” “Those bound by the Ordinances,” in order to build the regenerated system which developed into the “Gelugpas,” or Yellow Cap Order, which became the established church of Tibet. He also reorganized the Esoteric or Mystic Brotherhood (the “Esoteric division” of H. P. Blavatsky, quoted above) with which a few of the highest lamas have the privilege of affiliation. Very little is known of this Brotherhood in the outside world.

Since Tsong-khapa’s reform, conditions never descended to the former low levels, but as mentioned before they were not ideal. The Gelugpas, however, were far superior to some of the Red Cap sects in western Tibet which remained addicted to the old Bön black magic.

We have no space to describe the interesting vicissitudes of Buddhist yoga in Tibet, but the student will find the information in Dr. Evans-Wentz’s authoritative works, which have greatly added to Western knowledge of Lamaism. His *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* covers a hitherto unknown field of first-hand information and, as he says, the seven principal treatises translated from the Tibetan represent a comprehensive expression of Mahâyâna or Northern Buddhism, the “Greater Path.” They are not all, however, of equal value to seekers for spiritual light.

The treatises were translated from the Tibetan by the late Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup, Professor of Tibetan at Calcutta University and an initiated lama of the Kargyütpa Order of Mahâyâna Buddhism — whose chief doctrines are pure and elevating. He was well qualified to interpret teachings and yoga methods little known, if at all, outside the lamaseries. Even with the assistance of his careful translations and Dr. Evans-Wentz’s admirable commentaries, most Western scholars (except Theosophical students) are bound to find the subject matter difficult to comprehend because so few even suspect the existence of the widely differing inner planes of Nature with their corresponding states of consciousness, which are familiar to occultists.

We may mention in passing that the Lama Dawa-Samdup is a notable witness in defense of H. P. Blavatsky against the absurd charges made in her lifetime that she invented the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom, Theosophy. In another work, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Dr. Evans-Wentz writes:



The late Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup was of opinion that, despite the adverse criticisms directed against H. P. Blavatsky's works, there is adequate internal evidence in them of their author's intimate acquaintance with the higher lâmaistic teachings, into which she claimed to have been initiated. — p. 7

But H. P. Blavatsky belonged to a higher order of instruction and achievement than the word "lamaistic" usually signifies, unless the words "higher lamaistic teachings" are construed to mean the Ancient Wisdom, the "Esoteric Buddhism," as she called the teachings of the Great White Lodge. It would not be fair, however, to infer that all the lamaistic institutions in Tibet lost their spiritual life, for the Mahâtma K.H. and H. P. Blavatsky mention certain lamaseries in Lhasa and elsewhere where true and initiated occultists lived and worked in the training schools for chelas in genuine spiritual yoga. H. P. Blavatsky says that many Asian scholars confuse the genuine lamas of certain lamaseries in Lhasa, etc., with the numerous charlatans and sorcerers of the Bön sectarians.

It is reassuring to learn from Dr. Evans-Wentz and Mme. David-Neel that the teachers most respected in Tibet consider such attainments as the ability to perform occult phenomena quite unimportant and merely incidental features in the process of spiritual development.

Returning to the Yoga treatises mentioned above, we learn from Evans-Wentz that the first two are "fundamentally non-tantrik." The seventh is also sound and is one of the most widely-circulated Mahâyâna writings. It is an abridgment of the Sanskrit Prajñâ-Pâramitâ (Transcendental Wisdom) and it deals with the profound theory of *Śūnyatâ*, the "Void." This treatise is especially important to Theosophists because it supports H. P. Blavatsky's definite claim that the Buddha taught a secret doctrine to his inner group. Some Buddhist scholars deny this and claim that any really secret teaching in the possession of the Tibetan lamas is only instruction in practical magic of no spiritual or philosophical value. Dr. Evans-Wentz's Commentary on the Seventh Treatise indicates that they are mistaken, for Nâgârjuna, the thirteenth of the Buddhist Patriarchs, gave out some of the Buddha's esoteric teachings in the second century A.D. Dr. Evans-Wentz writes:

According to Nâgârjuna, the Buddha Shâkya-Muni Himself composed and placed the teachings in the custody of the *Nâgas* (Serpent Deities), to be kept hidden in the depths of a vast lake or sea till such time as men should be fit to receive them. This seems to be a symbolic way of stating that the Buddha taught the teachings esoterically, and that since prehistoric times they had also been so taught by the Buddhas Who preceded Shâkya-Muni, as by the *Bodhic* Order of Great Adepts of *Yoga*, the wisest of the Wise Men, who have long been symbolized by the Nagas, or Serpent Demigods.... The Lâmas, too, maintain, on the authority of an oral tradition, said to have been at first secretly transmitted by the Buddha's most intimate disciples, that the

Buddha taught the *Prajñā-Pāramitā* sixteen years after His Enlightenment... and that Mahākāshyapa, His most learned disciple and apostolic successor, secretly recorded it. The Japanese also have a tradition that the Buddha taught esoterically to His disciples as well as exoterically to the multitude. — *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, p. 344

The third to the sixth treatises deal largely with psychological and physical exercises for the development of personal will-power and the like, a very different teaching from the wholesome, impersonal, and beneficent yoga of the Lord Buddha and the Masters of Wisdom who are behind the Theosophical Movement. These parts treat of the alluring byways in occultism which lead away from the strait and narrow path that leads to life, and are derived from the early pre-Buddhistic Bönpa sources. H. P. Blavatsky describes the Bön religion as:

itself a degenerated remnant of the Chaldean mysteries of old, now a religion based entirely upon necromancy, sorcery and soothsaying. The introduction of Buddha's name into it means nothing.

— H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. III, p. 271 fn

The fifth treatise presents the “Chöd” rite of the “short path,” a violent and desperate method to grasp adeptship by the mystical sacrifice of the personality to the elementals, a ghastly process which is likely to result in insanity or death to the rash adventurer. The ostensible purpose of the grim and revolting rite is to deliver the participant by a short cut from the necessity of rebirth! It is, however, more probably carried out to gain magical powers by controlling a low order of elementals. As mentioned above, Mme. David-Neel found that many evil-minded persons in Tibet use such sinister and destructive methods to accomplish their desire for revenge and the like.

It is unfortunate that even the first (Kargyütpa) treatise (“The Supreme Path of Discipleship”) should be associated with certain phenomenalistic instructions which exhibit the weaker side of Lamaism and are out of place in a work whose tone is, on the whole, spiritually elevated. Such pseudo-occult ideas can do no good in a world which is turning toward the exploitation of psychic powers for purely selfish ends, or at best for the gratification of curiosity disguised under high-sounding names. They may possibly shake some Western scholars out of their unabashed and arrogant denials of the occult side of Nature, and suggest to them that the East is not unreasonable in regarding it as being subject to laws as *natural* as those of the physical world, however miraculous they may seem to the ignorant. The working of such laws is demonstrated in Tibet on a lower plane by such phenomena as the control of fire or water, levitation, transfer of consciousness to a distance, or the power to modify the action of the bodily functions. *Tummo*, the control of the bodily

temperature, is a semi-occult process well known to certain lamas or hermits in Tibet. By its means the expert can keep warm and comfortable when exposed to extreme cold and without warm clothing. Mme. David-Neel and other observers testify to their personal knowledge of tummo, and on one occasion at least she applied it with success when she was caught without fuel in the bitter cold of an icy mountain wilderness.

Such things, however, are not regarded by the wise as spiritual attainments nor as valuable in themselves, though under certain circumstances they may be of service. A quaint story is current in the East in regard to this subject. A merchant and a yogi of a low order met on the bank of a river and the latter, after expatiating on the immense labor he had spent in learning to levitate, proceeded to waft himself across the river in the air. The practical merchant paid a boatman to row him over. When they met on the other side the triumphant yogi expected congratulations but was nonplussed when the merchant showed him a small coin and remarked, "That is the value of your miracle!"

The higher Lamaism, as already mentioned, presents many of the leading principles of Theosophy, and the diffusion of such teachings explains the well-known good qualities of the Tibetans in general. The Lama Yongden in his instructive and delightful romance *Mipam*, referring to a quixotic act of kindness writes:

He thought his young companion was crazy, but in Tibet every action inspired by compassion arouses, even amongst the coarsest and most materially-minded peasants or traders, an intuitive feeling of respectful admiration. Chenrezigs [Pronounced Chen-rah-zee. In Sanskrit Avalokiteśvara, the "Onlooker," the Higher Self, the Logos, celestial and human, ever on watch to discover distress and succor the troubled.] of the thousand arms, the symbol of Infinite Compassion, was not chosen in vain to be the Supreme Lord and Protector of the lofty Land of the Snows.

The characteristic good humor of the Tibetans is seen in the following aphorisms quoted by Dr. Evans-Wentz in his *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*:

For a religious devotee to try to reform others instead of reforming himself is a grievous mistake. — p. 87

To preach religion and not practice it is to be like a parrot saying a prayer; and this is a grievous failure. — p. 77

Many Western writers and travelers have spoken well of the Tibetan national character. One, an Englishman who studied the Buddhist teachings for some years among the lamas of the southern border of Tibet, states that the lamas and other Tibetans he met possess a spirit of love and

kindness that is marked by an unusual note of serenity, new to him. He soon recognized that this rare quality is not based on a vague emotionalism, but is the result of their outlook on life, a wide-extending insight into the structure of the Universe which sees the intimate relationship of all things and principles. To the enlightened lamas the *laws of Nature* and the ethics or rules of right living are not independent but identical. This is an essential in the Theosophical *yoga* teaching. In the West the fatal mistake is still made of separating *religion* from *science*. G. de Purucker places the matter in a few words:

... Ethics are no mere conventions however much man may clothe them in conventional thoughts, but are based on the harmony and love at the heart of the Universe,... Ethics are very real because based on Nature herself. Ethics means doing aright; right means harmony; right means law; and law is cosmic justice which is universal love.

— *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, xxx

## YOGA IN INDIA

We are sometimes asked if H. P. Blavatsky did not go to India in 1878 to study yoga. No; after establishing the Theosophical Society in America she went to India to arouse a higher spirit of humanitarianism, oneness, where it was sadly lacking in spite of the thousands of yogis of one kind or another. She also went, under the direction of her Masters, to awaken India to the opportunities it had to present a great religious philosophy to a world that was vaguely groping for a more logical and liberating solution to life's problems than those of dogmatic theologies or materialistic science. She answered the call of many Hindûs who realized that the Ancient Teachings were perverted by superstitious interpretations and forms. Many leading societies of native Sanskrit scholars welcomed her to brotherhood, and a strange phenomenon happened in many places: proud Brahmins, exclusive and self-sufficient, recognized her as a teacher, she, a foreigner, an 'outcaste' and — a woman! She was publicly thanked by them and by other Indian associations on many occasions, and honored by various tributes for her self-sacrificing work in helping progressive India to higher ideals of thought and action. One of these, tendered by more than three hundred Hindû students at a Madras college, begins:

In according to you this our heartiest of welcomes on your return from the intellectual campaigns which you have so successfully waged in the West, we are conscious we are giving but a feeble expression to the "debt immense of endless gratitude" which India lies under to you.

You have dedicated your life to the disinterested services of disseminating the truths of Occult Philosophy. Upon the sacred mysteries of our hoary Religion and Philosophies you have thrown such a flood of light

by sending into the world that marvelous production of yours, the “Isis Unveiled.” — *Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky* by A. P. Sinnett

At a certain time when many students thought it was necessary for their spiritual development to rush to India for ‘occult’ training, W. Q. Judge protested, saying that it was not the wish of the Masters, nor was it the teaching of Blavatsky, for Theosophists to think that Eastern methods should be slavishly followed or the present East be made an example or a goal. The West has to adopt a method of spiritual development suitable to its mentality and the environment of its people. But, of course, the West can and must draw very largely from the Eastern scriptures, whose importance has greatly increased for students since H. P. Blavatsky partially lifted the veil of Isis and interpreted many of their hidden meanings. But in spite of all that she did to arouse the ancient spirit of spiritual life in India, we cannot look to modern India as a teacher.

The Indian Masters themselves say plainly that they “are all convinced that the degradation of India is largely due to the suffocation of her ancient spirituality,” and the Mahâtma K.H. says that he “cannot endure for any length of time the stifling magnetism even of my own countrymen.” (Quoted in *The Occult World*, by A. P. Sinnett.) And again, we read in *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* from the same source:

If it be permissible to symbolize things subjective by phenomena objective, I should say that to the psychic sight India seems covered with a stifling gray fog — a moral meteor — the odic emanation from her vicious social state. Here and there twinkles a point of light which marks a nature still somewhat spiritual, a person who aspires and struggles after the higher knowledge. If the beacon of Âryan occultism shall ever be kindled again, these scattered sparks must be combined to make its flame. And this is the task of the T.S.,.... — p. 384

There has always existed and exists what may be called an ‘esoteric circle’ of knowers. Unseen and unknown to the world at large, they work for the spiritual advancement of humanity in many ways. In far-off ages Mystery-Schools were established to protect people against partial or misleading information about the occult half-truths which are more dangerous than complete error because they are not so easily detected. The historically known Mystery-Schools at Eleusis and elsewhere in Greece, at Philae in Egypt, and in many other parts of the world were their comparatively modern successors; their reputation was very high and they were revered and trusted by all. Their dramatic representations and other more or less exoteric ceremonies of the threshold were suited to the needs of the ordinary thoughtful man, but, even in these, deeper meanings were symbolized. In the more advanced working, as we know from the accounts of the School of Pythagoras at Krotona, the candidates spent long periods

in silence. With their minds and bodies purified and disciplined, they finally were prepared to arouse high states of consciousness within themselves which are quite inaccessible to the untrained intelligence. St. Paul, an Initiate, speaks of having been “caught up into the third heaven” (2 Cor., xii), an obvious reference to one of these stages or steps toward what is called in the East *Samâdhi*. The process of “drawing out” what is locked up within is the true meaning of *education*, and this is the method of any genuine yoga or Mystery-School.

With the coming of the Theosophical Movement in the nineteenth century, a beginning was successfully made by H. P. Blavatsky to revive the Mystery-Schools in the West. She writes:

But if the voice of the MYSTERIES has become silent for many ages in the West, if Eleusis, Memphis, Antium, Delphi, and Cresa have long ago been made the tombs of a Science once as colossal in the West as it is yet in the East, there are successors now being prepared for them.

— “The Esoteric Character of the Gospels,” — *Lucifer*, Vol. I, p. 310

When the “beacon of Âryan Occultism” referred to by the Mahâtma K.H. was burning bright, yoga was properly understood. In her *Theosophical Glossary*, H. P. Blavatsky speaks of Hindû yoga as being one of the six *Darśanas* or philosophical schools of India, but her special definition sums it up as “the practice of meditation leading to spiritual liberation.” She adds that “*psycho-spiritual*” powers are obtained by the high forms of yoga which “lead to the clear and correct perception of the eternal truths in both the visible and invisible universe.” Note that these are not the *psycho-physical* nor even the psycho-intellectual powers, but are acquirements of a far higher order.

The Yoga *Darśana* or School is divided into five main classes which correspond with the five leading types of human psychology. G. de Purucker defines them as follows:

Now, what are these five Indian Yoga Schools? They are these, beginning with the simplest and lowest: Hatha-yoga, the yoga of physiological-psychical training, dealing almost wholly with the body and lower mind. Next, Karma-yoga, from the word “karma,” action. Third, Bhakti-yoga, the yoga of love and devotion. Fourth, Jñâna-yoga, the yoga of wisdom or knowledge, of study. Fifth, Râja-yoga, the yoga of *self-devised* effort to attain union with the god within, the yoga of discipline, such as the kings of the Kshatriya or Warrior Caste were supposed to exemplify as the leaders of their states; and the sixth, which we Theosophists add, is the Brahma-yoga, the yoga of the spirit, practically including the other five.

— *The Theosophical Forum*, March 1940

As the five Hindû systems of yoga, if fully studied and practiced, would demand the entire energy, thought, and time of the practitioner, it

is obvious that they would be found impracticable, even if desirable, in a modern Western environment. A Teacher of the rank of a minor Adept, at least, would be absolutely necessary, one who would constantly watch and protect his pupil when the latter was passing through certain stages of development. We are told that the Hatha-Yoga methods (*very rarely* used in the higher schools and only under exceptional conditions) are safe enough for chosen pupils when employed under a qualified *Guru* or guide, but in the case of the rash, unprepared, and unprotected free-lance, the situation is very different and is likely to be very tragic.

Consider, for instance, the case of the *âsanas*, or yoga postures, which are more or less familiar in the West by photographs and descriptions. These are purely physical exercises employed by some yogis to prepare the body for the terrific strain caused by the arousing of powerful and dangerous inner forces unknown to Western science. More than seventy *âsanas* are known, most of them requiring a long preliminary preparation before they can be entered upon. Some of them are suited to one individual, others to another, and only the skilled and experienced *Guru* can apportion them properly. The pupil has no means of knowing the difference, and it is a very serious matter to work on a wrong *âsana*, the usual result, we are told, being death!

Not long ago, a thoughtful student of occultism published the results of a long search in “secret India” for higher wisdom. He found many so-called yogis, mostly fanatics or self-seekers who, he says, have discredited the very name of yogi among the younger generation of Hindûs and the educated classes. There were some genuine psychics and magicians, seemingly of a low order. But he also found a few sincere and earnest men who were not *showing off* in any way, and who did not recommend the psychic, so-called yoga practices of which so much has been heard in the West of late, but who give teachings of vital importance for spiritual progress. One South Indian teacher of whom the student rightly speaks with great respect and admiration, when asked what must be done to enter the Path, replied:

There is only one thing to be done. Look within yourself. *Do this in the right way* and you shall find the answer to all your problems. You have to ask yourself, Who am I? Know the real Self, and then the truth will shine forth within your heart like sunshine.

— Paul Brunton, *A Search in Secret India*

The student need not have gone to India to learn this. It is an essential in Theosophical books of spiritual training, such as Blavatsky’s *Voice of the Silence* and G. de Purucker’s *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, where the path of discipleship is plainly set forth in a way suitable for all peoples, Eastern or Western. But what is *the right way*? Can it be right to withdraw from active participation in the life of the world and to concentrate on

one's personal progress regardless of the welfare of others? Without fuller explanation, the advice just quoted might easily be misconstrued. The right way to gain self-knowledge is given in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*, the greatest Hindû authority on yoga philosophy and self-discipline. It strongly enforces the necessity of doing one's whole duty in the world, which means duty to others as well as to oneself — *dharma*. This kind of yoga, *Karma-yoga*, is most important for Westerners who need to learn how to direct their exuberant energies more wisely. It is "the performance of right action." The subject of impersonal, compassionate service is fully treated by Purucker in *Golden Precepts of Esotericism* from which we take a couple extracts:

The Law of Laws of the Universe is self-forgetfulness, not concentration of attention upon one's personal freedom, not even upon your individuality. The primal law of the Universe is living unto all things, not the doctrine that each must live for himself in order to develop for himself the spiritual powers within. The latter is true enough as a bald and imperfect statement; but it is also misleading, dangerous, unwise, and therefore unholy as a statement of esoteric training, unless properly qualified — always qualified with the accompanying doctrine: Give up thy life if thou wouldst find it. Live to benefit humanity, for this is the first step.... — p. 90

The man who thinks of others before himself is already great. The man who gives up his life that others may live is already great. The man who forgets himself in impersonal service to humanity is the greatest of all; and such a man reaps a destiny — because he has builded a corresponding character — which is godlike. — pp. 100-101

In Theosophy we find a high yoga which can liberate us, if we will follow it, from the illusions we mistake for real living. Such initiation depends upon the right use of the opportunities of daily life in the world. It is not necessary to withdraw from the world but from enslavement to its selfish demands. Do we not all wish to be able to discern without hesitation the wise from the foolish course of action, and to possess a sympathetic understanding of human nature so profound and unbiased that we can make no mistakes in our efforts to help our fellows? This higher clairvoyance will develop as the human race advances, but we can hasten its coming by following the yoga of duty and unselfishness. Some would call this "moral rearmament," a popular expression today, but the higher yoga includes more than is usually meant by those words. As it becomes better understood, so will earnest students feel the stirring of intuitive faculties and, when they can be trusted not to misuse them, very marvelous powers will be allowed to develop, and very surprising expansions of consciousness will take place.

We have to fight our own battles, and it is an old saying that, like the poet, "the Adept becomes, he is not made." We can find guides who will



warn us of the pitfalls in the path, teachers who can bring our hidden weaknesses to light and show us how to overcome them; but we must be our own redeemers. There is no “vicarious atonement” on the yoga path but there is help, and, as mentioned previously, “When the disciple is ready the Teacher will appear.” Though it is a great blessing to have such an opportunity, the process of purification is bound to bring some unexpected and unpleasant revelations which must be honestly faced and conquered. But the sincere disciple expects this and does not ask the teacher to humor his egotism. On the other hand, there is increasing joy in the self-discipline which gradually reveals the fact that the self-centered *animal-man*, however intellectual, is not the real, immortal man, “for whom the hour shall never strike,” and that we have everything to gain and nothing to lose by making the true Self the Master.

The noblest yoga teachings of ancient India, such as *The Crest Jewel of Wisdom* by Śankarâchârya or the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*, present the essentials for high spiritual development without a trace of psychism or the lower forms of magic which disfigure portions of the mass of Hindû literature called the Tantras, and from which many of the Western ‘yoga’ or so-called ‘occult’ books derive their questionable and often dangerous information. Śankarâchârya and the writer of the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* teach those methods of self-government which open the path to spiritual wisdom. Some extracts from Judge’s rendition of the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* (*passim*) will indicate this line of instruction:

When the man, so living, centers his heart in the true Self and is exempt from attachment to all desires, he is said to have attained to yoga.... In this system of Yoga no effort is wasted, nor are there any evil consequences, and even a little of this practice delivereth a man from great risk.... There is no purifier in this world to be compared to spiritual knowledge; and *he who is perfected in devotion findeth spiritual knowledge springing up spontaneously in himself in the progress of time....* Such illuminated sages whose sins are exhausted, who are free from delusion, who have their senses and organs under control, *and devoted to the good of all creatures*, obtain assimilation with the Supreme Spirit.... Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility; the wise who see the truth will communicate it unto thee, and knowing which thou shalt never again fall into error.... (italics ours)

Śankarâchârya writes:

Soul-vision belongs to him who is free from passion; steady inspiration belongs to the soul-seer.... The first cause of Freedom is declared to be an utter turning back from lust after unenduring things. Thereafter Restfulness, Control, Endurance, a perfect Renouncing of all acts that cling and stain... himself well-controlled, he gains the fruit and the reward, and his reward is the Real.... For the Self, all that is seen is but mirage; it lasts but for a

moment, we see, and know it is not “I”; how could “I know all” be said of the personal self that changes every moment?

— *Oriental Department Papers*, 1895-6, *passim*

It is indeed significant that Krishna, the inner divinity, does not teach Arjuna in the solitude of the hermitage, but in the clash of arms on the battlefield, which represents the activities and trials of the practical life in the world.

## THE BUDDHAS OF COMPASSION

In India the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* is the great classic of the Hindû yoga schools, and it is frequently mentioned or quoted by the Mahâtmas and H. P. Blavatsky with high appreciation. It is indispensable for all serious aspirants to knowledge of the self, but it does not plainly express the sublime expression of Divine Compassion which the Buddha teaches in his yoga of the Great Renunciation and which we are about to consider. H. P. Blavatsky seems to have felt this, and toward the close of her life she gave us that magnificent illumination from Eastern sacred literature, *The Voice of the Silence*, which she translated and annotated for “the Few” who ardently desire to live the Theosophical ideal and serve humanity “to the endless end.” It stands as a model guide of Theosophical *yoga*. From this little volume we can learn the principles on which the training of the chelas of the Masters is founded and which, when widely adopted, will not only clear our vision to see eternal things, but will make the world an infinitely better place to live in. In regard to *compassion*, we find in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Canst thou destroy divine COMPASSION? Compassion is no attribute. It is the LAW of LAWS — eternal Harmony, Alaya’s SELF; a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting Right, and fitness of all things, the law of love eternal. — pp. 69-70 orig. ed.

Alaya is the “Oversoul” of Emerson. It “reflects itself in every object in the universe” (*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 48). The same teaching of compassion is an essential of true Christianity: “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” And “he who loveth God loveth his brother also.” (1 John, iv.)

Many of the aphorisms quoted from Mahâyâna teachings in Dr. Evans-Wentz’s *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* state the essential teachings of *The Voice of the Silence*, self-sacrifice and love for humanity being the guiding rules. For instance:

Unless the mind be trained to selflessness and infinite compassion, one is apt to fall into the error of seeking liberation for self alone. — p. 75

The smallest amount of merit dedicated to the good of others is more precious than any amount of merit devoted to one's own good. — p. 90

If only the good of others is sought in all that one doeth, no need is there to seek benefit for oneself. —p. 90

The disregard of phenomenalism by the true yogi is plainly stated:

For him who hath attained the Sublime Wisdom, it is the same whether he be able to exercise miraculous powers or not. — p. 92

The last quotation from the Yoga treatises relates to a teaching which is the very heart and soul of *The Voice of the Silence*. It is the most sublime possibility of spiritual aspiration:

The fact that there are Those who have attained *Bodhic* Enlightenment and are able to return to the world as Divine Incarnations and work for the deliverance of humanity and of all living things till the time of the dissolution of the physical universe sheweth the virtue of the Holy *Dharma*.  
— p. 95

This refers to the 'great renunciation,' an ideal higher than any other that is offered to the world today; and it speaks well for the Tibetans that they give greater honor to such holy men (Bodhisattvas or Nirmānakāyas) than to any other advanced Yogi or 'saint,' however exalted. Associated with this is the problem of the *Pratyeka-Buddhas*, about whom some misunderstanding has prevailed, even among certain Theosophists, although H. P. Blavatsky makes it clear enough in her *original* edition of *The Voice of the Silence* and in *The Theosophical Glossary*. Certain reprints of the former omit the significant passages! Owing to its importance we must devote some space to this matter.

Dr. Evans-Wentz rightly states that the ultimate object of Buddhism is the liberation of man from ignorance in its deepest sense, *Mâyâ*, which we inadequately translate as "Illusion." But, as he points out, the Buddha taught that this desirable end, the attainment of Nirvāna, can be deferred by those devoted souls who are willing to follow the highest path of self-abnegation and to make the *great renunciation*. This means that the candidate for spiritual Mastership resolves never to pass out of the *Samsāra* or "phenomenal world-consciousness" into the ineffable bliss of *Nirvāna* until the weary pilgrims in all the worlds have reached the culmination of their possibilities in this *manvantara*. This is surely the highest possible manifestation of Universal Oneness! The holy men {ones} who have returned to help the world at the cost of their own progress are called Buddhas of Compassion in contradistinction to the Pratyeka Buddhas, whose ideal is not so exalted. According to the most

authoritative Tibetan Mahâyânists, and endorsed by the Lama Samdup, the accepted view in respect to the Pratyeka Buddhas is the following, as presented by Dr. Evans-Wentz:

Self-Enlightened (Skt. *Pratyeka*) Buddhas do not teach the Doctrine publicly, but merely do good to those who come into personal contact with Them, whereas Omniscient Buddhas, of Whom was the Buddha Gautama, preach the Doctrine widely....

The *Gurus* of the Great Symbol School... teach that *Nirvâna* is not to be regarded as a final state. wherein its realizer selfishly abides in absolute rest and bliss. That is to say, *Nirvâna* is not a state to be realized for one's own good alone, but for the sake of the greater good which will accrue to every sentient thing merely in virtue of a realization of It. Thus it is that in Tibet all aspirants for the Divine Wisdom, for the Full Enlightenment known as *Nirvâna*, take the vow to attain the state of the *Bodhisattva*, or Great Teacher. The vow implies that the *Nirvânic* State will not be finally entered, by the one taking the vow, until all beings, from the lowest in sub-human kingdoms... are safely led across the Ocean of the *Sangsâra* to the Other Shore. Southern Buddhists are inclined to regard *Nirvâna*, at least when attained by *Pratyeka* (or Non-teaching) Buddhas, as a state of finality. Mahâyânists, however, say that *Nirvâna* is a state of mind reached as a result of evolutionary spiritual unfoldment, and that it cannot, therefore, be regarded as a final state, inasmuch as evolution has no conceivable ending, being an eternal progression.

— *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, pp. 94, 144

Here we learn that the Pratyeka Buddhas are highly advanced in spirituality, yet H. P. Blavatsky speaks of their "Spiritual Selfishness"! This peculiar expression caused ill-advised editors of certain reprints of *The Voice of the Silence*, wherein it occurs, to suppress her remarks on that subject under the plea that they had been written hastily without due consideration! She, however, repeated them in her *Theosophical Glossary*, published at a later date. G. de Purucker has explained the apparent difficulty in his *Golden Precepts of Esotericism* from which we extract a few passages, as the subject is of great importance to students of the "Right-hand Path":

[The Pratyeka Buddhas are] very great men, very holy men, very pure men in every way, whose knowledge is wide and vast and deep, whose spiritual stature is great; but when they reach Buddhahood, instead of feeling the call of almighty Love to return and help those who have gone less far, they go ahead into the Supernal Light — pass onwards and enter the unspeakable bliss of *Nirvâna* — and leave humanity behind. Such are the Pratyeka Buddhas. Though exalted, nevertheless they do not rank in unutterable sublimity with the Buddhas of Compassion.

The Pratyeka Buddha, he who achieves Buddhahood for himself, does not do it selfishly, however; does not do it merely in order to gratify self,

and he does no harm to others; if he did he could never reach even his solitary Buddhahood. But he does it and achieves Nirvâna automatically, so to speak,...

It is a wonderful paradox that is found in the case of the Pratyeka Buddha — this name *Pratyeka* means “each for himself.” But this spirit of each for himself is just the opposite of the spirit governing the Order of the Buddhas of Compassion, because in the Order of Compassion the spirit is: give up thy life for all that lives....

The time comes when the Pratyeka Buddha, holy as he is, noble in effort and in ideal as he is, reaches a state of development where he can go no farther on that path. But, contrariwise, the one who allies himself from the very beginning with all Nature, and with Nature’s heart, has a constantly expanding field of work, as his consciousness expands and fills that field; and this expanding field is simply illimitable, because it is boundless Nature herself. He becomes utterly at one with the spiritual Universe; whereas the Pratyeka Buddha becomes at one with only a particular line or stream of evolution in the Universe....

.... Thus the time comes when the Buddha of Compassion, although having renounced everything, will have advanced far beyond the state that the Pratyeka Buddha has reached; and when the Pratyeka Buddha in due course emerges from the Nirvânic state in order to take up his evolutionary journey again, he will find himself far in the rear of the Buddha of Compassion. — pp. 156-161

The Pratyeka path is not a *downward* path except in comparison with the “Secret Way,” the path of the Buddhas of Compassion, as H. P. Blavatsky calls it in *The Voice of the Silence*. At first the path is one, but finally the great choice has to be made, and the Pratyeka Buddha chooses the direction which leads away from the world of men, while the other takes the course in which “he remains in that glorious body he has woven for himself, invisible to uninitiated humanity, to watch over it and protect it,” as a Stone in the mystic “Guardian Wall.”

Gautama the Buddha heartened the average man by showing the way to break the terrifying and seemingly endless cycles of deaths and rebirths, the turning of the Wheel of Karma, during which we forge the fetters which hold us back. By following the Good Law faithfully we may reach the unspeakable bliss of Liberation in due time. But for those who were qualified by their overwhelming love for humanity, the Buddha set forth the self-sacrificing and sublime Path of the Great Renunciation.

The erroneous doctrine that Creation is divided into two distinct and opposite parts, spirit and matter, has been the root of much confusion. The higher Lamaism contains the important Theosophical teaching that it is possible for man by proper training to realize beyond a doubt the fundamental unity of the Universe. This has profound implications. The *Samsâra* (the phenomenal or mâyâvi) and the *Nirvâna* (the noumenal or spiritual aspect) are really One, a most significant principle which can be

studied in *The Secret Doctrine*. Only the illusion under which we live prevents us from realizing it. It is the basic principle behind the vital teaching in Theosophy that Oneness is a fact in Nature, and the way to discover it is by putting it into practice. Dr. Evans-Wentz, speaking of the Illuminated Sage, says that he comprehends:

... the root-nature of things, he sees phenomena from the view-point of noumena; and for him, therein, in the True State, there is neither the Ego, nor the non-ego, neither the *Sangsâra* nor *Nirvâna* but only Divine At-onement....

*Nirvâna* is, therefore, the liberating of the mind from the *sangsârically*-produced illusions of the human state, the arriving at Right Knowledge, the transcending of personality, or of ego, and the conquest of Life and the World. Truly, therefore, an Enlightened One is called a Conqueror. In the rapturous words of Asanga, "Thenceforth his one joy is to bring Enlightenment to all living things."

— *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, p. 19

In another place Dr. Evans-Wentz refers to the Tibetan tribute in which the Conqueror of Mâyâ is called a Master of Life and Death, a Light in the Darkness, a Guide to the Bewildered, and a Liberator of the Enslaved, and, in the case of a *Bodhisattva*, a Stone in the "Guardian Wall" that protects humanity throughout the ages.

On pages 43-44 of *The Mahâtma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, an interesting remark is made by the Mahâtma K.H. on this subject:

When our great Buddha — the patron of all the adepts, the reformer and the codifier of the occult system, reached first *Nirvana* on earth, he became a Planetary Spirit; *i.e.* — his spirit could at one and the same time rove the interstellar spaces in *full consciousness*, and continue at will on Earth in his original and individual body. For the divine Self had so completely disfranchised itself from matter that it could create at will an inner substitute for itself, and leaving it in the human form for days, weeks, sometimes years, affect in no wise by the change either the vital principle or the physical mind of its body. By the way, that is the highest form of adeptship man can hope for on our planet. But it is as rare as the Buddhas themselves, the last Khobilgan who reached it being Sang-Ko-Pa [Tsong-khapa] of Kokonor (XIV Century) the reformer of esoteric as well as of vulgar Lamaism.







