

Reincarnation:

A Lost Chord in Modern Thought

By Leoline L. Wright

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Chapter 1

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 our 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 one 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 each person to the universe and shows that his individual consciousness is a ray of the universal cosmic consciousness. It starts out by emphasizing that we each are 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, humans, 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 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 human beings 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. We came from former cycles of evolution and resumed a 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 men and women 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 (see *The Secret Doctrine*, volume 2).

Theosophy, therefore, begins with preexistence 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. Our innermost self 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, xvii

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., xxv

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.*, xx

In the human race we call this process of rebirth or reimpodiment by the word *reincarnation*, which means "refleshing," or taking on again a garment or body of flesh. There are various names for the different forms of reimpodiment which pertain to all beings from the highest to the lowest, but here we are concerned only with that form of reimpodiment 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 self — 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. 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 us, then, first of all try to realize that we are in our inmost nature a divine consciousness or ego; that this ego which is ourself has always existed, and shall never cease to live and grow, and develop towards perfection. Let us set our desire and will to realize our oneness with this divine ego and to bring it out in our daily life as a larger, deeper individuality than that of our personal consciousness. We will then enter upon a new life. We will become a creator, a self-generator of our own illimitable divine destiny. We 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 ourselves as sevenfold beings. But in restricting our study now to the subject of reincarnation it will be necessary to regard ourselves 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 our two natures 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 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. 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 us which reincarnates, then, is the spiritual ego, the divine individuality. The following words of Dr. de Purucker will help us better to understand the ego and its relation to ourselves:

First, then, there is the activity of the monad, the highest. During the process of incarnation the activities of this monad develop the intermediate nature which ensouls soul after soul, and this is the real meaning of this old Greek word metempsychosis; and these souls thus invigorated, inspired, and driven by the ensouling monad, ensoul body after body, which is metempsychosis, or reincarnation, as the word is commonly and properly used. — *Man in Evolution*, chapter 14

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

Chapter 3

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 environments — 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.

Man is an individuality. He has free will. He is changing from day to day, from year to year, from life to life. He is not static. He is building now what his character will be in his next incarnation, . . .
. — *Man in Evolution*, chapter 18

What is true of brain-memory is also true of the personality. As indicated in Chapter 1, 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 (as explained in Chapter 4) 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 us, as far as our free will does not prevent, against those things which hinder our evolution. Evolution always looks forward, is constructive, builds afresh and on developing patterns.

Foremost among hindrances to evolution would be a constant preoccupation with the past. We are supplied by the laws of the cosmos with an adequate memory of our own past and that of humanity, all that we need to use: we are protected in the very nature of things from a memory of details which would burden, distract, and bring suffering to our 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 people today, a feeling that life as we know it has been lived out, exhausted of its possibilities. Mankind 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 our 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. We must use our 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.

Chapter 4

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 Oriental 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 reflexion 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

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 theosophical literature it has been often explained, as in the following passage:

In the application of this word to the life-atoms, . . . it means, briefly, that the life-atoms which in their aggregate compose man's lower principles, at and following the change that men call death, migrate or transmigrate or pass into other bodies to which these life-atoms are psychomagnetically attracted, be these attractions high or low — and they are usually low, because their own evolutionary development is as a rule far from being advanced. — G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed., p. 315

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 our 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. Mankind must somewhere meet the consequences of its thoughts and actions, its 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:

Every act we do; every thought we think, affects our conduct; thus each must have its inevitable

effect, strictly proportionate to the force which gives it birth. The point to emphasize here is: where does that force or energy express itself in results? After death only, or in future lives? The answer is both, but mostly in future lives on earth, because an earth-force can find no effectual manifestation of itself in spheres not of earth.. — *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed., p. 359

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, and 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 human spiritual development proceeds we 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 mankind 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, xxxvii

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.

Section 2

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Chapter 5

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.

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

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, chapter 3

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. But it may prove clarifying to review the chief reasons why the human ego, 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 reimpodiment: 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 reimpody themselves. Even so does a celestial body reimpody itself — star, sun, planet, what not. — *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, xxv

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

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 unkindnesses, 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 loves and hates, and of magnetic attractions of the hosts of life-atoms composing man's constitution, visible and invisible, and of yearnings of many types, all of which collect during the various life-terms on earth into the human soul and mind, and which may be briefly called "thoughtdeposits" — emotional, mental, and psychic tendencies — all of which will energize the reincarnating entity's destiny until evolution finally transfers man's consciousness as an individual being to higher planes . . . — G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed., p. 473

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.

The majority, however, of the life-atoms which build man's constitution are his children; therefore they are psychomagnetically attracted back to the reimpodying ego on its return journey to the new earth-life . . . — *Ibid.*, p. 419

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 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 we express bodily actions and functions by means of the life-atoms which make up our body until death occurs and liberates them to pursue their transmigrations. Likewise we have our mental-emotional and also our spiritual life-atoms through which our 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:

these life-atoms of man's intermediate nature are freed from the overlordship of the monadic ray and form a host of interior planes. All these multitudes of various kinds of life-atoms are attracted to other human beings . . . — Ibid., pp. 416-17

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. 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 in Chapter 2. 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 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. (For a description of the physical processes of reincarnation, see *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3r & rev. ed., chapter 18, "Birth and Before Birth.")

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

the re embodying ego enters into earth-life where it is drawn magnetically and psychically to the family or to the particular human womb where vibrational conditions most similar to its own exist. Its more material force and substance connect psychomagnetically through its own astral-vital fluid with the laya-center of a human generative particle when the appropriate time comes; and from the instant of conception, "the appropriate time," the reincarnating entity overshadows that particle as it grows from conception through the intrauterine life, birth, childhood, into adulthood.
— *The Esoteric Tradition*, pp. 3rd & rev. ed., 483-4

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 psychomagnetic 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 the Devachan before he returns; . . . That is the rule; there are exceptions, of course. -- *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, xxv

This brief sketch may give some idea of the complex nature of the doctrine 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 reimpodiment.

Chapter 6

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. And 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 philosophy of life, growing out of the facts of nature itself, 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 reimpodiment. Reimpodiment 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 prevails everywhere throughout Mother Nature . . . Hence it is that death and birth for human beings are equally cyclical or periodical. We are no exception to nature's cosmic modes and functions. How could we be? We are not different from the universe, for we are inseparable and integral parts thereof. We are not out of it nor apart from it, nor can we ever be so. Man cannot free himself from the universe; nothing can. Whatever he does, he does of necessity, but not by Fate, because he is the creator of his own destiny, which, precisely because it is throughout time progressively enacted in the bosom of the universe, of necessity, therefore, is continuously governed by the inherent laws of periodicity ruling therein. — *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed., p. 356

Let us now examine what a belief in reincarnation ethically implies. First of all it changes a person'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 he will enjoy working it out. It is quite likely that he 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 on to 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. — Chapter 4

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 mahatmas 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 a century. 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

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.

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 death. — G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed., p. 484

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. — Chapter 14

Above all else reincarnation demonstrates that brotherhood 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. -- *The Secret Doctrine* 1:17

(Metempsychosis is a word of wider meaning than reincarnation. It refers to the reimpodiment of the spiritual ego in other spheres than that of earth — in the inner, spiritual worlds.) 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. Mankind 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 universal life. In the kingdoms below the human, 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 mahatmas 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 mahatmas, 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 mahatmas, 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 mankind. From time to time, as already said, the mahatmas 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 mankind.

A further development of this aspect of universal brotherhood 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 our 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 subhuman kingdoms are the evolved productions of the thoughts and vital emanations of the human race. — *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, chapter 2

Brotherhood, 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 brotherhood 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, and helped by our 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 brotherhood, which we learn through the long course of our evolutionary progress through reincarnations among our fellows, is expressed in *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, where Dr. de Purucker gives us the cosmic basis of brotherhood:

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. — Chapter 3

Chapter 7

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 a century, 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 re-embodiment 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:

Sometimes, because the background of Esoteric Philosophy was more or less lost sight of, one or another of these aspects rose so high in importance as virtually to exclude the other forms or aspects — a fact which brought about an obscuration of the all-comprehensive root teaching. This historical loss of the fundamental doctrine, with its over-accentuation of one aspect of the general doctrine, accounts for the difference in form of presentation, and for the defects in substance, that

the teaching concerning the postmortem adventures of the human ego has taken in the various archaic literatures of the world. — G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed., p. 311

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 Qabbalah, 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 Neoplatonist, teach it. 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 2, chapter 8, and book 3, chapter 8.)

Dr. de Purucker, in *The Esoteric Tradition*, quotes a passage from this work of Josephus where the doctrine of rebirth is mentioned, and comments:

There is here no argument about a doctrine which the orator lugs awkwardly into his discourse as being something foreign and new, in other words, a religious and philosophical novelty; but in each case the reference to the assumption of new bodies is made as being commonplace to his readers, and hence as being part of the psychology in which they lived. It is obvious that had the doctrines been unorthodox or strange they would not have been introduced at all, because weakening to his argument. — p. 328, 3rd & rev. ed.

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 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 9:2). 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 11:14, Jesus said of John the Baptist: "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come," a statement which he seems to repeat in Mark 9:13.

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 had reached such a stage of development that it all but became the dominant state-religion of the then wide-flung Roman Empire. In fact, it had so much that was similar, both in doctrine and in certain forms, to early Christianity that this fact was commented upon by writers of the time, both Christian and pagan. As it happened, Christianity finally prevailed over Mithraism as the dominant religious system of Europe . . . — *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed., p. 467

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 people 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 schools 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: 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. (See *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed., chapter 12, "Reimbodiment as Taught through the Ages.")

Chapter 8

Reincarnation and 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 forever.

The beginning of our period of evolution as human beings took place on this planet as briefly sketched in Chapter 2. 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 human vehicle 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 human 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 — 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 human beings, as is fully explained by H. P. Blavatsky in volume 2 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, already referred to in Chapter 4. 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, mankind 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 willpower 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 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 mahatmas, our elder brothers, and the successors of these earlier spiritual guides to mankind, 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 reïmbodied planet as helpers and instructors to guide our brothers of the lower kingdoms who are now mounting the evolutionary stairway towards humanhood in our rear. 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, our 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

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*, chapter 2

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 of all things visible and invisible, through the developing of his inner self into intellectual understanding: recognizing that the essence of the universe is the heart of his heart, the soul of his soul, and the spirit of his own spirit. Then, having obtained vision, he is freed from the wheel of revolving destiny. He has attained wisdom and freedom; he has become a master of and in life, instead of remaining a slave of the wheel. — *Man in Evolution*, chapter 3

There are men and women 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 mahatmas, to found the Theosophical Society and restore the ancient wisdom to humanity. Nor need people 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 what 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. — *Questions We All Ask*, Series I, xxxvi

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 man, which otherwise an ordinary man would achieve only after many ages. — *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, chapter 20

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.*, chapter 47

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

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 Occident today. — *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, chapter 47

According to theosophy the outlook for mankind 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 human destiny as glimpsed through even this brief study of reincarnation:

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. . . . I turn my eyes to greet the rising sun. — Chapter 3