



*Exploring*

**THEOSOPHY**

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## Preface

This collection of articles, condensed and edited from theosophical publications, is an invitation to inquirers to explore and enjoy the depth and beauty of theosophy. The Theosophical Society is dedicated to making universal brotherhood better understood and more deeply felt in human hearts. Its philosophy, drawn from the universal wisdom tradition of mankind, offers timeless principles that stimulate intuitive knowing and cast light on any question. These principles provide tools that can help students discover truth within themselves and unlock the mysteries of nature, fostering altruism and compassion for all beings.

## What Is Theosophy?

THERE IS A WISDOM-TRADITION THAT ONCE was universally known by every people on the face of the globe, a common treasury of inspiration and truth from which the saviors and benefactors of mankind draw. Known variously in different eras as the perennial philosophy, the *gnosis* of Greek and early Christian thought, the esoteric tradition, or the Mystery-teachings of the sanctuary — it is this god-wisdom that Jesus shared with the fisherfolk of Galilee; that Gautama imparted to ferryman and prince; and that Plato immortalized in letters and dialogues, in fable and myth. Today the modern presentation of this wisdom is called theosophy.

What is theosophy? The word is of Greek origin, from *theos*, “god,” and *sophia*, “wisdom,” meaning “wisdom concerning divine matters.” As a term it has a venerable history, having been used by Neoplatonic and Christian writers from the 3rd to the 6th century AD, as well as by Qabbalists and Gnostics in an attempt to describe how the One becomes the many, how divinity or God manifests itself in a series of emanations throughout all the kingdoms of nature. It was in use during medieval and renaissance times, Jakob Boehme being called the Teutonic Theosopher on account of his vision of man as microtheos and microcosmos.

The word *theosophia* has also been linked to Ammonius Saccas of Alexandria who, in the 3rd century AD, is said to have imparted to his pupils a theosophical system or school of thought in an attempt to fuse into a universal synthesis the seemingly divergent elements of the archaic wisdom then current in that teeming metropolis. Of exemplary

character, he was called *theodidaktos*, “god-taught,” on account of the divine inspirations he received. Ammonius exacted the strictest morality and although no record of his teachings or practices was made, providentially his pupil Plotinus later recorded for posterity the salient teachings of his master. Thus we have the *Enneads* or “Nine” books of Neoplatonism, which have exerted a profound influence through succeeding centuries.

Later in Europe, Qabbalists, Alchemists, the early Rosicrucians and Freemasons, Fire Philosophers, Theosophers, and others pursued the self-same purpose. Singly, and in secret associations, they held that the One, Divinity, the indefinable Principle, emanated forth from itself the entire universe, and that all beings and things within it will ultimately return to that source. More specifically, they sought to inject into the Christianity of their day the signal truth that mystical union with Divinity was *everyone’s* birthright because within each human being is a divine kernel.

Clearly, then, the theosophic endeavor, its teaching and practice, is not a new movement. It is ageless, rooted in the infinity of the past as firmly as it will be rooted in the infinity of aeons to come. Theosophy has no creed, no dogma, no set of beliefs that must be accepted, because truth is not something beyond or outside us, but in fact is *within*. Nonetheless, it comprises a coherent body of teachings about man and nature that have been expressed in various ways in the sacred traditions of the world.

The modern theosophical movement began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century — a timely intervention, for the preceding decades had witnessed a radical upheaval in spiritual and intellectual thought. World consciousness was ripe for change: on the one hand, rampant materialism both in theology and science had a stranglehold on independent inquiry and, on the other, many people hungry to believe in the immortality of the soul were being led astray by the will-o’-the-wisp of spiritualistic phenomena. A cosmic vision of man and his role in the universe was sorely needed, one that would restore trust in divine law and offer meaningful explanation of the seemingly cruel injustices of earthly existence.

H. P. Blavatsky, a woman of extraordinary gifts powered by a fearless devotion to truth and to the eradication of the *causes* of human

suffering, became the leading exponent for the modern theosophical movement. One of a long line of “transmitters” of the universal god-wisdom, she cast into the thought-atmosphere of the world electrifying ideas, innovative ideas, ideas which would revolutionize the thinking of mankind. Chief among these was that *we are a oneness*. She encouraged the investigation and study of the spiritual heritage of all peoples, in order to eradicate the conceit that any race or people is the “chosen one,” has the only true religion and the one and only God. Even a casual examination of other belief systems broadens our horizons. It is a thrilling experience to discern the same golden thread running through every tradition, whether religious, philosophic, or so-called primitive; we feel at once a sympathy, an empathy, with all who hold or cherish these truths. This in itself makes for a oneness, a feeling of understanding, a linkage of destiny.

Every human being is a copy in miniature of what suns or stars are — living divinities housed in temples of matter. We have as vast a pilgrimage behind us as ahead of us: a past filled with long cycles of experience through which the soul has matured to its present status, and a future of limitless possibilities during which we will evolve out of humanhood into the full glory of godhood. HPB makes no claim to having originated these teachings; rather, she was a transmitter in current language of “a select number of fragments” from the esoteric records.

HPB invites us to consider a few “fundamental conceptions which underlie and pervade the entire system of thought” (*The Secret Doctrine* 1:13) on which the sacred science of antiquity and the world’s religious and philosophical schools are founded. Reduced to essentials, these are:

- 1) That there is an eternal, omnipresent, immutable Principle which cannot be defined as it is “beyond the range and reach of thought,” yet from It all life emanates or flows forth. Theosophy has no name for this Principle except to call it THAT — the infinite, the uncreate, the rootless root, the cause without a cause. These phrases are merely an effort to describe the indescribable, the infinity of infinities, the boundless essence of divinity which we cannot define. In short, it posits that marvelous primordial essence which *Genesis* calls the darkness on the face of the deep — that darkness which was sparked into light when the ‘elohim breathed on the waters of Space.



2) That universes like “manifesting stars” appear and disappear in tidal flux and ebb, a rhythmic pulsation of spirit and matter, with every life-spark in the cosmos, from stars to atoms, pursuing the same cyclic pattern. There is continual birth and death, appearance and disappearance, of these “sparks of Eternity” as the rhythm of life brings forth ever new life forms for returning worlds: galaxies and suns, human beings, animals, plants, and minerals. All beings and things have their birth and death cycles, because birth and death are gateways of life.

3) That all souls, being at their heart the same in essence as the “Universal Over-Soul,” are required to undergo the full cycle of imbodyments in material worlds in order to bring into active expression, by self-effort, their divine potentialities.

Why does divinity manifest so many times and in so many different forms? Every divine seed, every spark of God, every unit of life, must go through the great cycle of experience, from the most spiritual realms to the most material, in order to gain firsthand knowledge of every condition of being. It must learn by becoming every form, i.e., by imbodying in them as it pursues its course through the arc of matter.

Here’s a vision to lift the heart: to *feel* that every human being is a necessary part of the cosmic purpose is to give dignity to our strivings, to the urge to evolve. The reason for this grand “cycle of necessity” is twofold: whereas we start as unself-conscious god-sparks, by the time we have experienced all there is to learn in every life form, not only shall we have awakened into fuller awareness the multitudes of atomic lives which serve as our bodies on the various planes, but we ourselves shall have become gods in our own right.

When we grasp the intimate relationship of these three postulates to ourselves, we come to see how all the other teachings flow forth from them; they are as keys to a larger understanding of rebodyment, cycles, karma, what happens after death, the cause and relief of suffering, the nature of man and cosmos, the interplay of involution/evolution, and more — all the while the awakening soul is pursuing the eternal quest.

The theosophical philosophy is vast as the ocean: “unfathomable in its deepest parts, it gives the greatest minds their fullest scope, yet, shallow enough at its shores, it will not overwhelm the understanding of a

child.”\* Even though its truths go deeply into cosmological intricacies, a beautiful simplicity runs through the whole: *oneness* is the golden key. We *are* our brothers, no matter what our racial, social, educational, or religious background. And this affinity is not limited to the human kingdom: it takes in every atomic life that is evolving as we are — all within the webwork of hierarchies that compose this pulsating organism we call our universe. Assuredly our great error has been to regard ourselves as discrete particles adrift in a hostile universe, rather than as god-sparks struck from the central hearth of Divinity — as intrinsically one in essence as the flame of the candle is one with the stellar fires in the core of our sun.

Of course, acceptance of the principle of universal brotherhood is relatively simple compared to *living* it. All of us have difficulty at times living harmoniously with ourselves, let alone with others. Perhaps a first step would be to accept ourselves, to be friends with the whole of our nature, recognizing that when we do so we are accepting our lower tendencies along with our higher potentialities. In this acceptance we automatically are accepting others, their frailties as well as their grandeur. This is brotherhood in action, for it dispels those subtle blockages that bar us from feeling we all are units of one human life-wave.

Already the theme of our oneness with nature has revolutionized present-day thinking and lifestyles. Once again we are beginning to see ourselves as participants in an ecosystem of cosmic dimension. We are discovering that we, the observers, measurably affect not only the object we are observing but the entire complement of evolving entities. Best of all, we are realizing, though not sufficiently as yet, that we are *one* humanity, and that what you or I do to help another benefits all, striking a resonant chord in the ongoing symphony that together we are composing. Though the burden of our inhumanities is indeed heavy, the universe must rejoice over the slightest movement of compassion in the soul of even a single human being.

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\*William Q. Judge, *The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 1.

## Man's Search for Truth

TRUTH IS ELUSIVE. Scholars delving into the past; scientists seeking to explain the universe, the atom, the butterfly; neighbors conversing over the back fence endeavor to see things as they truly are. This phrase, *things as they are*, is a potent one. We might tentatively adopt it as a definition of truth: things-as-they-are as distinct from what they *appear* to be to our senses and limited minds.

Our search for truth goes hand in hand with our ability to comprehend it. Opening our natures to be more, to understand more profoundly and compassionately, is part of the process. Those who are larger of heart and mind can see further beneath appearances; they are not bound by our narrow horizons.

What prevents us from seeing things as they truly are? There is of course the illusion of appearances, called *māyā* in the Orient. Innumerable examples confirm that appearances are deceiving; also our preconceived ideas stand in our way. We see only what we are prepared to see. We approach reality with glasses already tinted. Each era and each culture tints its glasses differently. We demand that reality show itself to us as *we* think it should be, instead of the way it *is*. Our human natures are not open and flexible enough; our minds are not free of preconceptions, nor our intuitions sufficiently alive to penetrate to the heart of things. As yet we are only partly evolved or awakened.

Everyone has a kind of longing to know how things really are. "How are you?" we ask a friend. We wish to know. We have ties with this person. His welfare and ours are connected. If he is not fit, we will feel ourselves somehow diminished. What is the truth of him? He visits a

doctor, let us say, and is scanned and tested in a multitude of ways and pronounced in good health. What do all these facts tell us about him? Practically nothing. This is because the most important aspects of a human being are invisible. It is impossible to discover the actual person from appearances only, for he is a great deal more. Should we not apply the same reasoning to other areas? To birds and flowers, to the wind and the rain, to comets and suns? Do not these things have an inward reality behind the outward seeming? The poets feel this keenly. That is what poetry is all about.

What I am trying to say is that we should leave ourselves as open, as susceptible to the inside truth as we are alert to observe and classify visible phenomena. To get the feel of things is often more important than to analyze them, to measure and to weigh them. The quest for truth is not an intellectual game. It is a looking within and a looking without. Nothing we see outside would mean anything unless it sparked something in us. How may we know beauty, grandeur, courage, unless these qualities are within us to respond? In this sense, truth lives in us as a divine potential or, as Browning phrased it: "There is an inmost centre in us all,/Where truth abides in fullness." From this quiet center come gleams and insights. The mystic or sage, artist or poet, expresses these glimpses, and these have the power to awaken us.

Truth resides in the heart of the heart of all beings, great and small. Some have unfolded more understanding of this truth. We are at the human stage of comprehension and self-expression. Birds are birds by reason of the same process. Gods are gods because they have unfolded the godlike. Hence truth-seeking has throughout the ages been linked with the idea of the path, the path of unfolding latent capacities. We are on this path leading to our flowering as human beings, whether or not we realize it. And when we extend our view to encompass many lives or reincarnations we realize we have the time scale needed for everyone to develop his higher potential. Those who have successfully accomplished this are the great teachers and philosophers: Christ, Buddha, Zoroaster, and a host of others, among them Plato and Pythagoras.

Truth needs no outside force, for it persuades by its innate veracity. What kind of truth are we looking for? Religious, philosophic, or scientific? It is sometimes believed that these three are incompatible. This is not the case, however, for they are facets of the one truth — in man, in

nature, in the cosmos. One person may approach reality from the spiritual point of view, another from the intellectual, a third from observing the physical world with all its marvels and beauty. They could no more contradict one another than the fact that I am a soul contradicts that I also have a body. Properly understood, the wisdom of each branch of learning can only augment and extend the others, for each approaches the same reality from a different angle.

The great universe surrounds us on every side. It is our parent; we were born of and from it. All that we are in the small, it must be on an immensely grander scale. We have only to step outside some night when the wise old stars are shining. Looking up into the immeasurable heavens something stirs within us, a feeling beyond the reaches of the finite mind. The soul yearns for an immensity it cannot grasp: deep calling to deep.

According to the old traditions, our universe has a certain structure and operates in certain ways. It was born as we were born, lives its life and, like us, will one day die, rest. And sometime in the far, far future it will be reborn. Religion, science, and philosophy seek to explain it and our relation to it. They search for the truth of it, approaching the problem from their respective points of view, using their own terms, but there can be no final statement of truth. To the degree that an individual penetrates the mystery and reports his findings honestly, to that degree will his conclusions coincide with the equally honest findings of others, whether these be metaphysical or physical. But when the spirit of free inquiry has fled an organization designed to house it, what is left are the empty ceremonial, the sterile, cerebral platitudes.

We are all learners sharing with one another, and we would learn very little if we consulted only those who hold our point of view. Often more is to be gleaned from those whose thoughts seem to differ from ours. But sometimes the barrier of semantics separates those whose beliefs, actually, may be very close. If one were to search for similarities rather than differences, he would find agreement in the broad area of general principles. What is the difference between the karma of the East and the sowing and reaping of the New Testament? Truth is one, it cannot be otherwise, but the paths to it are as numerous as are the searchers.

What this means is that all efforts through the ages to explain the cosmos are based, indeed must be based, on certain principles and experiences common to all, including the mystical and the poetical.

One way to keep truth alive and growing in our hearts is to reexpress it constantly. Otherwise we shall become worshipers of commas and semicolons, and truth will lie buried in unthinking mantras endlessly repeated. In the long reach of the moving centuries the living spirit of truth becomes entombed in its very institutions. Dogmas grow in the minds of men. Once symbols of the living message, they sooner or later become like shells found on some lonely beach, often beautiful, but a structure from which the life and meaning have fled. The answer to our search for truth does not lie in institutions, it lies in ourselves.

The spirit of the most high is in all things. In the wind moving against our faces, in the sparrow and the daisy and the pebble, in those who suffer and those who are glad, in the beautiful and in the ugly, and in the ugly made beautiful by the spirit within. The wisest of mankind have pictured man as a child of the cosmos. They saw the worlds that bestrew the fields of space as animated by cosmic divinities in whom we live and move and have our being; that the life that animates universes breathes in us also, and that we too are the beneficiaries of its serene laws.

Truth is out there and in here. It is the way things are in us and in our world. We are urged to search for it by forces within ourselves, soul qualities. How much will come to us through suffering? How much through joyful realization? How much in the day-to-day giving of our best to the calls of duty? How much through our love for companions, known and unknown, who travel the road of life with us?



Electricity was in the world from the beginning. How many million men observed its effects before one discovered it? Gold was in the world from the beginning. How many men pass where it lies hidden, until one digs and finds it! Wisdom was in the universe from the beginning, but only those whose minds are open to it can deduce the truth from what they see.

## Karma

**HUMAN LIFE IS FULL OF INEQUITIES:** differences in material conditions, opportunities, and abilities, as well as natural or man-made disasters which bring suffering to hundreds of people without any apparent cause on the part of the victims. Is there justice in such a world? Can the causes behind these events be found?

Certainly we do not live in a random universe. Physical cause and effect forms the basis of both scientific knowledge and day-to-day decisions. But we often fail to realize that the physical world is but the effect or outermost shell of a cosmos composed almost entirely of grades of consciousness and substance not readily perceived by our senses. It is made up of the bodies of living organisms, forming a limitless web of interconnected lives acting and reacting on each other.

This universal action and reaction, or cause and consequence, is called *karma*, a Sanskrit word meaning “action.” Although some traditions present this as the personal will of a divine being, karma is universal and impersonal, an inherent attribute of nature. Every act, thought, or feeling is an energy which has an impact on the universe. The universe then reacts as a matter of course, and sooner or later the force rebounds upon its source. Activities in harmony with natural patterns maintain and reinforce that harmony, which then is reflected back onto the generator; activities in conflict with the patterns of nature create disharmony, which is also reflected back on the initiator. Calling it punishment or reward is simply projecting our own feelings onto the natural process by which balance is restored after individuals, using their will, create causes.

Because we do not see the immediate cause of our character, circum-

stances, associations, joys, and sufferings, we are apt to explain them as chance, luck, fortune, or divine will. The inequalities in human life, however, are caused by the people involved, individually and as groups. This goes unrecognized, especially if we view ourselves as completely new at birth, instead of as the expression of a spiritual consciousness-center with a past history as long as that of the universe itself.

Beings who have reached the human stage have lived many lives on earth as a human being. They have built up, from within themselves and by reacting to circumstances, particular characteristics, and have reinforced certain abilities and lacks. Further, each individual, through contact with others, has set in motion causes which attract him to particular groups of people in order to experience the effects. Each human being is born with many tendencies and relationships awaiting the opportunity for expression and modification in a new set of circumstances. Considering the many causes we set in motion even in one lifetime, we cannot wonder at the variety of conditions in the world.

### **Why Don't We Remember the Causes?**

The reason we aren't consciously aware of many causes we have set in motion lies in our complex, compound structure. During life we identify almost completely with our personality and body, but this personality or everyday psychological self does not survive death intact any more than our body does. When the spiritual aspects withdraw from our psychological "body" after death, the forces holding it together dissipate, and it disintegrates into psychological "atoms" which circulate through nature just as the physical atoms of our body do after death. When the time comes for rebirth, most of this mental-emotional substance is gathered together again to form the new personality, and the recombined elements have no remembrance of the personality they helped form before. Nevertheless, because these atoms bear the impress of qualities and tendencies stamped upon them in the last imbodiment, the "new" personality is the direct result and serial continuation of the previous one. We are affected by this karma that we do not fully understand or remember because it is literally part of us, formed by us.

Nevertheless we are more than psychomental beings. Our spiritual aspects are enduring and retain the record of our past. If we centered our consciousness on these levels, we could know our past lives — though



we might find this a very sobering experience. As our everyday consciousness becomes more universal, it gradually grows toward its spiritual parent, until the time comes when we pass consciously through death and reïmbodiment and are able to know the causes that form our life.

### **Is Karma Fatalism?**

If everything has a cause and nothing results from chance, some people conclude that we must be trapped by the past into a predetermined, inescapable fate. Such a view overlooks the idea that we are not creatures only of matter or mind, but fundamentally identical in our inmost reaches with cosmic divinity. Every entity in nature has free will, even though its freedom is limited by its level of evolution and its relations with other entities. Yet these limitations do not mean we do not express our free will.

Our habits of thought, feeling, and action are powerful forces, and it is easy to drift along the route of least resistance. But if our desire and commitment are strong enough, we *can* change. While we must inevitably deal with the consequences of our actions, we need not be controlled by them. New karmic effects arise constantly from our reactions, motives, and attitudes, so that at every moment we are a new self-created entity. The personality which receives the effects of past karma may be quite changed from the one which originally made it, just as the mature person is usually different from what he was as a teenager, though he is the same individual and must deal with the consequences of the teenager's decisions. His present perspective may allow him to meet creatively even unfortunate effects of his past, transmuting something potentially negative into an opportunity to learn and grow.

By generating causes of a more harmonious quality we can mitigate and perhaps find positive aspects to much of the former inharmonious effects we have made, while planting seeds of a new kind for the future. Thus, karma allows us to choose and mold our destiny, giving us the opportunity to guide our life by governing ourselves and how we let circumstances affect us.

### **Karma and Compassion**

Sometimes karma is misinterpreted as a rationalization for callousness and for maintaining a status quo of suffering and injustice, indi-

vidually or socially. Such reasoning ignores the fact that it is not only a person's karma to experience trying situations, but also to have others there in a position to help. By remaining aloof from another, we create self-limiting karma in ourselves. As parts of one organic unity, identical in essence with each and every other part, it is our responsibility to assist others to the best of our ability. Compassion and fellow-feeling for all is a prime pathway of growth and the expression of what is truly and nobly human.

The key to understanding the present lies in recognizing that everything has a cause and will have an effect, for the universe and all in it have been formed by their past activities. We each have shaped ourselves through innumerable lives into exactly who we are at present, and by our current thoughts, actions, and desires are forming our future self. Our reactions to those around us set up a pattern of causes which must be worked out in future relationships with those individuals. And just as we are the great storehouse of our past karma, so is every other entity in nature its own karma. As human beings we are part of greater entities — such as the earth and solar system — which also create karma that affects humanity just as our actions affect the smaller lives which compose our bodies.

There is interaction and reaction among all things, for the universe is a complete unity, a single living organism, rather than a collection of superficially related parts as it sometimes appears to be. Each part affects the whole at every instant, and is affected by it, and these interrelations make the universe function as it does. Our lives have an impact on everything within and around us; what we choose to think and do and feel is not limited in its effect only to ourselves or to those we know. If we can see beyond the narrow, self-centered aspects of ourselves and live in accordance with the wider interests of the myriad beings which surround us, we will become a positive influence of planetary extent, creating karma which will be a present and future benediction.



Fear nothing, for every renewed effort raises all former failures into lessons, all sins into experiences. In the light of renewed effort the karma of all your past alters; it no longer threatens. It passes from the plane of penalty before the soul's eye, up to that of tuition.

## Reflections on *The Voice of the Silence*

Help Nature and work on with her; and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance. — *The Voice of the Silence*

AMONG H. P. BLAVATSKY'S writings her devotional classic *The Voice of the Silence* has had deep appeal through the years. The integrity of universal truth is evident in every page of this little volume derived from "The Book of the Golden Precepts," which for countless ages has guided the steps of mystic students in search of the spiritual path. The original *Precepts* contain about "ninety distinct little treatises," of which HPB memorized thirty-nine. Copies are engraved on thin discs, which are "generally preserved on the altars of the temples attached to centres" of the Mahāyāna schools. In her later years she translated and annotated a selection from the *Precepts*, fashioning this work of great beauty.

The *Voice* comprises three "Fragments" — The Voice of the Silence, The Two Paths, and The Seven Portals — devoted to awakening the lesser self to the higher Self whose urgings, wisdom, and soundless voice will not be fully understood until we *become* that Self, "the doer and the witness, . . . Light in the Sound, and the Sound in the Light."

Compassion is the motivating force in both Mahāyāna Buddhism and in The Theosophical Society. Noted Zen Buddhist scholar, Dr. D. T. Suzuki, wrote of *The Voice of the Silence*:

Undoubtedly Madame Blavatsky had in some way been initiated into the deeper side of Mahayana teaching and then gave out what she deemed wise to the Western world as Theosophy.

— *The Eastern Buddhist* (old series) 5:377

The divine oneness of life, the just and unerring operations of karma, and our cyclic rebirths here on earth, form the broad canvas on which aspects of human conflicts and possibilities are candidly presented. Also treated are various types of illusion stemming from the “heresy of separateness,” and the discipline and exercise of the pāramitās or virtues required of a genuine adept or teacher. These include charity, harmony in word and act, patience, fortitude, and indifference to pleasure and pain, which lead through dhyāna (contemplation) to enlightenment — prajñā. “The Two Paths” and “The Seven Portals” explain the differences between the path of the pratyeka buddha which culminates in the choice of nirvanic bliss for eons, and the path of the buddha of compassion who is moved to renounce his well-earned nirvana in order to remain on earth and help alleviate human suffering. The path “for self alone” is called the Dharma of the Eye or intellect, the external and transitory; the path for aiding others, the Dharma of the Heart, is the permanent and everlasting, known as the true seal of esoteric wisdom.

This earth is our home where for ages we have been harvesting the fruits of past actions and thoughts, sometimes joyous, sometimes filled with pain and suffering. It is referred to as the Hall of Sorrow — *Myalba* (hell) — because of the trials we have brought on ourselves in former lives. As we travel through the Hall of Learning to the Hall of Wisdom we gradually become aware that true joy comes from following the Dharma of the Heart, from sacrifice of the personal for the selfless and universal, of the darkness of fear for the heart-light of courage.

Many are the comforting thoughts on facing one’s karma positively, on the absolute justice of karmic action:

no efforts, not the smallest — whether in right or wrong direction — can vanish from the world of causes. E’en wasted smoke remains not traceless.  
 . . . The pepper plant will not give birth to roses, nor the sweet jessamine’s silver star to thorn or thistle turn.

— p. 34

The use of paradox in *The Voice* is fascinating to explore. A paradox presents two seemingly contradictory sides of the same truth as a means of awakening intuition and faculties other than the purely rational, preventing the mind from becoming fixed in one opinion by allowing it free rein to explore possibilities of meaning. Truth is forever vital and ongoing but, when boxed into a mindset, the vitality leaves it and

it becomes dogma: “the seeds of Wisdom cannot sprout and grow in airless space.”

The meaning of the path is a paradox wrapped up in paradoxes. Individually we are the path leading to the heart of the universe: “Thou art THYSELF the object of thy search.” Yet collectively, as human beings we are all on the path together, learning the lessons that belong to our state of self-consciousness. But being self-conscious is not synonymous with being aware of our spiritual promise. The challenges and opportunities are different for each one, according to the “Karmic progeny of all our former thoughts and deeds.” “The Teacher can but point the way. The Path is one for all, the means to reach the goal must vary with the Pilgrims.” We are already directing our own evolution, but assume greater responsibility for our every thought and act with each added degree of will and commitment that we inwardly make. As soon as we take one step forward with noble intent, life says “prove it,” and challenges increase. It is a long and varied way, as through trial and error we arrive at many dead ends and resort to detours along our journey. Yet there is always encouragement. “Remember . . . each failure is success, and each sincere attempt wins its reward in time”: “If Sun thou can’st not be, then be the humble planet. . . . Point out the ‘Way’ . . . as does the evening star to those who tread their way in darkness.”

The duality of the mind is an important paradox, for mind is the hub of our humanness and can be used either as “the playground of the senses” or as an instrument of soul-wisdom. We vacillate between the “I am I” consciousness and the “I am part of all things” awareness. Head-learning, unillumined by spirit, falls prey to the deceptive light of illusion that bewitches the senses and “blinds the mind,” pandering to egoism, selfishness, cruelty, and ambition, while humility and impersonality open doors to self-knowledge. On the very first page we learn: “The Mind is the great Slayer of the Real. Let the Disciple slay the Slayer.” This is a mandate to conquer the negative aspect of the mind and be in command. The following elucidates the mind’s true function:

For mind is like a mirror; it gathers dust while it reflects. It needs the gentle breezes of Soul-Wisdom to brush away the dust of our illusions. Seek, O Beginner, to blend thy Mind and Soul. . . . seek in the Impersonal for “the eternal man,” and having sought him out, look inward: thou art Buddha.

Through experience we learn to exercise discernment, and our greatest teacher is life and interaction with others. The familiar paradox “Give up thy life, if thou would’st live,” obviously does not mean to abandon one’s responsibilities, leave the family, and take off to the hills to become spiritual. “The man who does not go through his appointed work in life — has lived in vain”:

Follow the wheel of life; follow the wheel of duty to race and kin, to friend and foe, and close thy mind to pleasures as to pain. Exhaust the law of Karmic retribution. — p. 36

By changing the focus of attention to more meaningful priorities, and giving up attachments to the personal and selfish, we will find “the stronghold of the soul” that is constant, transmuting passive acceptance of life into more active *knowing* and *doing*.

Poetic imagery and nature symbology lend themselves to mystical thought, and since aspects of human consciousness reflect operations in nature, symbols, such as the lotus, have power to inspire:

Let thy Soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.

Let not the fierce Sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer’s eye.

But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain, nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed.

These tears, O thou of heart most merciful, these are the streams that irrigate the fields of charity immortal. ’Tis on such soil that grows the midnight blossom of Buddha . . . — pp. 12-13

Could humanity’s tears of pain not be the call that brings the buddha of compassion to make the ultimate choice to renounce nirvana? “Compassion speaks and saith: ‘Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?’”

Such is the quality of commitment, the degree of self-sacrifice of a bodhisattva or buddha of compassion who gives himself totally to join those, “unthanked and unperceived by man,” who build and sustain the Guardian Wall protecting mankind, to shield us and this planet “invisibly from still worse evils.”

Daily we make choices and these have a cumulative effect as an ever

more universal compassion, or as spiritual selfishness exemplified by the pratyeka buddha who, though thoroughly pure, is nevertheless blinded by his goal of nirvana, unmindful of others. The noblest attainments stem from simple beginnings. Early in *The Voice* is the maxim, “Step out from sunlight into shade, to make more room for others.” This is so clear a child could understand it, and a lovely way to convey the principle of consideration for others before oneself. There are also thoughts in this book so profound that it could take lifetimes to fathom them. How little we see of the grand reality that we are inwardly. We are all that we have made ourselves to be thus far, and our presence reflects the invisible as well as the visible. That which endures from life to life is hidden deep within, unseen, unrealized:

Fix thy Soul’s gaze upon the star whose ray thou art, the flaming star that shines within the lightless depths of ever-being, the boundless fields of the Unknown. — p. 31

The beauty of these words leads thought and feeling out of the mundane track toward those boundless fields of the Unknown in which the inmost Self is at home. Such musings give deeper overtones to daily living, making it possible to take a line or two from these precepts and keep them in the back of one’s mind for days on end. This is a natural form of meditation that can go on continuously, without interrupting the ordinary activities which should be given full attention. And one never knows when a sudden intuition may flash through the mind awakening valuable insights. For these words have a force — the vital force of timeless truth, of wisdom of the divine, of the voice of the silence.



Therefore practice, practice continuously your will. Open your heart more and more. Remember the divinity at your inmost, the inmost divinity of you, the heart of you, the core of you. Love others, for these others are yourself. Forgive them, for in so doing you forgive yourself. Help them, for in so doing you strengthen yourself.

## Spiritual Growth or Spiritual Behaviorism?

WITH THE MANY APPROACHES to personal growth competing for an audience today, it is difficult to discern what is beneficial, what is detrimental, and what is merely ineffectual. Modern attitudes cloud the issue by their emphasis on convenience, quick results, and mechanistic solutions, all with as little effort on our part as possible. Our concern is with symptoms and behavior rather than their causes: we would like a pill, a technique, a device — prepackaged, automatic, fast-acting, fool-proof — to give us the desired result. We see this attitude of spiritual behaviorism in self-help tapes that promise that the hearer will change and progress if he simply listens repeatedly, while subliminal tapes require no conscious effort at all. It sounds so good: a painless, effective solution to so many problems and an easy path to personal and spiritual growth — it's hard to resist giving it a try. Yet while this approach may deliver “results,” its ability to foster meaningful personal development is not so clear.

Through the ages religious traditions have affirmed that human beings are divine as well as psychological and physical. Human growth is a long-term proposition; from the perspective of reincarnation, a truly vast one. Instant gratification becomes irrelevant against this panorama of human existence. We are slowly evolving to become the compassionate, self-controlled masters of the characteristics that distinguish us from the animals. In this evolutionary journey, it is the traveling itself — the efforts, the motives, the attitudes — that counts for much more than achieving any particular goal or possessing specific characteristics and abilities. Real growth lies in the transformation of ourselves, so that



accomplishments follow as natural consequences rather than something grafted onto us. By making outward results a by-product of inner development rather than an end in themselves, we are more able to deal with whatever comes to us in a positive, self-aware way. Contrariwise, when we allow ourselves to be changed without making the effort ourselves, it is easy to become increasingly passive and more open to the influences both of others and of our undeveloped aspects. Passive methods which deal with symptoms of our inner states rather than the states themselves, undercut the very qualities most needed to become complete human beings: self-discipline and self-control, an active will, and reliance on our own strength and wisdom.

This situation suggests an analogy. To increase yields, farmers turned to chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, indiscriminate irrigation, and monoculture. While providing profits, these practices in time ruin the soil and cause pollution and depletion of the water table. Organic processes allow plants to flourish without damage to the environment and improve the soil so that high yields can continue. As in organic farming, beneficial development practices depend on careful preparation and participation in the processes of nature. They are not an instant remedy that can be mass-produced. If we cultivate and control our mind and energies so our being is prepared to progress, growth will come and continue. Such a program does not depend on dramatic results produced at the expense of the future. Techniques such as hypnosis, self-hypnosis, and subliminal programming produce superficial results while undermining fundamental factors we need for continued spiritual growth. Obtaining quick results from such practices may leave us depleted and at a point behind our present level of growth.

Again, the main boosters of agricultural chemicals are the very manufacturers whose profits depend on their sale and increasing use. Company representatives have been the farmers' primary source of information on farming practices. In the human development field, too, the main promoters of a particular technique or viewpoint are often those benefiting financially from its adoption. All the more reason for each person to do his own thinking and research and for being cautious about embracing practices that someone else is trying to sell.

From another point of view, the use of mechanistic or passive methods can force development that we are not ready to undertake, so

that we more easily become unbalanced inwardly. It is much easier to open ourselves to certain experiences and energies than it is to control them once they have begun. Great discernment is required to evaluate results. Hatha yoga, for example, is generally presented as a form of physical exercise for fitness and health. It can, however, activate the body's psychic centers, as Hindu yogis well understood. Like techniques designed to awaken the kundalini and other energies, it can produce dramatic results and disquieting experiences which may be difficult to deal with even with a competent teacher present. Most of us are not yet able to control these phenomena because we have not built the foundation within ourselves which would make them natural to us.

Moreover, using methods for personal change that by-pass our conscious awareness may cause us to lose touch with those areas in ourself that are crying out for attention. Does a change in behavior or mental patterns in itself signify inner growth or simply the suppression of unwanted symptoms? All of us wish at times to escape our imperfections and difficulties, yet what are these but pointers to various areas in ourself that need adjustment? In the same way we might imagine it would be wonderful to eliminate physical pain, but we would soon become very unhealthy without negative feedback from our body. We would not know when we were hurt or needed to react or to change our behavior. Leprosy exemplifies the traumatic effects of losing physical sensation as the body becomes injured, infected, and finally deformed because of the sufferer's lack of normal physical perception. Similarly, without salutary — although unwelcome — psychological pain we may become spiritual lepers, increasingly deformed in our spiritual body because of a lack of appropriate feedback about our inner environment.

Perhaps the most fundamental question of all is, why do we wish to "improve" ourselves in the first place? The primary benefit listed for many techniques is to be successful — personally, financially, mentally, socially, spiritually, and physically. While we generally accept this as a normal, even commendable motive, it reflects an egocentered attitude, not a universalizing one. Rather than directing us toward the spiritual center of our being, it tends to focus us on our personality and thus harden the ego's grip upon us. Mahāyāna Buddhism brings out clearly the danger of spiritual selfishness. While great spiritual advancement and psychic and spiritual faculties can be attained by one who seeks self-

improvement for personal success or to escape the pain of human existence, this is basically a “self”-centered path and therefore limited. In this approach there is always the danger of becoming destructively selfish and retrograding in development, to the detriment of others as well as ourself. The person whose growth results from an all-encompassing love and a desire to be of greater service to all around him, even when it means the delay or denial of his own progress, has set his goal on a state beyond personal limitation. With our focus on results, appearances, and the concrete, we are apt to dismiss motive as a metaphysical factor and therefore inconsequential. Yet motive is the pivotal factor in human development, indicating the direction in which we travel and the type of being we wish ultimately to become — and what we wish for, we do in time become.

How then can we evaluate the worth of development programs? It is vital for each person to exercise his own powers of judgment. Two key elements for consideration, however, are selflessness and universality. Insofar as a technique appeals to our desire to get something for ourselves or something for nothing, by so much is it consolidating our ego rather than dissolving its hold on our awareness. This does not mean that improved methods of learning won't be found as understanding increases — though only experiences built into our deeper self will stay as permanent additions to our character, while superficial habits will dissipate with our physical and psychological bodies after death. But we need to go beyond results to an evaluation based on motives, attitudes, and the natural functioning of spiritual forces within us. What is really important in human life? The *Bhagavad-Gita* advises us to seek wisdom “by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility,” stressing action without personal attachment to results. There are no shortcuts to inner growth, for it is an active process, not merely a receptive one. Centering our awareness on divinity and approaching actions from the standpoint of the Supreme rather than of our personality is the timeless path to spiritual growth. By cultivating a less self-concerned attitude and focusing on service, we will find that we possess the qualities we need and can deal effectively with our problems and imperfections.

## Infinite Imperfection

LOOKING AT OUR EARTH, GAIA, it's hard not to recognize that we belong to each other. Many of us are in this photo somewhere, and



looking at it this way helps remind us that we're all in this together, literally. However many paths there may be interiorly, we are basically all on the same path. Observing the picture closely, we see a living being, ensouled as we are, evolving and growing just as we are. As Gaia evolves, we evolve, and vice versa.

But what are we evolving towards? Sacred texts often proclaim that the supreme goal is perfection. For example, the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, one of the most important Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings, tells of six perfections (of giving, morality, patience, vigor, concentration, and wisdom), but are we to believe that there is a level of morality or patience which cannot be improved? The Bible tells us, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (*Matthew 5:48*). Perfection usually means that no further evolution is possible and clearly implies a final and ultimate ending. One wonders, then, if perfection is a factual reality or a functional concept; an achievable goal or a valuable target? As we consider the immensity of our universe, visible and invisible, can we really imagine a once and forever conclusion, a final episode beyond which no further chapters are written, an infinity that ends?

Theosophy speaks only of temporary endings, relative perfections, and mini-completions until the next phase of the journey begins. With its implication that something has been completed, perfection is always

context related, and in an infinite universe how could there be a final perfection any more than a final number? So while we can journey towards transitory boundaries, limited resting points, and momentary perfections, theosophical philosophy holds that at the heart of our pilgrimage there is endless progressive becoming:

The Secret Doctrine teaches the progressive development of everything, worlds as well as atoms; and this stupendous development has neither conceivable beginning nor imaginable end. Our “Universe” is only one of an infinite number of Universes, . . . each one standing in the relation of an effect as regards its predecessor, and being a cause as regards its successor.

The appearance and disappearance of the Universe are pictured as an outbreathing and inbreathing of “the Great Breath,” which is eternal, and which, being Motion, is one of the three aspects of the Absolute — Abstract Space and Duration being the other two. When the “Great Breath” is projected, it is called the Divine Breath, and is regarded as the breathing of the Unknowable Deity — the One Existence — which breathes out a thought, as it were, which becomes the Kosmos. . . . So also is it when the Divine Breath is inspired again the Universe disappears into the bosom of “the Great Mother,” who then sleeps “wrapped in her invisible robes.”

— H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* 1:43

This was written in 1888 when Western science believed that there was only one galaxy in the universe — ours. In her writings H. P. Blavatsky goes to great lengths to describe how the universe always acts according to principle, and one of those principles is that anything that manifests does so periodically, cyclically. “Manifest” refers to anything that comes into form — thoughts, ideas, feelings, as well as visible physical forms. From such an understanding of cycles, we can appreciate the philosophy of karma (cycles of action) and reincarnation (cycles of rebirths).

The very nature of spirit expressing itself through matter is cyclic motion. The alternation of night and day, dark and light, is so deeply connected to our sense of sequential time that it is easy to forget that these are planetary rhythms arising from the earth spinning round its axis. The illusion of stillness is so real as we sit in a room that it is easy to doubt that Gaia, and we along with her, are spinning at up to 17 miles per minute, roughly 1,000 miles per hour (25,000 miles per day)

measured at the equator. Meanwhile the being we call the solar system is speeding through space at 125 miles per second around its galactic center. Wobbly earth, and you and I, are scurrying around the sun, careening through more than 580 million miles of uncharted space each year — all the while being carried within our Milky Way Galaxy spacecraft shooting along at 200 miles per second. As we mark off our birthdays and anniversaries we may think of our days, our years, our lives as continually circling back around again to where they started, but we are actually participating in a journey through brand-new territory in space: every second we are in a new place, though we are given the gift of familiar landmarks, the equinoxes and solstices.

Reflecting on this we can see that everything — souls, thoughts, people — has its own rhythm and motion. The earth cycling the sun, the moon circling the earth, and the seasons that come from these whirlings and turnings, parallel the birth, flowering, death, and rebirth cycles we participate in psychologically, intellectually, and spiritually. Cycles within cycles: our blood pulsates, our breathing circulates, and nightly we move through sleep cycles. As children of the sun, moon, and earth, we participate with them in ongoing cycles of evolution and involution, inner and outer, which flow from and are in sync with the universal pulse of the cosmos, which in turn has the heart of the heart of divinity as its central sun. Considering the similarity of the structure of an atom to the structure of the solar system, we can even imagine how our bodies are composed of miniature solar systems, each made up of innumerable lives. In fact, three or four days after a human egg is fertilized, it has divided and multiplied and grown itself to look like a small planet.

Just as each of us considers ourselves to be a unique being, so too is the solar system a being. In the Hindu tradition our entire solar system is called the Egg of Brahmā, and may be looked on

as an enormous ovoid aggregate body poised in space; and were some astronomer on some distant globe in the stellar deeps to see our Egg of Brahmā, and were he to see it from the proper superior plane or world, our entire solar system would appear to him as an ovoid body of light — as an egg-shaped irresolvable nebula. . . . composed of concentric spheres centered in the Sun, and each one of these spheres is a cosmic world. Its heart — the heart of each one of them — is the Sun. The world or sphere of our Earth is one such, and surrounds the Sun as a sphere of dense substance,

and the nucleus in this sphere or egg, for such it is, is what we commonly call our Earth. Such also is the sphere of Mercury, such is the sphere of Venus, such is the sphere of Mars, also of Jupiter, also of Saturn . . .

— G. de Purucker, *The Four Sacred Seasons*, pp. 10-11

Earth's orbit, then, is not just an invisible pathway, but actually describes the outline of earth's being. The body of the planet we see is a temporary focus for the spiritual and material forces of that being. The orbit of the earth lies within the orbit of Mars as one nesting doll lies within another, not like the fixed crystalline spheres imagined by some, but more like interpenetrating realms permeating each other. As Ezekiel said, "wheels within wheels." Mars' orbit lies within Jupiter's like the layer of an onion, and the solar system's orbit around the galactic center describes yet another level or realm or world of consciousness, alive with an infinite number of consciousnesses.

Looking at our spiral galaxy, we can begin to understand what the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* may be referring to when it speaks about "all the conscious beings in this billion-world system." Each planet, moon, and star is an expression, a temporary focus, of a cosmic being manifesting on various worlds or realms and peopled by entities and consciousnesses — concentric spheres each including all the others. Such is the evolutionary and revolutionary structure of the universe, the one around us as well as the one within us. We humans are cells in the body of the earth, solar system, and galaxy; and just as our body is built of living consciousnesses, so too are we each a living piece of planet earth. We may think of ourselves as living *on* the earth, but we are living within it as we live within the sun. The stars are millions of miles away, invisible to us during the daytime; nevertheless some aspect of them is always present — unseen, far away, but present.

The real person is invisible. We each could lose an eye, or a limb or two, and still be ourselves (it's curious to ponder how much of our physical body we could misplace and still be present). We are essentially invisible beings manifesting through a variety of vehicles of spirit, thought, and desire, and are also cosmic voyagers. When incarnation on earth begins, we wear one-celled "space" suits. Our bodies change, our vehicles change, life goes on. Like the sun which attracts the planets into their orbits, our divine sun collects and keeps all the aspects of our being in one coherent whole. We are each like a solar system with

spiritual forces pouring through our inner divine sun. And very often we are also like those telescopes William Q. Judge wrote of, outwardly pointing towards where the Real is not, forgetting to turn inwards to the invisible sun at the heart of our being. We must always peer deeper, look below the surface of our present understandings, as life is infinitely complex. There is no final ending to these cycles, no ultimate once-and-forever perfection, but an ongoing series of ever-perfecting processes.

Discovering that nature repeats herself continuously is very comforting. Somehow she is both endlessly creative and endlessly repetitive as to form and function. Just as the Hermetic axiom predicts, every earthly structure is itself made up of smaller structures echoing and repeating the design, transcending and including all those below. Every life too is made up of a temporary concentration of smaller lives, like Arthur Koestler's idea of a holon: "an entity that is itself a whole, and simultaneously a part of some other whole." Everything is alive and a life. The divine journey is not about freeing ourselves from nature, because human nature, mother nature, and cosmic nature are all one. It's about freeing ourselves from the illusion that they are essentially different. The divine path is about enlarging our focus to include not just earth and her orbit, but all the planets in our entire system. It's about shifting our personal center of gravity, our center of small self-focus, and relocating it in the divine sun.



The mass of men walk waveringly, uncertain as to the goal they aim at; their standard of life is indefinite; consequently their karma operates in a confused manner. But when once the threshold of knowledge is reached, the confusion begins to lessen, and consequently the karmic results increase enormously, because all are acting in the same direction on all the different planes. The individuality has approached the state of responsibility by reason of growth; it cannot recede from it.



## Reincarnation

WE HAVE BECOME WHAT WE ARE today by a long evolutionary process, psychological and spiritual as well as physical. This stems from the need of the core of our being to express its potential through manifested experience. How can we hope to express even a fraction of our present abilities in one life? Limitations of time and circumstance unavoidably force us to choose among many possibilities, but by repeated imbodiments we are able eventually to bring forth all the qualities that lie latent within us.

Reimbodiment, or cyclic manifestation, is a cosmic process. The universe is not a static collection of unchanging parts, but a great flux and flow of substances and forces, of matter and consciousness, always undergoing change. In this constant change there is a continuity of divine centers of consciousness modifying their mode of expression to match their ever-growing states of awareness. Reimbodiment is the universal means of drawing out from individual sparks of divinity their inner capacities, so they can experience and assimilate every aspect of consciousness.

### Reincarnation and Human Evolution

We are accustomed to thinking of evolution as applying to species or kingdoms, as it does in the Darwinian scheme, which emphasizes the development of material bodies. In theosophy, however, it is the individual imperishable entities which evolve *through* the kingdoms of nature, as children pass from one grade of school to another. The fifth grade does not evolve into the sixth grade, but rather a group of

students passes through the fifth grade and then moves on to the sixth grade if prepared individually to do so. In the same way, evolutionary progress is centered in individuals who grow by repeated imbodyments in a kingdom until the consciousness peculiar to that kingdom of nature is mastered.

Because we have unfolded our potentials past the animal stage of consciousness and are working to perfect and pass beyond our present human self-awareness, we imbody time and again on earth as human beings. We don't reimbody as animals or plants because their physical and psychological apparatus cannot express or contain the attributes central to our more advanced development. As we progress, those able to universalize their consciousness will become spiritual beings, gods. Those who cannot reach that point in this cycle will have an opportunity to continue their progress in another evolutionary epoch.

### **Why Are We Born Again on Earth?**

Why should we return to earth instead of re embodying in another place? Yet why should we expect to meet the results of our actions anywhere but where we originated those energies? If we plant seeds in one garden, we don't expect to find them sprouting across the street. We are drawn back to earth again and again because we are part of this planet — not merely accidental appearances on its surface — bound to all its inhabitants by strong ties of cause and effect. We are also linked to our own cells, emotions, and thoughts, and are attracted to them, and they to us, by sympathetic links which are reforged every instant. All beings are linked by a chain of consequences which must eventually express themselves.

Reincarnation has a profound effect on our view of ourselves by focusing attention on the invisible but very real portions of our being. While many theories try to explain human beings solely in physical terms through environment and biological heredity, reincarnation adds another more fundamental factor: our inner self-heredity.

We tend to be so aware of the physical world that consciousness and spirit often seem like abstractions or effects, rather than the causes behind ordinary experience. Yet we are essentially *spiritual* beings, and while we travel through worlds of matter, we are not ultimately limited by them. We are influenced by them, because all life is knitted together

with indissoluble bonds, but it is we who are responsible for our present and future circumstances. We have brought with us from former lives our character, abilities, and circumstances. We are not victims of chance happenings; there are causal reasons behind our being born into a particular family in a certain place and time. The reembodiment entity is drawn to parents who can provide a life-situation best suited to its innate characteristics. The child in turn is best suited to fulfill the karmic needs of its family. Such things are not simply material processes or a matter of accident.

## Reincarnation and History

Civilization, society, and daily contacts take on a different tone from the longer perspective offered by the idea of reembodiment. Instead of tracing all causes to events in our present life, the environment, or a supernatural edict, reincarnation opens up the possibility that many causes originate in our own distant past.

Humanity is a large but finite group of beings which embody repeatedly on earth, forming complex relationships. People reembodiment together bring with them the predisposition for certain actions and ways of thought because of what they have been and done in the past: karmic causes which must find manifestation. Patterns of causation and human progress do not proceed in an unbroken line from generation to generation or from civilization to civilization. Causes may leap the vast periods between incarnations of individuals — perhaps thousands of years — and come into effect when the parties are reunited again centuries hence. Thus there is a cyclic appearance of groups of people and even of entire cultures.

## Can Reincarnation Be Proved?

Reembodiment does not lend itself to the physical proof we are accustomed to demanding in science, because it deals with *states of consciousness* and *nonphysical* substances and energies. Most of us do not remember our past lives because we tend to identify with the aspects of ourselves which disperse at death — our emotions, sensations, and intellect — instead of with our more enduring parts.

Nevertheless, we are told that through much training and discipline people can center their waking consciousness in the spiritual portions

of their being. This allows them to pass consciously through sleep and finally through death, returning, if successful, with direct knowledge of these conditions. Those who have reached this state are said to re-embodiment without losing personal consciousness and to recall their past lives, because they are living in the imperishable portions of themselves where all our experience is permanently recorded. Eventually all of us will reach this level of development and be able to know rather than merely speculate or believe.

## **We Make Ourselves and Circumstances**

In considering re-embodiment, we see that everything matters, even if we cannot see its results within one lifetime. No action or decision is meaningless or lost. Its essence becomes part of us and helps make us what we are. It also molds the world around us, and those effects will rebound upon us in times to come. Certainly the people we encounter now will be met again and again until the karmic energies between us reach a state of equilibrium. Seeing ourselves from this larger perspective suggests that every moment of each lifetime is important and precious. Every encounter with our fellow beings affords us the opportunity to love and help others, and so embody in increasing fullness that limitless divine potential which we essentially are.



It is in the silence that the soul grows strong. For then it is thrown back upon its own energies and powers, and learns to know itself. One of the finest ways of getting light on a problem quickly and certainly, of cultivating intuition, is by not passing the trouble of solving it on to someone who you believe can help you. Seeing solutions and solving problems are a matter of training, of inner growth. One of the first rules that a neophyte is taught is never to ask a question until he has tried earnestly and repeatedly to answer it. Because the attempt to do so is an appeal to the intuition. It is also an exercise. It strengthens one's inner powers. Asking questions before we ourselves tried to resolve them simply shows that we are leaning, and this is not good. To exercise our own faculties means growth, the gaining of strength and ability.

## The Universe: A Living Organism

A UNIVERSE COMES INTO BEING because a cosmic entity is embodying itself; and a universe dies, as a person dies, because it has come to the point where the major part of its energies have already passed into the invisible realms. Universes embody themselves just as human egos do. The same fundamental laws prevail in the great as in the small. There is no essential difference whatsoever. The differences are in details, not in principles. Death is only a change; life is only an experience. The one enduring thing is pure unalloyed consciousness, for it includes everything else.

People commonly think that they grow to maturity and then stop growing, remain mature for a while and then begin to decline. There is no such stopping time. The forces composing us, and making each of us a being, are moving constantly along the same road which brought the child to birth, which brought the child to adulthood, and which carries the adult to the experience of death. From the instant when culmination of our faculties and powers in any one life is reached, decay begins, this "decay" simply meaning that the inner self is already beginning to make its way and its new body in the invisible worlds.

As human beings we are at home on many planes. We are at home, in fact, everywhere. Our earth life is only one short arc of the circle of existence. How absurd it would be to say that any one particular place, such as our earth, is the standard by which to judge the entire pilgrimage of man. So too the embodiment and growth of a universe, as well as its culmination and decay followed by its death, are caused by the cosmic entity's coming out from the invisible spheres into these material

realms, embodying itself in the substances thereof and thus building up a material universe, and then passing on; and when the passing on approaches its completion, the universe is in its stages of dissolution.

It is the same with a star or sun as it is with its parent universe. It is the same with any entity. Life is endless, has neither beginning nor end; and a universe is in no wise different in essentials from a human being. How could it be, since we merely exemplify what the universe embodies as the primary law. Man is the part; the universe is the whole.

Look up into the violet dome of night. Consider the stars and the planets: every one of them is a life-atom in the cosmic body; every one of them is the organized dwelling place of a multitude of smaller life-atoms which build up the brilliant bodies we see. Moreover, every sparkling sun which begems the skies was at one time a being equivalent to a human, possessing in some degree self-consciousness, intellectual power, conscience, and spiritual vision, as well as a body. And the planets and the myriads of entities on the planets encircling any such cosmic god, any such star or sun, are now the same entities who in far bygone cosmic manvantaras\* were the life-atoms of that entity. Through the ages they trailed along behind, all learning and progressing. But farther along the evolutionary pathway, as their leader, was their parent, the source of their being.

By our actions we are constantly affecting the destiny of the suns and planets of the future, for when we, by bringing out the native powers of the god within, shall have become glorious suns shining in the cosmic deeps, then the nebulae and the suns around us will be the evolved entities who now are our fellow human beings. Consequently, the karmic relations that we have with each other on earth or elsewhere will most assuredly affect their destiny as well as our own.

Yes, each one of us, in far distant aeons of the future, is going to be a sun, resplendent in the spaces of Space. And this will be when we shall have evolved forth the divinity in the core of our being, and when that

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\*Manvantara is a compound of two Sanskrit words, *manu-antara*, meaning "between two manus," and therefore applies to the period of manifested activity between the opening or root-Manu and the closing or seed-Manu of any globe. By extension of the idea it has come to have the general significance of the life term of any cosmic entity, whether planetary, solar or galactic. Manu thus stands for the entities collectively which appear at the beginning of manifestation, and from which everything is subsequently derived.

divinity in its turn shall have proceeded to still greater heights. Beyond the sun there are other suns, so high that to us they are invisible, suns of which our own sun is a divine attendant.

The Milky Way, a complete and self-contained universe, is, aggregatively, but one cosmic cell in the body of some supercosmic entity, which in turn is but one of an infinitude of others like itself. The great contains the small; the greater contains the great. Everything lives for and unto everything else. This is the reason why separateness has been called the “great heresy.” It is the great illusion, for separateness is nonexistent. Nothing can live unto itself alone. Every entity lives for all, and the all is incomplete without the one entity, and therefore lives for it.

Boundless space is our home. There we shall go, and there we even now are. We are not only connected by unbreakable links with the very heart of Infinitude, but we ourselves are that heart. This is the still small path of which the ancient philosophers taught; the path of the spiritual Self within.



Our destiny lies in our own hands, and we can make or mar ourselves. No god forbids, no god imposes; we are children of the divine, and therefore partakers of the divine freedom of will; and in our own feeble way as only partly evolved souls, we work out our destiny.

As we shape our lives, so those lives shall become good, bad, shapely, distorted, beautiful, or ugly. We make them such. There is no fatalism in this. All nature surrounding us is not only aiding us but, at the same time strangely enough, to a certain degree restricting us so that it gives us an opportunity to exercise our strength against opposition, which is the only way to develop a good pair of biceps!

Exercise brings out strength. If nature gave us no chance to prove the god within us, we should never grow. Therefore nature is not only a beautiful, helpful mother, but also a stern nurse watching over us with an infinitely compassionate eye, and insisting by her operations and reactions to what we do or follow with our own will, that this will shall grow in strength through exercise; that our understanding shall become brighter and keener through use.

## Descents into Hades — Ascents into Heaven

From the unreal lead me to the real!

From darkness lead me to light!

From death lead me to immortality!

— *Bṛihad-Āraṇyaka Upanishad* 1.3.28

THE PROCESS BY WHICH MORTALS become immortal was once universally respected. Past cultures understood that our consciousness, when freed from the body, enters multidimensional regions of experience, and also that it is possible to retain an awareness of our soul's nightly and after-death journeys. They described these adventures in stories of Descents into Hades and Ascents into Heaven. Jesus, we are told, descended into hell to free imprisoned spirits; the third day he rose from the dead, and later ascended to his Father. Job, in his way, also went through hell and triumphed, humbled yet wiser. Arjuna, prince of the Pāṇdavas and disciple of Krishna, was, according to India's *Mahābhārata*, drawn under the waters of Pātāla by the daughter of the Serpent King. This suggests some type of consciousness transformation, serpents frequently being a worldwide symbol of those advanced human beings who travel and participate in the three worlds and who, as custodians of hidden truth, give portions of it to trustworthy individuals and groups to assist mankind's advancement.

An interesting version of the descent into the underworld is related in the *Katha Upanishad*. The episode begins when Naciketas, after watching his father give practically everything he owned in sacrifice to



the gods, cried out in alarm: “Papa, to whom will you give me?” The father, annoyed at the interruption, exclaimed: “I give you to Yama (god of Death).”

Stunned, but remembering that “like corn the mortal ripens and falls, and like corn, is born again,” Naciketas departed for the House of Death. On arrival, finding that Yama was away, he waited. Three days later Yama returned. Chagrined that the lad had waited so long without food or hospitality, he offered him three boons. For the first, Naciketas asked for a propitious return to his father. For the second, to be given the understanding of that fire sacrifice whereby the heaven-dwellers attain immortality and are freed from sorrow and the fear of old age.

The third wish was not so willingly granted. When Naciketas asked to know about life after “the great passing-on,” Yama explained that so subtle and sacred a knowledge could not be revealed to mortals. He offered him wealth, sons and grandsons, horses, elephants, long life, fame — anything his heart desired. “All these I give to thee, O Naciketas, but ask not about death.” But having glimpsed beyond, the youth would have nothing less than “the boon which penetrates the mystery.” Finally Yama relented and revealed strange and wonderful truths, adding that to become immortal one must renounce worldly thoughts and desires and open his heart to *Ātman*, the Self Supreme.

What is *Ātman*, the Self Supreme? It is the spiritual essence within each individual that survives the death of bodily forms and transformations. Higher than mind, superior to spiritual understanding, it is that which, when found by heart and thoughts, enables one to understand that which can and cannot be seen. He who knows the Self, Yama declared, becomes immortal.

The assurance that we can transcend our mortality and participate consciously in dimensions beyond the physical is reinforced by comparable stories in other traditions. The ancient Persians tell of a young priest, Ar dai Viraf, who entered the invisible realms to recover “intelligence from the spirits” to restore their religion. Leaving his body asleep, his spirit ascended and beheld wonders most remarkable. Relating these later he described the fate of departing souls: those who in life had benefited others enjoy after death the most delightful of pleasures; but those who had been selfish and cruel suffer agonies terrible to imagine. He spoke too of the secrets he had learned from the regents of

various planetary “stations,” each of whom had explained the laws and conditions of the systems and spheres over which he ruled.

The Graeco-Egyptian “Vision of Hermes” presents similar teachings and tells how the youthful Hermes attained knowledge “most marvelous.” By entering an abyss of “terrifying encircling darkness” and then “ascending into the vast regions beyond,” he witnessed the luminous birth and unfolding of worlds; beheld, among other things, the descendings and ascendings of souls as they pass through experiences within the seven spheres of the planets.

These accounts confirm our intuitive feelings that life continues after death, and give credence to present-day reports of near-death experiences as well as the theosophic teaching that we are surrounded by forces, substances, intelligences, and regions which, as Yama told Naciketas, “cannot be seen” with mortal eyes.

Poets and preachers have populated these regions with angels and demons, while philosophical writings supply details of their hierarchical structure. Early Christian teachings, describe the many “circles” of Hell or “Infernos” (Hells), stages of Purgatory, and regions of “Heaven.” Hindus call these multilevel regions *lokas* and *talas*, the bipolar, interpenetrating spheres and states of consciousness we even now participate in.

Many traditions suggest that all living beings periodically “descend” into material realms in order to unfold and develop the full gamut of their qualities and talents. Interestingly, it is on earth — which has been referred to as the antipodes (or hell) because of the suffering experienced here — that souls awaken and begin to express mental and spiritual qualities that enable them to progress upwards self-consciously. Ultimately, after ages of trial and effort, they become fully aware, at one with the Supreme Self, and attain immortality — the boon Naciketas sought in Yama’s domain.

These ideas were familiar to Assyrians and Babylonians whose great Mother goddess, Ishtar, entered the Netherworld, leaving at each stage of the descent a piece of her jewelry or garments. They were symbolized by the Egyptians in the story of Isis, who descended into the Underworld to recover and reunite the dismembered body of her husband, Osiris, the Sun-god. Greeks and Romans immortalized this theme in tales of Odysseus’ encounter with shades from the House of Hades; of

Cupid and Psyche; of Demeter, who rescued her daughter, Persephone, from the kingdom of Death; and of Orpheus, whose efforts to recover his beloved Eurydice failed because, as he led her upwards toward daylight, he looked back and, forgetting the god's caution, lost what he treasured most.

Hercules also made the hazardous descent. As part of his twelfth and final labor he overcame Cerberus, the three-headed hound guarding the gates of Hades. In his journeys he also freed mankind's benefactor, Prometheus. His ability to triumph over such trials won him a place among the Immortals of Olympus — immortality here not implying never dying, but rather sustaining an awareness during transformations.

The significance of these metaphorical accounts of descents/ascents may be explored in connection with 1) in-depth psychological examination; 2) scientific/philosophical interpretations of mankind's evolutionary "fall" and "resurrection"; 3) initiatory ordeals during which candidates gain knowledge of nature's invisible realms through actual experience; and 4) the periodic incarnations of avatars, christs, and buddhas.

Psychological descents/ascents are familiar: who has not felt a kind of spiritual ascension when we have triumphed over adversity; who has not been "drawn down" beneath waves of pain and depression, or imprisoned by conscious and subconscious passions and fears? These are the dread underworld monsters that hierophants of old and psychologists today help pupils and patients to understand, and then confront and transcend. For it is by transforming into good the forces that repeatedly wreak havoc in our lives that we become freer, wiser, and strong enough psychologically to function in the higher levels of awareness.

Scientific/philosophical interpretations deal with the astronomical-agricultural cycle. Patterned on the sun's annual passage through the twelve months or signs of the zodiac, this cycle climaxes at the winter solstice. The sun (or human initiant), having "descended" from its summertime sidereal height, now enters the subterranean antipodes (Hades, Pātāla) and on the 21st-22nd of December remains captive three days and nights in the House of Death. Then it arises newborn, Sol Invictus, the "Unconquered Sun," bearing gifts that rejuvenate the world. The gifts of the Christmas/New Year season represent both the seeds which, fructified within nature's womb, assure an abundant harvest, and also the spiritual teachings which enrich and regenerate our souls.

With the initiatory cycle, the sowing of good seeds, of good thoughts and deeds, assures refinement of character and development of spiritual potentials. To achieve this, years (perhaps lifetimes) of intensive instruction, self-discipline, and purification are essential. Otherwise, like Orpheus, we become entangled in illusions of the past. Success comes through impersonality and detachment. Possessing these, the aspirant makes the perilous descent safely and rises into heavenly regions, from which he brings back, according to Cicero, “a brighter view of life and a livelier hope as regards death.”

Perhaps the most inspiring interpretation of the ascent/descent deals with the coming of great teachers. Responding to the cries of the suffering world, highly evolved compassionate souls “descend” into what to them is a hell. They labor in every way possible to bring light and freedom from the chains of ignorance and fear. Jesus’ love and light have inspired believers for two thousand years, while in the East Buddha and the beloved Kwan Yin are corresponding embodiments of mercy and love. In response to the vow made ages ago to bring enlightenment to all sentient creatures, they benefit the world in “a thousand, thousand ways.”

Reflection on these various descent/ascent stories can bring conviction that a part of our natures lives even now in unseen worlds, below and above. Thus we can become a part of and at one with our Supreme Self to the degree that we transfer our attention from the personal and material to the impersonal and spiritual. As we do, higher faculties gradually unfold until one day we “see” the marvels most wonderful which were revealed to Naciketas, Hermes, Hercules, and others. When this occurs we, like them, will be free of the fear of dying and able to bring back from those unseen realms knowledge that will bless life on earth, and make the hereafter “bright with hope and beautiful.”



The power of the divinity within, and the best and noblest things we have strived after and forgotten, remain in spite of all our errors, a light to lighten our path into the eternities.

## Inner and Outer Karma

WHEN WE SAY THAT EVERYTHING is karma, is the result of causes previously set in motion, we have to extend our perspective of human karma far into the past; in fact, millions of years, to the very early period when man first tasted the fruit of knowledge, and began henceforth to learn right from wrong. Obviously, from that long ago time we have had to be fully responsible not only for what we thought and did, but also to share in the responsibility for the effect that our thinking and acting has had on others throughout the ages.

We can see then that every one of the billions of human souls that have been in and out of existence on this earth during those thousands and thousands of centuries must have developed countless attractions and repulsions, and set in motion innumerable causes — causes which at some time, in some place, and under the right conditions, will inevitably express themselves as effects. But karma is by no means a merciless round of reaping and sowing, with never a chance to get out of the squirrel's cage. Not at all. Life, everything, moves in *spiral* fashion, not in a closed ring or circle. That is where we make our greatest mistake when we first come across the idea of rebirth and karma.

If we assume that everything is governed by universal law, that the cosmos is founded on justice, then nothing could happen by chance; everything must be an expression of the operation of the law of balance, of the law of attraction and repulsion, action and reaction. Pursuing this to its logical consequence, every one of us on earth today must have experienced many hundreds of life episodes since that very early point

in man's history when we first recognized the difference between right and wrong in a self-conscious way. Certainly there must be a continuity of reactions, otherwise you would have a crazy universe, without rhyme or reason; and what better way could there be for the permanent soul in us to grow and evolve, and benefit by and through the effects of its past actions?

If we can grasp the long view, it is not difficult to feel the grand sweep of destiny that is moving civilization forward on its evolutionary path. There are bound to be times of terrible suffering because somewhere, some place, we have upset the balance by wrong thinking and wrong action. We can scarcely realize what an immense amount of karma each soul, to say nothing of nations and races, has engendered from long ago — a backlog of karma that must in time expend itself.

There are many more kinds of karma than just the physical aspect which insures that fire will burn and that if we go out in the rain we get wet. If karma is a universal law it must work universally — that is, on the divine, spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical planes. That means that we have a divine karma, a spiritual karma, a mental and an emotional karma, as well as a physical karma. Just as we often speak of man's higher self as well as his ordinary personality, so we can say that there is an inner karma that pertains to his higher self, his guardian angel, that has its source in the divinity within, and an outer karma that belongs to the everyday personality.

At times something inside seems to push us into difficulties. In a way that is exactly what happens: the inner karma, the karma that springs from our higher self, does at moments make itself felt, and we almost feel led in a certain direction, perhaps even a difficult and roundabout way; but the karma that belongs to our personality seems to pull us in the opposite direction. So there is a conflict between the feeling deep inside that a certain path should be followed, and the contrary impulses of the outer nature. How can we reconcile this conflict so that the inner and the outer karma can work harmoniously?

We have to set our sights higher, take them off the lower and place them where they rightfully belong. Once we do this, we shall realize that our Father or guardian angel is continuously sending its impulses into our human self and, if our desire is to live so that the higher has predominance in all our thinking and actions, there will be no undue

strain. But when under these inspiring influences we intuit that a particular path is right, if our concentration has been largely focused in our ordinary consciousness, we may feel terribly disturbed. There will be real conflict between the inner and outer karma, a conflict which will not cease until we make up our minds definitely to follow the lead of our guardian angel whose goal is the bringing of light out of darkness and the evolution of the lesser into the greater.

At first, many think that karma is either good or bad. It is neither — it is only our reaction to the circumstances of life that brings either pleasant or unpleasant experiences. Actually, all karma is opportunity. Obviously, if we have lived many, many lifetimes, it would be impossible for an individual to carry in any one incarnation the full burden of his entire past. Nature is just all along the line and fits the burden to the shoulders — a law that works universally and compassionately.

The inner karma that originates from the divinity within and operates through our higher self quietly impresses the entire constitution with its influence. When the human self feels the touch of those divine promptings, it would do well to heed them and allow the outer karma as far as possible to conform with the inner. It is when we try to isolate our personality from the radiance from above that there is tension and conflict.

Life is not always a simple straight line of duty — sometimes we are presented with some real problems of decision, but if we can stand aside and view them from the broader perspective, we can be assured that our higher self will never forsake us in time of genuine need. We should be grateful for the kindly impulses that lead us into a new set of circumstances. When the inner karma appears to conflict with the outer, we can take it as a sign of progress, a sign that the personal self needs to look at things from a higher vantage point. That is the reason we have stressed the practical importance of trying to read the daily script of our lives, because our higher self in conjunction with the natural affairs of daily life, is trying to lead us into avenues of experience where the soul can grow in strength and understanding.

We have the responsibility to recognize that all karma is opportunity. I repeat this again because it is the fundamental key to meeting life without despair, no matter what the conditions or situations may be. The so-called pleasant situations may present an even greater challenge

than the difficult ones: to handle them wisely, to recognize them not just as recompense for good in the past but rather as a means of sharing our blessings with all. I am speaking here of spiritual values, of course.

The unpleasant conditions in themselves represent a great opportunity because often the most difficult experiences, which at first seem like the bitterest of poison, in the end turn out as the “waters of life.” That is because our guardian angel, seeing our growing sensitivity to its behests, begins to impress us more strongly and “push” us into periods of trial. We have all had the experience that when we meet hardship and adversity squarely, they cease to overwhelm us, for the reason that our attitude of courage allows the inner and outer karma to work harmoniously together. Simply put, we have to learn to meet and handle wisely, without thought of ourselves, all the circumstances that flow from our karma — from ourselves.

Everything is karma, inner and outer, higher and lower, spiritual and physical; and the master of the inner karma is the divinity within that resides at the core of our being. The master of the outer karma is your and my human personality. Everything is consciousness, and our whole task of raising the lower by the higher consists in self-consciously transmuting the base metal of our ordinary consciousness into the gold of the divinity within.

The threads of karma are finely drawn, and not one is lost in the larger pattern of our evolution. Therefore, in the final analysis, there cannot be anything but justice, which is nothing other than the adjustment of equilibrium in action and reaction, cause and effect, sowing and reaping. Why do you suppose all great religions and philosophies have stressed this one teaching: the balancing of the scales of destiny? Did not the ancient Greeks use the scales as the symbol of universal Justice and Order and Balance — a symbol which we in the West have faithfully preserved? Did not the Egyptians also emphasize this truth in their dramatic scene of the judgment as portrayed in their papyri and temples: the “weighing of the heart against the feather of truth”?

Everything in nature works toward harmony, toward bringing about growth from the less to the greater. Why then should man be an exception? If justice inheres in the physical realms, why not in the moral and spiritual areas of experience?



## Spiritual Progress

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?

Yes, to the very end.

Will the day's journey take the whole long day?

From morn to night, my friend.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S LINES ARE an epitome of the life of those who are truly treading the path which leads to higher things. Whatever differences are to be found in the various presentations of the Esoteric Doctrine, as in every age it donned a fresh garment, yet in every one of them we find the fullest agreement upon one point — the road to spiritual development. One inflexible rule has been ever binding upon the neophyte, as it is binding now — the *complete* subjugation of the lower nature by the higher. Search as we may through the bibles of every race and cult, we find but one way — hard, painful, troublesome — by which man can gain true spiritual insight. And how can it be otherwise since all religions and all philosophies are but the variants of the first teachings of the One Wisdom, imparted to mankind at the beginning of the cycle by the Planetary Spirit?

The true adept, the developed man, must, we are always told, *become* — he cannot be made. The process is therefore one of growth through evolution, and this must necessarily involve a certain amount of pain.

The main cause of pain lies in our perpetually seeking the permanent in the impermanent, and not only seeking, but acting as if we had already found the unchangeable in a world of which the one certain quality we can predicate is constant change, and always, just as we fancy we have taken a firm hold upon the permanent, it changes within our very grasp, and pain results.

Again, the idea of growth involves also the idea of disruption, that the inner being must continually burst through its confining shell or encasement, and such a disruption must also be accompanied by pain, not physical but mental and intellectual.

And this is how it is, in the course of our lives, that the trouble that comes upon us is always just the one we feel to be the hardest that could possibly happen — it is always the one thing we feel we cannot possibly bear. If we look at it from a wider point of view, we shall see that we are trying to burst through our shell at its one vulnerable point; that our growth, to be real growth and not the collective result of a series of excrescences, must progress evenly throughout, just as the body of a child grows, not first the head and then a hand, followed perhaps by a leg; but in all directions at once, regularly and imperceptibly. Man's tendency is to cultivate each part separately, neglecting the others in the meantime — every crushing pain is caused by the expansion of some neglected part, which expansion is rendered more difficult by the effects of the cultivation bestowed elsewhere.

Evil is often the result of over-anxiety, and people are always trying to do too much, they are not content to leave well alone, to do always just what the occasion demands and no more. They exaggerate every action and so produce karma to be worked out in a future birth.

One of the subtlest forms of this evil is the hope and desire of reward. Many there are who, albeit often unconsciously, are yet spoiling all their efforts by entertaining this idea of reward, and allowing it to become an active factor in their lives and so leaving the door open to anxiety, doubt, fear, despondency — failure.

The goal of the aspirant for spiritual wisdom is entrance upon a higher plane of existence; he is to become a new man, more perfect in every way than he is at present, and if he succeeds, his capabilities and faculties will receive a corresponding increase of range and power, just as in the visible world we find that each stage in the evolutionary scale is marked by increase of capacity. This is how it is that the adept becomes endowed with marvelous powers, but the main point to be remembered is that these powers are the natural accompaniments of existence on a higher plane of evolution, just as the ordinary human faculties are the natural accompaniments of existence on the ordinary human plane.

Many persons seem to think that adeptship is not so much the

result of radical development as of additional construction; they seem to imagine that an adept is one who, by going through a certain plainly defined course of training consisting of minute attention to a set of arbitrary rules, acquires first one power and then another, and when he has attained a certain number of these powers is forthwith dubbed an adept. Acting on this mistaken idea they fancy that the first thing to be done towards attaining adeptship is to acquire “powers” — clairvoyance and the power of leaving the physical body and traveling to a distance are among those which fascinate the most.

To those who wish to acquire such powers for their own private advantage, we have nothing to say; they fall under the condemnation of all who act for purely selfish ends. But there are others who, mistaking effect for cause, honestly think that the acquirement of abnormal powers is the only road to spiritual advancement. These look upon our Theosophical Society as merely the readiest means to enable them to gain knowledge in this direction, considering it as a sort of occult academy, an institution established to afford facilities for the instruction of would-be miracle-workers. In spite of repeated protests and warnings, there are some minds in whom this notion seems ineradicably fixed, and they are loud in their expressions of disappointment when they find that what had been previously told them is perfectly true; that the Society was founded to teach no new and easy paths to the acquisition of “powers”; and that its only mission is to rekindle the torch of truth, so long extinguished for all but the very few, and to keep that truth alive by the formation of a fraternal union of mankind, the only soil in which the good seed can grow. The Theosophical Society does indeed desire to promote the spiritual growth of every individual who comes within its influence, but its methods are those of the ancient rishis (seers), its tenets those of the oldest esotericism; it is no dispenser of patent nostrums composed of violent remedies which no honest healer would dare to use.

It appears that various societies have sprung into existence since the foundation of the Theosophical Society, profiting by the interest the latter has awakened in matters of psychic research, and endeavouring to gain members by promising them easy acquirement of psychic powers. In India we have long been familiar with the existence of hosts of sham ascetics of all descriptions, and we fear that there is fresh danger in this direction, here as well as in Europe and America.

In this connection we would warn all our members, and others who are seeking spiritual knowledge, to beware of persons offering to teach them easy methods of acquiring psychic gifts. Such gifts are indeed comparatively easy of acquirement by artificial means, but fade out as soon as the nerve-stimulus exhausts itself. The real seership and adeptship which is accompanied by true psychic development, when once reached, is never lost.



For it is the motive, *and the motive alone*, which makes any exercise of power become black, malignant, or white, beneficent Magic. It is impossible to employ *spiritual* forces if there is the slightest tinge of selfishness remaining in the operator. For, unless the intention is entirely unalloyed, the spiritual will transform itself into the psychic, act on the astral plane, and dire results may be produced by it. The powers and forces of animal nature can equally be used by the selfish and revengeful, as by the unselfish and the all-forgiving; the powers and forces of spirit lend themselves only to the perfectly pure in heart — and this is DIVINE MAGIC.

It must be remembered that the Society was not founded as a nursery for forcing a supply of Occultists — as a factory for the manufactory of Adepts. It was intended to stem the current of materialism, and also that of spiritualistic phenomenalism and the worship of the Dead. It had to guide the spiritual awakening that has now begun, and not to pander to psychic cravings which are but another form of materialism. For by “materialism” is meant not only an anti-philosophical negation of pure spirit, and, even more, materialism in conduct and action — brutality, hypocrisy, and, above all, selfishness — but also the fruits of a disbelief in all but material things, a disbelief which has increased enormously during the last century, and which has led many, after a denial of all existence other than that in matter, into a blind belief in the materialization of Spirit.

## Occultism vs Psychic Powers

*True Occultism or Theosophy* is the “Great Renunciation of SELF,” unconditionally and absolutely, in thought as in action. It is ALTRUISM.

— H. P. Blavatsky

THERE IS A WIDE DIFFERENCE between occultism and cultivating psychic powers. Psychic powers are many and various, including such phenomena as clairvoyance, psychometry, telepathy, kinesthesia, channeling, and trance mediumship. Their development is often undertaken by those who are naturally psychic; or a person may be merely curious, ignorant of what he may be getting into, for many regions of the psychic world are far more illusory than the physical world we are familiar with. Such powers, however, are in most cases to be distinguished from spiritual powers. As W. Q. Judge remarks:

When a student starts upon the path and begins to see spots of light flash out now and then, or balls of golden fire roll past him, it does not mean that he is beginning to see the real Self — pure spirit. A moment of deepest peace or wonderful revealings given to the student, is *not* the awful moment when one is about to see his spiritual guide, much less his own soul. Nor are psychical splashes of blue flame, nor visions of things that afterwards come to pass, nor sights of small sections of the astral light with its wonderful photographs of past or future, nor the sudden ringing of distant fairy-like bells, any proof that you are cultivating spirituality. These things, and still more curious things, will occur when you have passed a little distance on the way, but they are only the mere outposts of a new land which is itself wholly material, and only one remove from the plane of gross physical consciousness. — *Echoes of the Orient* 1:45

Seeking this type of phenomenon usually has a deadening effect on our higher aspirations, just as physical indulgence does. Judge spoke of the danger of “astral intoxication” in connection with these matters, since the thirst for phenomena can be as insatiable as that for liquor or drugs:

The power that Nature has of deluding us is endless, and if we stop at these matters she will let us go no further. It is not that any person or power in nature has declared that if we do so and so we must stop, but when one is carried off by what Böhme called “God’s wonders,” the result is an intoxication that produces confusion of the intellect. Were one, for instance, to regard every picture seen in the astral light as a spiritual experience, he might truly after a while brook no contradiction upon the subject, but that would be merely because he was drunk with this kind of wine. — Ibid. 1:46

As human evolution goes forward and as new senses and organs come into active functioning, psychic powers will increasingly appear as the *natural* development of inner faculties. But any attempt to force this process prematurely is perilous to health and even sanity. At times like the present, when the barrier between ethereal inner worlds and our physical world grows thin, we can expect an increase in psychic sensitivity. In such eras it is of vital importance to give a positive direction to the resulting tide of phenomena by moving human thought-life towards spiritual realities.

Occultism is often confused with psychism, and so people shy away from it. The picture of occultism in the public consciousness is that of the séance, fortune tellers, charlatans, wandering gurus with claimed powers, black magic — all things which are rampant today. But occultism in reality is the study of the hidden parts of nature. In its widest application it is sometimes called the esoteric philosophy, which deals with the structure and operations of the cosmos and with the origin and destiny of the beings that compose it. A fundamental axiom of occult philosophy is that all things are alive and parts of a living whole; that universes, galaxies, suns, and planets are all living beings composed both inwardly and outwardly of hosts of greater and lesser entities. In the same way the atoms, molecules, cells, and organs of our own bodies — together with the thoughts, feelings, aspirations, and understanding

emanating from the higher parts of our nature — form the living universe that we call a human being.

Suppose we consider any one of our friends whom we have known so well and ask ourselves, just what is this friend? Is he or she the physical appearance, or is the real person the consciousness, intelligence, goodness? Surely the latter. This inner person, the real individual, is from the standpoint of our *physical* senses intangible and invisible. The intellect and soul qualities are governed by spiritual and psychological laws; even the so-called physical laws of nature are not physical at all. They also are invisible, becoming tangible and observable only because of the way they control and organize the material world. They themselves cannot otherwise be seen by our ordinary eyesight.

If we apply this reasoning to the cosmos, we can understand that the true causal universe is an invisible universe. If human life, consciousness, goodness, and strength are our reality, just so with the universe that enfolds us. It too is governed by intelligence and consciousness. What is the nature of this intelligence and consciousness? It is the overdwelling activity of intelligent, conscious beings.

Each of us is truly a universe in miniature, and within us are ranges or planes of being and awareness which at present we are only vaguely aware of and only partially understand. And just as there are hosts of lives beneath the status of humans, so there must be hosts of superior beings, a view held by all the great religions. The various levels of life from atom to cosmos represent the ascending steps in the ladder of cosmic evolution. And the laws of nature, so called, are the spiritual essence of superior beings, whose very presence ensures the harmony of the spheres. Thus the universe is as real spiritually as it is tangible to us physically.

The three propositions given by H. P. Blavatsky in the first volume of her *Secret Doctrine* are the very heart of occultism, for they awaken the godlike in us and show the universe as a vast organism of which all the kingdoms, from the electron up to the highest god, are the integral evolving parts. The first proposition describes the infinite, unknowable source from which all things flow — an eternal, boundless, and immutable principle. The second proposition describes the universal law of periodicity, the life, death, and rebirth of all things — worlds, gods, and men. All these come forth periodically: there are times of rest and

times of activity or manifestation. Moment by moment, year by year, cycle after cosmic cycle, the evolution of all beings goes forward. The third proposition asserts the essential oneness of every soul with the universal oversoul. It also describes how each divine spark evolves in time through every form of the phenomenal world, eventually attaining individuality. It achieves this through an almost infinite series of reembodiments, ascending over cosmic time through all degrees of intelligence, from the lowest to the highest.

This grand process is what is implied by the word occultism: how the visible comes forth from the invisible; how the smallest spark of divine life becomes in time a human being; and how we humans may become gods. How far this majestic vista is from the paltry powers associated with psychism and the so-called “occult” arts. Let us instead turn our attention toward the spiritual heart of this vast universe surrounding us, which is also the spiritual heart at the core of our own being, as we aspire to become like the gods.



The term *occult* has noble, but largely forgotten origins. Derived from the Latin *occultus* meaning “hidden,” it properly defines anything which is undisclosed, concealed, or not easily perceived. Early theologians, for example, spoke of “the occult judgment of God,” while “occult philosopher” was a designation for the pre-Renaissance scientist who sought the unseen causes regulating nature’s phenomena. In astronomy, the term is still used when one stellar body “occults” another by passing in front of it, temporarily hiding it from view.

Writing a century ago, when the word had not acquired today’s mixed connotations, H. P. Blavatsky defined occultism as “altruism” — the divine wisdom or hidden theosophy within all religions. Occultism is founded on the principle that Divinity is concealed — transcendent yet immanent — within every living being. As a spiritual discipline occultism is the renunciation of selfishness; it is the “still small path” which leads to wisdom, to the right discrimination between good and evil, and the practice of altruism.



## The Perennial Philosophy

These teachings are, therefore, no novelties, no inventions of today, but long since stated, if not stressed; our doctrine here is the explanation of an earlier and can show the antiquity of these opinions on the testimony of Plato himself.

— Plotinus, *Enneads* V. 1. 8

THERE IS AN ARRESTING THOUGHT in one of Plato's Dialogues, the *Symposium* (§202-4), that love is the midpoint between ignorance and wisdom, the mediator between humans and the gods, and that through love we attain spiritual understanding.

St. Paul, too, spoke of love in one of the most beautiful passages of the Bible: that even if he could speak all the languages of men and angels, and had not love, he would be as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal; and even had he the gift of prophecy, knew all mysteries and had faith to move mountains, but had not love, he would be nothing — homage to his Master's commandment, that "ye love one another as I have loved you." And in Buddhism the ideal human being, the bodhisattva who is "awakened" to the Reality behind life's illusions, is spoken of as possessing the "great loving heart." He has arrived at the "other shore" of enlightenment guided and strengthened by perfecting in himself the two most important virtues in Buddhist philosophy, *karuna* and *prajñā*, "love" and "discriminating wisdom" born of altruism.

The same theme pervades the word philosophy — whose invention is credited to Pythagoras — for the word is a union of two Greek roots: *philos*, "love" + *sophia*, "wisdom." Although usually translated "love of

wisdom,” philosophy may equally denote the wisdom of love or, alternatively, “loving-wisdom.” Among the several Greek terms for love, each signifying a different aspect, *philos* and its cognate *philia* connote friendship and affection — as in *philantropy*, the “love of man” which motivates charity, and *philadelphia*, “brotherly love.” Theon of Smyrna (2nd century CE) wrote that philosophy may be compared to initiation into the Mysteries, the last part or crowning achievement of which is “friendship and communion with divinity.”

Thus we may see that the principal aim of Greek philosophy originally, like Buddhism and Christianity, was the perfection of love and wisdom as a means to becoming one with the source of life. Moreover, each of these traditions implied that the spiritual quest actually begins with love and ends in wisdom; that the portals to the heart of Being open to those seized by passion for truth *and* a deep concern for the welfare of all. “To live to benefit mankind is the first step” — this is a universal, perennial message. Equally enduring has been humanity’s quest for a unifying, saving wisdom.

The idea of a perennial philosophy, of a common denominator — rather, a highest common factor — forming the basis of truth in the world’s many religious, philosophic, and scientific systems of thought, goes back thousands of years at least. The Roman statesman and philosopher Cicero, for example, speaking about the existence of the soul after death, mentions that not only does he have the authority of all antiquity on his side, as well as the teachings of the Greek Mysteries and of nature, but that “these things are of old date, and have, besides, the sanction of universal religion” (*Tusc. Disp.* I.12-14).

It was the 17th-century German philosopher Leibniz, however, who popularized the Latin phrase *philosophia perennis*. He used it to describe what was needed to complete his own system. This was to be an eclectic analysis of the truth and falsehood of all philosophies, ancient and modern, by which “one would draw the gold from the dross, the diamond from its mine, the light from the shadows; and this would be in effect a kind of perennial philosophy.” A similar aim, with the goal of reconciling differing religious philosophies, was pursued by Ammonius Saccas in Alexandria (3rd century CE), the inspirer of Plotinus and the Neoplatonic movement.

Leibniz, however, laid no claim to inventing the phrase. He said

he found it in the writings of a 16th-century theologian, Augustine Steuch, whom he regarded as one of the best Christian writers of all time. Steuch described the perennial philosophy as the originally-revealed absolute truth made available to man before his fall, completely forgotten in that lapse, and only gradually regained in fragmentary form in the subsequent history of human thought.

Much more recently (1945) Aldous Huxley compiled an anthology of the world's religious and mystic traditions which describes many features common to this "philosophy of philosophies." In his preface, he defined it as follows:

Philosophia Perennis — . . . the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being — the thing is immemorial and universal. Rudiments of the Perennial Philosophy may be found among the traditionary lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions.

— *The Perennial Philosophy*, p. vii

Huxley pointed out that he did not turn to the writings of "professional" philosophers in compiling his book, but to a few of those rare individuals in history who have chosen to fulfill certain conditions — in his words, by "making themselves loving, pure in heart, and poor [humble] in spirit" — by which they were afforded firsthand, direct apprehension of divine Reality. If one were not a sage or a saint, he felt, the next best thing one could do was "to study the works of those who were and who, because they had modified their merely human mode of being, were capable of a more than merely human kind and amount of knowledge."

It is not so extraordinary that the core teachings of every major spiritual philosophy are so similar, even though the traditions are separated geographically, culturally, and by vast epochs of time. For it was the same theosophia or divine wisdom that was universally given forth by every sage and teacher, the same "exhaustless, secret, eternal doctrine" that Krishna had eons ago imparted to Vivasvat (the Sun), and has been periodically transmitted from age to age (*Bhagavad Gītā*, ch. 4).

The most comprehensive modern presentation of this “theosophia perennis,” with proofs of its diffusion throughout the world, may be found in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky, in particular *The Secret Doctrine*, subtitled “The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy.” Herself taught by more advanced students, she wrote that

the teachings, however fragmentary and incomplete, contained in these volumes, belong neither to the Hindu, the Zoroastrian, the Chaldean, nor the Egyptian religion, neither to Buddhism, Islam, Judaism nor Christianity exclusively. The Secret Doctrine is the essence of all these. Sprung from it in their origins, the various religious schemes are now made to merge back into their original element, out of which every mystery and dogma has grown, developed, and become materialised. — 1:viii

Besides elaborating the fundamental teachings and showing their analogy in nature, Blavatsky explains how the secret “wisdom of divine things” has been “revealed” to mankind and periodically renovated throughout history. Referring to an historical event allegorized in the Garden of Eden story, in the myth of the Promethean fire, and also in the Hindu story of the descent of *mānasaputras* (“sons of mind”), she describes how some 18 million years ago divine beings, “perfected” humans of former cycles who are native to higher, invisible spheres of cosmic life, blended a portion of their consciousness with nascent mankind, inflaming them with thinking intelligence. In this act of sacrifice and evolutionary necessity, they indelibly impressed upon the “plastic mind-substance” of humanity life’s important truths so that they would never be utterly lost. Here then, also, is the rationale of Plato’s doctrine that learning is actually a process of “reminiscence” — “remembering” or “rediscovering” primordial knowledge imbedded in the immortal portion of the soul.

Since that ancient time, restorations of the wisdom-tradition in every part of the globe have been regularly attempted, mainly for two reasons: first, because of erosive forces which in time disfigure each presentation — namely, that original teachings, usually oral, are imperfectly remembered or forgotten, texts are lost, copies and translations are edited, word meanings change, and people often misinterpret or overlook essential points.

The second and more compelling reason is that humanity is evol-

ing, with likewise evolving needs; and when the cry from the collective human heart is sufficient, a response from the right quarters is made which will fulfill the needs of the cycle then opening. It is well known that the messiahs, avatars, buddhas, prophets, and “god-taught” of every nation have come as reformers and transmitters, not as originators of anything but the “earthly garment” of their presentation, woven out of available materials. Yet it is also to be noted that the messengers are seldom well known to their contemporaries, nor is the import of their message fully understood. All innovation attracts opposition; powerful dragons surround the grail.

Our own age, like every other, is replete with “false prophets” whose often fascinating mixture of truth and error has led many astray into unproductive, even dangerous, sidelines. How then, we may ask, are we to determine what is genuinely of the spirit and what is chaff? Though it requires persevering and discriminating study, we can apply the tests of perenniality and universality: is the teaching explicitly stated or implied by the world’s great spiritual teachers? And, what is equally important, does it bear the hallmark of spirit: is its appeal to the selfless, altruistic side of our nature?

The universe, physical and metaphysical, is all one reality; and according to simple logic there can be only one truth, however limited, varied, and seemingly divergent may be its expressions in human language. The divisive influence of dogmatic theologies, of the attempt to arrogate truth under banners of any kind, including those of science and philosophy, can affect human welfare only negatively.

Perhaps it is best to remember, then, that like love, most of us are but “halfway” between ignorance and wisdom. If we have intimations of divine realities about which we seek fuller knowledge, or if we seek only to be an active force for good in the world but need a philosophy that will help us weather the storms of life, and the doldrums, we can be confident that such a knowledge exists which satisfies both heart and intellect. Humanity is not bereft of the compassionate guardianship of the gods and never has been. Both they and their earthly representatives have ever held out the compass of loving-wisdom as the surest guide to our destination. In following the course charted by these advanced wayfarers, not only can we discover what is true in life and what is not, but we will be fitting ourselves to express the perennial qualities of spirit.

## The Path to the Heart of the Universe

THERE IS A HUNGER IN EVERY human heart which nothing can satisfy — a hunger for something more true than ordinary human beings conceive of, for the real, the sublime. It is the nostalgia of the spirit-soul within. Its source is the homesickness brought about by the soul-memory of our spiritual abode, whence we came and towards which we are now on our return journey. Every human heart feels this, and it is the saving power in us, the thing which gives us hope and aspiration, which raises our souls with the recognition of the glory that once was ours. Light for the mind, love for the heart, understanding for the intellect: all three must be satisfied before we have real peace.

There is a sublime pathway of wisdom and illumination which begins for each human being in the present life, and thereafter leads inward, for it is the pathway of consciousness and spiritual realization. Every faculty, energy, everything, is in the core of the core of your being, which is your road, so to speak, by which you grow out from the heart of Being, which is your spiritual selfhood.

The path to the heart of the universe is one and yet different for every person. The meaning is that every human being himself is that pathway — which is built of thought and consciousness and of the fabric of your own being. It is built of the stuff of nature's heart.

There is a long road, also broad, whereon you have nature's streaming current of energy with you, and following this road you will reach perfection in due time; but this is the road of slow evolution, moving ahead little by little in each life through incalculable ages.

There is another road, steep and thorny, difficult to follow, but

which the Great Ones of the human race have trod. It is the quick road, but the difficult one. It is the road of self-conquest, the road of the giving up of self for the All, the road by which the personal man becomes the impersonal Buddha, the impersonal Christ; the road by which the love for your own is abandoned, and your whole being becomes filled with love for all things both great and small. It is the steep and thorny pathway to the gods; for when you climb the heights of Olympus you must tread the pathway as it lies there before you.

Beautiful are the pathways, sublime the goal, and quick the feet of them who follow the way of the still, small voice within, the way which leads to the heart of the universe. This is the core of the messages of the great Mysteries of antiquity — the union of the simple human being with his divine source, with the root of himself, linked as that is with the All, for that core is a spark of the central Fire, a spark of divinity; and this spark is in everyone.

Divinity is at the heart of you. It is the root of you, the core of your being; and you can ascend along the pathway of the spiritual self, passing veil after veil of obscuring selfhood, until you attain unity with that inner divinity. That is the most sublime adventure known to mankind — the study of our inner being. By following this inner pathway of self-knowledge, you will in time grow so greatly in understanding and in inner vision, that your eyes will take in ranges and sweeps of inner light, unveiling to you the most awful, because the holiest and the most beautiful, mysteries of the boundless universe.

The first step on the pathway to the heart of the universe is to recognize the truth that all comes from within. All the inspirations of genius, all the great thoughts which have made and unmade civilizations, all the wonderful messages that have been delivered by the Great Ones of the earth to their fellow human beings — all these come forth from within. The battle of union, towards union, for union, with your own inner god is more than half won when you recognize this truth.

The inmost of the inmost of you is a god, a living divinity; and from this divine source there flow downwards into your mentality all the things that make men great, all the things that give rise to love and mighty hope, inspiration and aspiration, and noblest of all, self-sacrifice.

In yourself lie all the mysteries of the universe. Through your inner self you have a road reaching to the very heart of the universe. If

you travel that road leading ever within, behind veil after veil of selfhood, deeper and deeper into yourself, you go deeper and deeper into the wondrous mysteries of universal nature. This pathway is spoken of as a road, yet it is the unlocking of the human heart — not the physical heart, but the heart of our being, our essence; the unlocking and development of our spiritual, intellectual, and psychical powers and faculties. This is the doctrine of the heart, the secret doctrine. The eye doctrine is that which can be seen and is more or less open.

Those who have the intuition of something greater within, of something splendid and grand which is growing within the heart and mind like the budding flower: these are the ones who shall finally see more.

There is no favoritism in nature. Man is an inseparable part of the universe in which he lives and moves and has his being. There is no separation whatsoever between his roots and the roots of the universe. The same universal life flows through all things. The same stream of consciousness which flows in and through the mighty whole flows therefore through man, an inseparable portion of that universe. This means that there is a pathway by which you may come into intimate relation with the heart of the universe itself; and that pathway is you, your spiritual self. Not the ordinary physical self, which is just a poor reflection of the spiritual brilliance within, but that inner self of pure consciousness, pure love for all that is, unstained by any earthly taint.

How can one live the life so as to advance on this pathway? A clean heart, a pure mind, an eager intellect, the searching to obtain an unveiled spiritual perception: these are the first steps of the golden stairs, ascending which you will pass into nature's temple of wisdom. This "living the life" has naught to do with foolish asceticism, torturing the body, and all such vain and self-destructive methods. Not at all. It is your will and your intelligence which you must train; and then by training you become truly men and are on the pathway to human divinity.

Do not kill or annihilate your personality in the sense of wiping it out. You have brought it into being yourself; it is the emotional and psychical part of you, the lower mental and passional part of you, the evolutionary work of aeons upon aeons. Raise the personality. Cleanse it, train it, make it shapely and symmetrical to your will and to your thought, discipline it, make it the temple of a living god so that it shall become a fit vehicle, a clean and pure channel for passing into the hu-



man consciousness the rays of glory streaming from the god within — these rays of glory being rays of spiritual or divine consciousness.

It is not the fall of the personal which frees the spiritual man; it is the raising of the personal into becoming spiritual, which is the work of evolution. This is the same thing that natural evolution in its slow age-long process is trying to accomplish — to raise the lower up to become higher — not to kill it, not to down it.

*Be* the holiest and noblest and purest that you can think of. Then you can forget your body. You can forget your personality which the body expresses, the lower mental and emotional part of you

In proportion as you ally yourself with your own inner god, with the fountain of divinity which is constantly pouring through your own inner being, does your consciousness ascend and expand in power and reach, so that with inner growth comes expanding vision on the one hand and the expanding consciousness to interpret that vision on the other.

How wonderful, holy, sublime, inspiring is this truth: that within each one there is an unspeakable fount of strength, wisdom, love, compassion, forgiveness, purity! Ally yourself with this fountain; it is in you, none can ever take it from you. Its value is more excellent than all the treasures of the universe, for knowing it, being it, you are All.

For one bright intelligence pervades all things; and what is in the star is in the flower under our feet; and it is the instinctive recognition of this thing of beauty which has led the poet to speak of the flower as a star of beauty. The same life force pours through it as through the star; the same intelligence gives to it its exquisite form, shape, color, and this is the same intelligence that controls the passing of the stars along their cosmic ways. This inner divinity is the source, the fountain, of all things that make us truly human, great, grand, and noble; that give us understanding, knowledge, compassion, love, and peace.

Commune in the silence with your inner god — that living inner chamber-temple wherein, if you listen carefully, you can hear the whisperings of the divinity which fills that chamber full. There lie truth and wisdom and understanding and ineffable peace. Open the portals of your human selfhood to the rays from the divine sun within; enter into this chamber in your heart of hearts; become one with your divine self, the god within you; be the god which you are in the core of your being!