

THEOSOPHY magazine was established in November 1912 and is independent of any society or organization. It is designed to pursue the Objects of the Theosophical Movement.

To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity....

The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences and....

The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

The Theosophical Movement exists in all times and in all nations, wherever thought has struggled to be free.

Theosophy reflects the wisdom acquired by the sages of the past. Often referred to as ancient wisdom, it offers a vision of nature and of man based upon this wisdom. The study of this philosophy enhances an understanding of the contrasts and unisons of the world's conceptions of deity and the common foundation underlying them all.



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Theosophy

*The Synthesis of Science,
Religion and Philosophy*



PROMETHEAN ALTRUISM

Spring 2003

THEOSOPHY — The name theosophy dates from the third century and began with the Eclectic Theosophical system. The primary aim of Eclectic Theosophy was to synthesize religions and ideologies under a common system of ethics, based on eternal truths.

MODERN THEOSOPHY — Modern theosophy has influenced literature, art, music, and film. It introduces philosophical themes into everyday life.

THEOSOPHIST (the·os·o·phist) n. — All real lovers of wisdom and truth have a right to the name “theosophist.” Theosophist is a word many mystics have called themselves throughout history. The Neoplatonists of Alexandria were theosophists, as were the mediæval alchemists and cabalists. Also called theosophists were the martinists, the quietists, and various other mystics, whether acting independently or in association with a brotherhood or society.

EGO (ĕ·go), **EGO** (êg·o) n. — The term Ego (pronounced *ego* as in egg) is a Latin word which represents the immortal “I” in Man. In contrast, ego refers to the personality in its familiar Freudian sense.

MAN (mân), **MANAS** (mâ·nas) n. — In theosophical nomenclature, Man is used in a generic sense and carries no gender. It comes from the common root to think, as does the Sanskrit word *Manas* (the thinking principle in Man).



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Theosophy is a student journal and reflects a variety of minds. Its articles express a cornucopia of thought inspired primarily from a study of the writings of H.P. Blavatsky and William Q. Judge.

THEOSOPHY

*is that ocean of knowledge
which spreads from shore to shore;
unfathomable in its deepest parts,
it gives the greatest minds their fullest scope,
yet shallow enough at its shore,
it will not overwhelm
the understanding of a child.*

— Wm. Q. Judge



SIGNIFICANT SIGNS

FROM an etymological perspective, something becomes redundant when there is too much of it. Redundant “things” *overflow* normal boundaries. The title, “Significant Signs,” extends beyond normal boundaries to suggest that people continually face events that foretell things to come. The way people read signs, and the decisions they make, have as much to do with their fate as the conditions themselves. In a world of relativity that reflects contrasting images, every event offers more than one avenue of action. As a consequence experience tells us to beware, for inherent duality moving into the illusion of diversity seduces humanity.

Accordingly, the activities of humanity combined with Karma shape human destiny. Sophocles, one of the three great Greek tragic dramatists of the fifth century BC, wrote almost exclusively on the moral quality of the decisions the principal characters in his plays make when facing the crucial *crossroads* of their lives. Everything hinges upon the signs and the significance of subsequent choices. As Sophocles develops the story he applies the law of necessity, or Karma, to the continuously revolving relationships commonly called human life.

In *Oedipus Rex*, Sophocles tells the tale of the legendary “Sphinx” of Greek mythology who threatens travelers on the road to Thebes. This “notorious and fearful creature” possesses a lion’s body, a serpent’s tail, the wings of a bird and the face of a woman with penetrating eyes. As travelers

pass the Sphinx, they are confronted and challenged with a riddle concerning the nature of Being. When Oedipus, who was destined to become the King of Thebes, approached, the Sphinx asked: "What living being goes on four feet in the morning, on two feet at noontime, and on three feet in the evening." Responding to the riddle, Oedipus confidently replied: "Man, who as a baby creeps on hands and knees, walks erect on two legs in maturity, and goes on three in old age by adding a staff." This reply, which involved only the animal man, so dismayed the Sphinx she shriveled up and disappeared from the scene. Oedipus had described but one short physical life of man, while it seems the Sphinx sought an answer from the future King of Thebes that would involve the permanent (spiritual) rather than the impermanent (physical) man.

As the story goes, after experiencing an initial period of glory and material gain, both Oedipus and the kingdom of Thebes fell upon hard times. When the full truth was revealed personal tragedy struck, and the whole of Thebes suffered. In *Oedipus Coloneus*, a sequel to this play, Sophocles writes of how a more mature, quite and contemplative Oedipus, regrets many of the choices and decisions he made while ruling as King of Thebes. He had worked primarily for material power and glory. Now, he appears to realize that he had focused his attention only on the material world, ignoring how the Sphinx's riddle might have suggested a more enlightened path.

HPB often drew upon legendary figures to give great moral truths a "human face." In closing "The Science of Life," an article she published in *Lucifer* for November, 1887, HPB remarked:

A few words may be said of the eternal riddle propounded to mortals by the Sphinx. To fail to solve the problem contained in it, was to be doomed to sure death, as the Sphinx of life devoured the unintuitional, who would live only in their “animal.” He who lives for Self, and only for *self*, will surely die, as the higher “I” tells the lower “animal.”

About a year later in *The Secret Doctrine*, HPB observed that, “The whole essence of truth *cannot be transmitted from mouth to ear*. Nor can any pen describe it, not even that of the recording Angel, unless man finds the answer in the sanctuary of his own heart, in the innermost depths of his divine intuitions.” She continues:

It can be represented only in its apparent, objective form, like the eternal riddle of the Sphinx. If the later threw herself into the sea and perished, it is not because Oedipus *had* unriddled the secret of the ages, but because by anthropomorphizing the ever-spiritual and the subjective, he had dishonoured the great truth for ever. Therefore, we can give it only from its philosophical and intellectual planes, unlocked with three keys respectively—for the last four keys of the seven that throw wide open the portals to the mysteries of Nature are in the hands of the highest Initiates, and cannot be divulged to the masses at large—not in this our century, at any rate (SD ii, pp. 516-517).



FACETS OF INQUIRY

WHAT DOES THE THEOSOPHICAL PHILOSOPHY HAVE TO OFFER CONCERNING THE ONGOING DEBATE BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS CREATIONISTS AND THE DARWINIAN EVOLUTIONISTS?

People have long challenged the premise of creation, scientific or religious, in efforts to define who we are and why we are here. After all, the self cannot be what it appears to be. Surely, these mysteries are only eluding our grasp momentarily, we tell ourselves. Even now, the divided forces of the intelligent-design advocates add fuel to the fiery debate (but at least the debate moves forward again). We want to be consistent in religious beliefs and scientific uncertainty, and the debate will not go away because collectively we have not managed to sort through heaps of well-meaning scholarship to grasp what's missing.

Any one side continually pushes back the boundaries of others' explanations to shake rigid truths held dear. "Our scientific temper is devout," philosopher William James (*Pragmatism*, 1907) reminded us. Origin theories need to be squared with nature and with logic, since empiric science will abandon them. Creation myths remain powerful visions that seem to offer competing scientific realities. We can ask then, are we indulging in circular reasoning that defies the light of day? When science offers probability, the religionists can counter, is someone playing fast and loose with facts?

As a scientific religion and a religious science (according to William Q. Judge, “What is Theosophy?”), theosophy lies solidly in the thick of this debate. If there is no religion higher than truth, as the maxim promulgates, then we must always remain open to the changes that truth brings. Will it be borne out that faith and reason are antagonists? “On the contrary,” author Milton Steinberg (*As a Driven Leaf*, 1940) told us, “salvation is through the commingling of the two, the former to establish first premises, the latter to purify them of confusion and to draw the fullness of their implications.” Several students of theosophy now pursue the question asked about the debate between these two adversaries, the religious creationists and the scientific evolutionists, seeking resolve along theosophical facets of inquiry.

EMANATIONS AND ARCHITECTS

From the first pages of the Proem in HPB’s *Secret Doctrine*, the ultimate source of life is elucidated as an eternal, immutable, boundless and omnipresent principle. Though changeless in itself, it is the source of all change; though formless in itself, it is the source of all forms; though without thought, it is the cause of all thought; though it acts not, it is the cause of all action.

Life emanates from this one, divine, eternal source. And that source remains at the deepest core of everything that emanates from it: every atom, molecule, mineral, plant, animal, human being, and god. The divine source is the highest deity, and that same deity resides in the heart of every being in the universe. As the poet Rumi wrote, “That source is within you/And this whole world is springing up from it.”

The implications of this one, pre-eminent idea are extraordinary. It means that everything in life is essentially

divine, essentially sacred, essentially God. It means that each apparently discrete entity is at root joined with every other entity in one vast and seamless unity. We are more than brothers and sisters. We are one.

It means also that there is a hidden, invisible (to us now) spiritual realm to life—that divine core, and an overt, visible material realm to life, i.e., the tangible world of the physical senses. This duality pervades all the manifested universe.

The creationists and the evolutionists are both in part right and both in part wrong. The creationists are right in pointing to an eternal power beyond the evanescent material world as the source of life. They err when they say an insurmountable gulf exists between the creator and his creation, between god and man, when they forget, that is, the all-important doctrine of emanations, that there is an unbroken continuity between the two—like the sun and its rays, the fire and its sparks, the spider and its web.

The evolutionists are right in pointing to an amazingly complex web of life that is constantly mutating, constantly striving towards improvement of its condition. They err when they limit their purview to the physical world alone and leave out of consideration the many realms of existence beyond the physical and, most importantly, the divine source itself. With extraordinary zeal, talent and resourcefulness they are studying the many wonderful aspects of the house, but ignoring the reality of, the necessity of, the builders, the blueprints and the architect.

ETERNAL PILGRIMS

Creationist and Darwinian proponents have produced an impasse by forming a pair of opposites that, when taken

literally, are beyond resolution. Various theories are suggested by science for the activity of life and its purpose. The Darwinian explains the activity in matter as an evolutionary process that begins with the very lowest forms of matter and proceeds upward by natural selection and the survival of the fittest. This seems to be the accepted mode for the majority of people at this point in time. On the creationist end: If we subscribe to the notion that each birth produces a new soul, we tacitly accept the personal God idea as being the cause of each soul's birth.

Neither the religious nor the current scientific explanations are complete in themselves. From the point of view of their being a pair of opposites, there is a glaring need for a link to explain the activity on the material plane as being more than a "fortuitous concurrence of atoms" and why there is a need for creation.

The ancient teaching found in theosophy proposes several links that would seem to appeal to our logical sense. First, all of life has absolute potential. This suggests the equality of life as contrasted with the birth of individuals by special privilege through the agency of an all-powerful super-being. Second, the presence of the emanation of life waves or energy (which we refer to as a periods of evolution) is commonly accepted and easily witnessed as the law of cycles or periodicity. Third, the progression of a spiritual life force (referred to as the monad) is seen in all manifested life forms, from the elemental to the fully awakened and self-conscious individual. Why the need for all this activity? To raise all matter to conscious godhood and a conscious realization of the unity of the whole of life.

In his book *The Great Chain of Life* (1956), Joseph Wood Krutch (1893-1970), the literary naturalist, describes the

dependency and common links each kingdom shares in the evolutionary process:

Literally nothing is wasted. Everything nourishes something else until the bacteria finally get hold of it and return it to the soil after breaking it down once more into inorganic compounds...which plants can again transform into protein.

Likewise, Darwin in describing natural selection and the survival of the fittest presented a description of evolution through material forms—he did not include the spiritual impulse needed to produce the interaction of spirit and matter. In theosophy, a simultaneous involution of spirit progresses alongside the evolution of matter.

At a far distant evolutionary period, the human stage is reached when there is a lighting of mind by those fully awakened beings that have made the journey before. From this point on, humans are responsible for their own evolution as manifested through the law of karma. Once a self-conscious, thinking being, the individual Ego is responsible for its own evolutionary progress through self-induced and self-devised efforts. Free will, which is often relinquished in creationist and Darwinian views, is essential to the human spirit. To understand the teaching more fully, a study of the laws of reincarnation and karma can be applied to the individual and the universal level equally.

SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE DICHOTOMY

The great divide between Darwinists and religious creationists is artificial at best. It expresses a dichotomy caused by a lack of holistic thinking. Even within the scientific camp, there is a growing realization that it is only through interdisciplinary exploration that any real light will illuminate

the great mysteries of life concerning our origin, essence, and ultimate purpose. It is interesting how the scientific community praises the mathematical genius of a Pythagoras but dismisses his mystical views as overheated imagination. It is the same with Plato, Paracelsus, and many other noted minds. Why is it so difficult to entertain the possibility that these beings knew more, not less, than many of our present day scientists whose knowledge all comes from the same handful of textbooks?

Religion represents the spiritual self while science the physical. Until rather recently, a few centuries ago, this dichotomy did not exist. Somehow we have polarized the physical and spiritual aspects of life and we are the worse off for it. This polarization is the prime cause for the feeling of meaninglessness, purposelessness, and alienation that is so prevalent in modern culture. Not only have we cut ourselves off from the vital pulse of nature by paving it over but also we've cut ourselves off from the real spiritual wellspring within by caving into simplistic and anthropomorphized theologies that are inconsistent and don't reflect the real potentials within us. For example, the idea of one short lifetime and then judgment for eternity without any chance of even scratching the surface of our capacities to learn, love, create, or express our real essence does not allow for true human evolution to go forward and goes against the general pattern of great nature. Both science and orthodox religion turn a blind eye to millenniums of phenomena that neither science nor religion in their present states can adequately account for.

In theosophy, the physical universe reflects the spiritual universe: "as above so below." The interdependence of the kingdoms of nature, the intricate balance and reciprocity seen in ecosystems, is a wonderful expression of the spiritual

identity of all beings that is at the heart of religious teachings of all civilizations.

No contradiction exists between many scientific principles and the spiritual principles expressed through the world's religious traditions. Only when scientists cross the borders of their research and knowledge with haughty judgments about the invisible side, the transcendental side of life, do they cease to be scientists and become ideologues attempting to foist their personal opinions and pet theories as "God's Truth." Likewise, why is it that many religious creationists are so resistant to scientific discoveries or breakthroughs that seem to contradict their cherished interpretations of their particular bible or holy book? They should rejoice in the growth of human understanding on every level, for if "God" is truly in all things, then the more we know about all aspects of life, the closer we are to our source.

Theosophy, by leaving no department of nature out of the equation of life, allows us to unlock the mysteries of the physical as well as the metaphysical world and traverse both subjective and objective space in order to attain a true perspective on reality. Each of us must accomplish this for ourselves.





H. P. B.

(In Memoriam)

Though swift the days flow from her day,
No one has left her day unnamed:
We know what light broke from her ray
On us, who in the truth proclaimed.

Grew brother with the stars and powers
That stretch away—away to light,
And fade within the primal hours,
And in the wondrous First unite.

We lose with her the right to scorn
The voices scornful of her truth:
With her a deeper love was born
For those who filled her days with truth.

To her they were not sordid things:
In them sometimes—her wisdom said—
The Bird of Paradise had wings;
It only dreams, it is not dead.

We cannot for forgetfulness
Forego the reverence due to them,
Who wear at times they do not guess
The sceptre and the diadem.

With wisdom of the olden time
She made the hearts of dust to flame;
And fired us with the hope sublime
Our ancient heritage to claim;

That turning from the visible,
By vastness unappalled nor stayed,
Our wills might rule beside that Will
By which the tribal stars are swayed;

And entering the heroic strife,
Tread in the way their feet have trod
Who move within a vaster life,
Sparks in the Fire—Gods amid God.

—The Irish Theosophist Vol. i, 1894



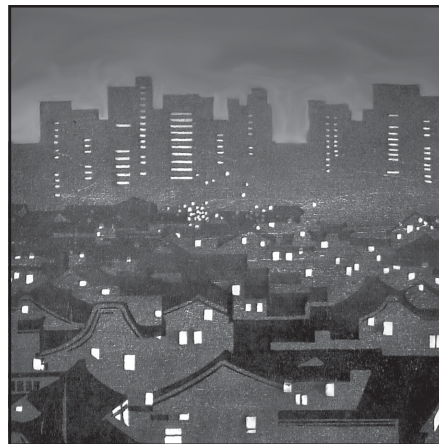


Gleanings from Historical Journals



This article by Wm. Q. Judge was published, under the pseudonym of Bryan Kinnavan, in *The Path*, November, 1892.

CITIES UNDER CITIES



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The theory that the remains of ancient cities exist under those of the present is not a new one. Dr. Schliemann held it, and working upon the clues found in Homer unearthed the buried Troy. Some have held it in respect to London, asserting that St. Paul's stands over the ruins of an old Pagan temple, and Roman ruins have been excavated in different parts of England. In India there is a mass of traditions telling of many



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modern cities said to stand over ancient ones that lie buried intact many feet below the present level. *Lucifer* for September noticed the “find” of an Amorite fortress sixty feet below the surface, with walls twenty-eight feet thick. It is well known to those who enjoyed intimate conversations with H.P. Blavatsky that she frequently gave more detailed and

precise statements about great cities being built on the exact spots where others had stood long ages ago, and also about those over which only villages stand now. And as the constant explorations of the present day—reaching almost to the North Pole—give promise that perhaps soon the prophecies about revelations from mother Earth made by her will be fulfilled, I am emboldened to give the old theory, very likely known to many other students, to account for this building and rebuilding of cities over each other after such intervals that there can be no suspicion of communication between present and past inhabitants.

As man’s civilization has traveled around the globe many times, filling now one country and now another with populous places, creating an enormous metropolis here and another there, his influence has been left on nearly every spot upon the earth, and that as well upon lands now beneath the seas as on those above them. If we can imagine the first

coming of a population to a place never before inhabited, the old theory asks us to believe that certain classes of elementals—called *devas* generally Hindus—are gathered over the place and present pictures of houses, of occupations of busy the place and present pictures of houses, of occupations of busy life on every hand, and, as it were, beckon to the men to stay and build. These ‘fairies,’ as the Irish call them, at last prevail, and habitations are erected until a city springs up. During its occupation the pictures in the astral light are increased and deepened until the day of desertion arrives, when the genii, demons, elementals, or fairies have the store of naturally impressed pictures in the ether to add to their own. These remain during the abandonment of the place, and when man comes that way again the process is repeated. The pictures of buildings and human activity act telepathically upon the new brains, and the first settlers think they have been independent thinkers in selecting a place to remain. So they build again and again. Nature’s processes of distributing earth and accumulating it hide from view the traces of old habitations, giving the spot a virgin appearance to the new coming people. And thus are not only



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cities built in advantageous positions, but also in places less convenient.

Evidence is accessible and plentiful in every country to show that the winds, the trees, birds, and beasts can in time cover over completely, while leaving them intact, the remains of roads and buildings

once used and occupied by men. In Central America there are vast masses of ruins among which tress of considerable girth are now growing. In other districts the remains of well-made roads are sometimes found creeping out from tangled underbrush and disappearing under a covering of earth. At Elephanta near Bombay, and in other places in India, the earth has been blown gradually under pillars and gateways, rendering entrance impossible. On the Pacific Coast, in one of the Mexican States, there is old and new San Blas, the one on the hill, deserted and almost covered with trees and *debris* of all sorts which is surely constructing a covering that will ere long be some feet in thickness. So without regard to volcanic eruptions or landslides, which of course suddenly and forcibly overlay a city, it is quite possible for Nature through her slower processes to add to thickness of earthy covering at any place



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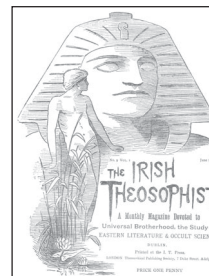
abandoned by man, and the very best illustration of this is in the coral islands which rise out of the ocean to be soon covered with earth and trees.

But, our ancient theory says, no process of a mechanical or physical kind has any power over the pictures impressed in the retentive ether, nor over those classes of elementals which find their natural work in presenting pictures of cities and buildings to the receptive brain of man. If he is materialistic he will recognize these pictures only subconsciously. But the subconscious impressions will translate themselves into acts just as hypnotized subjects respond to a suggestion they have no memory of. When, however, these elementals encounter a race of men who are psychically developed enough to see not only the pictures but also those entities which present them, it will then result that a conscious choice will be made, leading to a deliberate selection of one place for building on and the rejection of another.

I present this interesting old theory without proof except such as can be obtained by those few persons who are themselves able to see the devas at work on their own plane.

These words on human solidarity, from a 14-year-old boy, were printed in *The Irish Theosophist*:

Universal Brotherhood is the first great principle of Theosophy. It has been taught by most religions, Christianity included, but it has been practiced by few. In other words, the theory has been admitted, but the practice has never been pressed. This may be accounted for by the difficulties which attend it. Universal Brotherhood

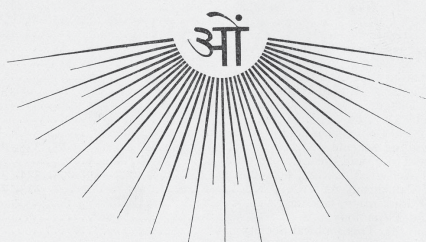


has been neglected for so long that it is almost a new teaching or, at least, a revival of a long disregarded principle. Class distinction is, and always has been, the great enemy of Universal Brotherhood. At the present day, India, we see the effect of caste in preventing communication between those of the same race. But the Jews also had their Scribes and Pharisees, and the thing, if not the name, is not unknown ourselves. This class distinction has less foothold in America than elsewhere. But even there the evil has been evaded and not overcome. No one can pride himself on his honesty unless he has overcome the temptation to be dishonest; but what *are* the means which have been employed to get rid of these distinctions? The American Constitution admits of everyone reaching a high position in the State, and the Americans make this their boast. In this way a great race for material power has been entered upon which, as history shows us, is always the first step to decay. There always will be certain differences among us. For example, we are not the same as the Mahatmas or Adepts, but the difference is not of kind, but of degree. All these things show that the only to combat the evil is by example.

So it becomes the bounden duty of every Theosophist to carry out in practice the teaching of Universal Brotherhood, without which, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity are but empty names.

—G. H. Whyte (*age 14*)





THE PATH.

A MAGAZINE DEVOTED

TO

THE BROTHERHOOD OF HUMANITY, THEOSOPHY IN
AMERICA, AND THE STUDY OF OCCULT
SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY, AND
ARYAN LITERATURE.

VOL. V.—1890-'91.

PUBLISHED AND EDITED AT NEW YORK
BY WILLIAM Q. JUDGE,
1891.



A JOURNAL OF VALUE

THE PATH commenced in April 1886, and according to H.P.B., was proclaimed by the Masters to be “the most *theosophical* of all theosophical publications.” Her own journal, THE THEOSOPHIST, represented “the fighting and combative manas” whereas she referred to THE PATH as “pure Buddhi.”

During its ten year publication, Mr. Judge periodically commented on its design and intent. The following is culled from his comments [Eds.].*

This magazine is not intended to replace or to rival in America *The Theosophist*, nor any other journal now published in the interest of Theosophy. *The Theosophist* is the organ of the Theosophical Society, while the founders of THE PATH are Theosophists, they do not speak authoritatively for the Theosophical Society.

Its policy is independent devotion to the Cause of Theosophy, without professing to be the organ either of The Society or of any Branch; it is loyal to the Great Founders, but does not concern itself with dissensions or differences of individual opinion. The work it has on hand, and the end it keeps in view, are too absorbing and too lofty to leave it the time or inclination to take part in side issues; yet its columns are open to all Theosophists who may desire to express their

*Note: Collated from *Judge Articles* Vol. ii. Publishers, The Theosophy Co.

views on matters of real importance to the cause in which all should be interested.

The study of what is now called “practical occultism” has some interest for us, and will receive the attention it may merit, but is not *the* object of this journal. We admit the existence of hidden, powerful forces in nature, and believe that every day greater progress is made toward an understanding of them. The control of these hidden forces is not easily obtained, and in our view the attainment of true wisdom is not by means of phenomena, but through the development which begins within. Besides that, mankind in the mass are not able to reach to phenomena, while every one can understand right thought, right speech, and right action. The very first step in true mysticism and true occultism is to try to apprehend the meaning of Universal Brotherhood, without which the very highest progress in the practice of magic turns to ashes in the mouth.

It is not thought that Utopia can be established in a day; but through the spreading the idea of Universal Brotherhood, the truth in all things may be discovered. Certainly, if we all say that it is useless, that such highly-strung, sentimental notions cannot obtain currency, nothing will ever be done. A beginning must be made. Riches are accumulating in the hands of the few, while the poor are ground harder every day as they increase in number. Prisons, asylums for the outcast and the magdalen, can filled much faster than it is possible to erect them.

All this points unerringly to the existence of a vital error somewhere. It shows that merely healing the outside will never reduce the number of criminals nor the hordes of children born growing up in hot-beds of vice. What is wanted

is true knowledge of the spiritual condition of man, his aim and destiny. Such a study leads us to accept the utterance of Prajapati to his sons: "Be restrained, be liberal, be merciful; it is the death of selfishness."

April, 1896

There will be a change in the title of this magazine when issued next month. It will appear as THEOSOPHY instead of as THE PATH. This change is thought advisable for many reasons, one of which is the indistinctiveness of the present name. "Theosophy," as a word, has become familiar and a certain definite though not always correct meaning has been attached to it. One of our chief objects will be to spread a proper understanding of its significance, as well as to remove false impressions concerning it. The change will increase familiarity with the word; and it is a word that has a power in it, sufficient to change the tenor of a man's life, as experience has shown in more than one instance. Its new name will in no way alter its purpose or character, but THEOSOPHY will more explicitly proclaim these to the general public than the old title—*The Path*.

—William Q. Judge





ON IMMORTALITY

*Of the Immortality of the Soul it appears to me
that there can be little doubt if we attend for a moment
to the action of the Mind
I used to doubt it
but reflection has taught me better*

*It acts also so independent of body in dreams for instance
incoherently and madly I grant you
but it is still Mind
and much more Mind
than when we are awake*

*Now that this should not act separately
as well as jointly
who can pronounce?*

*How far our future life will be individual or rather
how far it will at all resemble our present existence
is another question*

*But that the Mind is eternal
seems as possible
as that the body is not so*

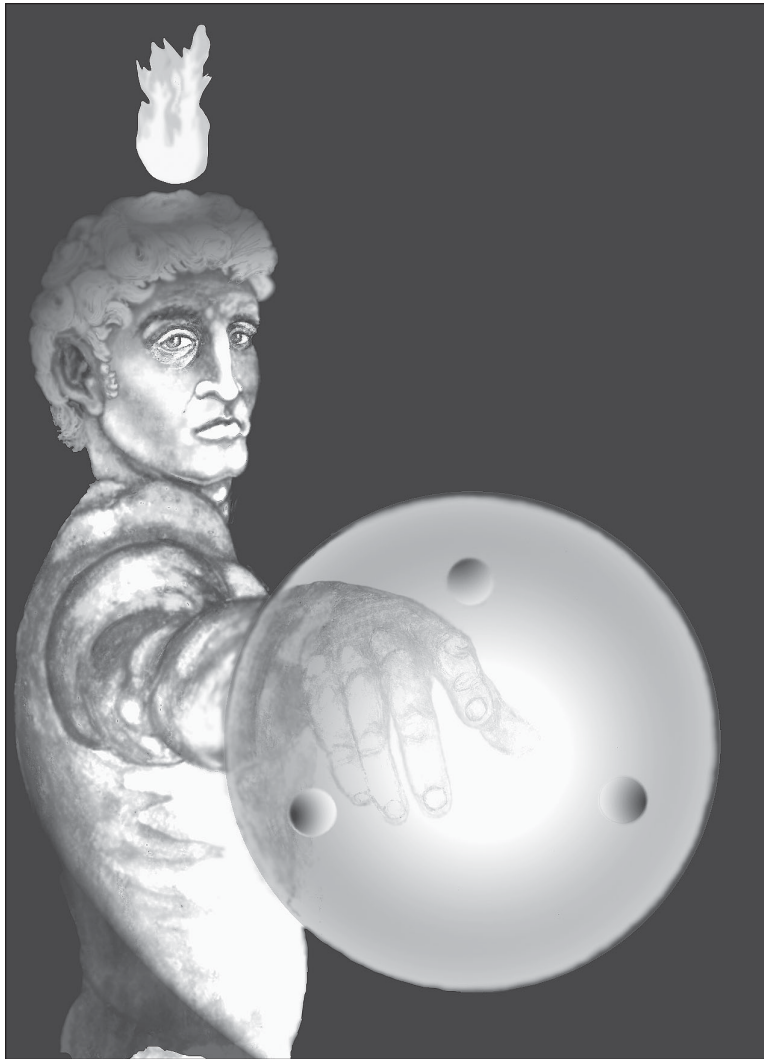
*A material resurrection
seems strange and even absurd
except for purposes of punishment*

*and all punishment which is to revenge
rather than to correct
must be morally wrong*



—George Gordon Lord Byron

PROMETHEAN ALTRUISM



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In Greek mythology, Prometheus was the creator of mankind. The goddess Athene taught him architecture, astronomy, mathematics, navigation, medicine, and metallurgy, and he in turn taught them to humans. Zeus, the chief of the Greek gods, became angry at Prometheus for making people powerful by teaching them all these useful skills.

—ROBERT GRAVES



INTRODUCTION

I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings;
I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all existing
things.

—*The Bhagavad-Gita*

Prometheus appears to be intimately connected with humanity. In the metaphysical world of *The Secret Doctrine*, along with her other various writings, HPB frequently identifies the mythological Prometheus with that infamous host of celestial beings, the “Fallen Angels.” In the Hindu pantheon they are referred to as the Kumaras, those who infused mind into the evolving human form—thus, the presence of the human Ego or soul. And so it is that our Egos acting within humanity become through sacrifice and wisdom the moral agents on this plane of life.

In order to approach this theme, “Promethean Altruism,” let’s consider some of the meanings embodied in the title.

Altruism:

“Altruism contains the notion of other people—it was borrowed from the French *altruisme*, which was apparently coined by philosopher Auguste Comte in 1830, on the Italian adjective *altrui*, and employed by him to denote the benevolent, as contrasted with the selfish propensities.” (*Dictionary of Word Origins*, Littlefield, Adams & Co.)

Humanity:

“Occultly and Kabbalistically, the whole of mankind is symbolised, by Manu in India...by Adam Kadmon in the Kabbala. All these represent the totality of mankind... Humanity is a great Brotherhood by virtue of the sameness of the material from which it is formed physically and morally. Unless, however, it becomes a Brotherhood also intellectually, it is no better than a superior genus of animals.” (*Glossary*.)

“And when we say human, this does not apply merely to our terrestrial humanity; but to the mortals that inhabit any world, *i.e.*, to those Intelligences that have reached the appropriate equilibrium between matter and spirit...” (*SD i*, p. 106.)

Krishna on spiritual knowledge and sacrifice:

“Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility; the wise who see the truth will communicate it unto thee, and knowing which thou shalt never again fall...” (*Gita*, Chapter IV (Theosophy Company edition).)

Prometheus:

“(Gr.). The Greek *logos*; he, who by bringing on earth divine fire (intelligence and consciousness) endowed men with reason and mind. Prometheus is the Hellenic type of our Kumaras or *Egos*, those who, by incarnating in men, made of them latent gods instead of animals. The gods (or Elohim) were averse to men becoming “as one of us” (*Genesis iii.*, 22), and knowing “good and evil”. Hence we see these gods in every religious legend punishing man for his desire to know. As the Greek myth has it, for stealing the fire he brought to men from Heaven, Prometheus was chained by the order of Zeus to a crag of the Caucasian Mountains.” (*Glossary*.)

The Greek Myth of Prometheus concerns the introduction of “manas”(mind) into humanity. From an occult standpoint “Mind is Fiery” making it especially relevant in the context of this theme, because by the very act of probing into philosophy and metaphysics we are playing with Fire!

From a theosophical perspective Prometheus is synonymous with Lucifer with respect to the introduction of Fire, derived from the Latin “lux and ferre,” and so therefore, “The Light Bearer.” Lucifer is also interchangeable with the Demiurge of theosophy. It is that force manifesting via the Trinity as the Primal Energy of Creation, otherwise known as Brahma. The War in Heaven is an allegorical theme of the “conflict” of Spirit with Matter. And, this is identical with the polarization implicit in duality. Thus, we find the Promethean sacrifice to be inherent in life, as it brings Light to all of nature—the “Fire of Manas” being the instrument of Creation and Evolution.





RECLAIMING THE FIRE

*H*OW ironic that in New York City, arguably the capital of modern culture and sophistication, in the middle of Rockefeller Center, prime symbol of material power and wealth, stands a shining golden sculpture of a mythic figure, actually a god carrying a flame,



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a burst of fire in his right hand. He is surrounded by the heavens, a ring representing the astrological constellations. One gets the sense that he is moving swiftly, flying down from a mountain peak (the sculpture's base), hurrying to his destination before the flame is extinguished. Most people are

not exactly sure who he is, missing the inscription on the marble retaining wall behind him and certainly missing the irony that he is a god of compassion and sacrifice not the patron saint of opulence and power in spite of being painted in gold. The inscription reads:

PROMETHEUS TEACHER IN EVERY ART BROUGHT
THE FIRE THAT HATH PROVED TO MORTALS A
MEANS TO MIGHTY ENDS.—Aeschylus

Prometheus, divine Titan, a kind of rebel angel who out of compassion for poor, obtuse humanity brought them the divine fire, taught them the arts and sciences, but paid a heavy price for tricking Zeus and disobeying the chief god. His act was a sacrifice; for he foresaw the consequences of his action. Humanity also paid for its awakening of consciousness. Hesiod the Greek poet relates that, “Zeus created the woman Pandora and sent her down to Epimetheus (hindsight) and although warned by his brother Prometheus (foresight) married her anyway. Pandora took the lid off the jar she carried, and evils, hard work and disease flew out to wander” among humankind.

On one level Prometheus and Epimetheus together represent the dual aspect of Manas, or mind, the former portraying the free, spontaneous expression of the spiritual, intuitive mind and the latter, Epimetheus, the logical, analyzing lower mind, ideally the instrument of the higher. On a more macrocosmic level H.P. Blavatsky points out in her master work, the *Secret Doctrine* that the Promethean sacrifice represents a great evolutionary crossroad when the evolving human form was prepared for the involving spiritual consciousness of more spiritual beings (Manasaputra), who incarnated into flesh and provided the bridge or spark for the expression of spiritual consciousness through the human



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form (*SD*, ii). The biblical myth of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, as well as the story of Lucifer, the fallen angel (whose name incidentally has for its root *lux* or light), also represents this evolutionary juncture where self-conscious human evolution began, strapped with responsibility, free will and the real possibility of a conscious spiritual life on earth. And here we find ourselves countless generations later still seemingly under the curse of Zeus. Let us remember Prometheus and the possibilities he brought; let us remember our spiritual heritage and reclaim the fire.



“I am not an Athenian or a Greek, but a citizen of the world.”

—*Socrates, from Plutarch, Of Banishment*

“I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue comes money and every other good of man, public as well as private. This is my teaching, and if this is the doctrine which corrupts the youth, I am a mischievous person.”

—*Socrates, quoted by Plato, “The Death of Socrates”*





QUOTATIONS ON PROMETHEUS

From *The Secret Doctrine*

THE TITAN—HIS ORIGIN IN ANCIENT INDIA

IN our modern day there does not exist the slightest doubt in the minds of the best European symbologists that the name Prometheus possessed the greatest and most mysterious significance in antiquity...according to the significant legend, the author of the *Mythologie de la Grèce Antique* remarks: "Thus Prometheus is something more than the archetype of humanity; he is *its generator*. In the same way that we saw Hephæstus moulding the first woman (Pandora) and endowing her with life, so Prometheus kneads the moist clay, of which he fashions the body of the first man whom he will endow with the soul-spark" (*Apollodorus*, I., 7, 1). After the Flood of Deukalion, Zeus, it was taught, had commanded Prometheus and Athena to call forth a new race of men from the mire left by the waters of the deluge (*Ovid, Metam.* I, 81. *Etym. M.* v. 33D@:02,bl)...

The same authors remind the world of another equally mysterious personage, though one less generally known than Prometheus, whose legend offers remarkable analogies with that of the Titan. The name of this second ancestor and generator is *Phoroneus*, the hero of an ancient poem, now unfortunately no longer extant—the *Phoronidæ*. His legend was localized in Argolis, where a perpetual flame was preserved on his altar as a reminder that he was the bringer of fire upon earth (*Pausanias*, 11, 19, 5; *Cf.* 20, 3.) A benefactor of men as Prometheus was,

he had made them participators of every bliss on earth. Plato (*Timæus*, p. 22), and Clemens Alexandrinus (*Strom.* I, p. 380) say that Phoroneus was the first man, or “the father of mortals.” His genealogy, which assigns to him as his father Inachos, the river, reminds one of that of Prometheus, which makes that Titan the son of the Oceanid Clymene. But the mother of Phoroneus was the nymph Melia; a significant descent which distinguishes him from Prometheus (*SD* ii, p. 519).

ADAM KADMON—THE JEWISH HERMES

The Adam Primus, or Kadmon, the Logos of the Jewish mystics, is the same as the Grecian Prometheus, who seeks to rival with the divine wisdom; he is also the Pymander of Hermes, or the POWER OF THE THOUGHT DIVINE, in its most spiritual aspect, for he was less hypostasized by the Egyptians than the two former. These all create men, but fail in their final object. Desiring to endow man with an immortal spirit, in order that by linking the trinity in one, he might gradually return to his primal spiritual state without losing his individuality, Prometheus fails in his attempt to steal the *divine* fire, and is sentenced to expiate his crime on Mount Kazbeck. Prometheus is also the Logos of the ancient Greeks, as well as Herakles. In the *Codex Nazaræus* we see Bahak-Zivo deserting the heaven of his father, confessing that though he is the father of the genii, he is unable to “construct creatures,” for he is equally unacquainted with Orcus as with “the consuming fire which is wanting in light.” And Fetahil, one of the “powers,” sits in the “mud” (matter) and wonders why the living fire is so changed.

ALLEGORY OF THE FALL

The allegory of the Fall of man and the fire of Prometheus is also another version of the myth of the rebellion of the proud Lucifer, hurled down to the bottomless pit—Orcus.

In the religion of the Brahmans, Moissasure, the Hindu Lucifer, becomes envious of the Creator's resplendent light, and at the head of a legion of inferior spirits rebels against Brahma, and declares war against him. Like Hercules, the faithful Titan, who helps Jupiter and restores to him his throne, Siva, the third person of the Hindu trinity, hurls them all from the celestial abode in Honderah, the region of eternal darkness. But here the fallen angels are made to repent of their evil deed, and in the Hindu doctrine they are all afforded the opportunity to progress. In the Greek fiction, Hercules, the Sun-god, descends to Hades to deliver the victims from their tortures; and the Christian Church also makes her incarnate god descend to the dreary Plutonic regions and overcome the rebellious ex-archangel. In their turn the kabalists explain the allegory in a semi-scientific way. Adam the second, or the first-created race which Plato calls gods, and the Bible the Elohim, was not triple in his nature like the earthly man: *i.e.*, he was not composed of soul, spirit, and body, but was a compound of sublimated astral elements into which the "Father" had breathed an immortal, divine spirit. The latter, by reason of its godlike essence, was ever struggling to liberate itself from the bonds of even that flimsy prison; hence the "sons of God," in their imprudent efforts, were the first to trace a future model for the cyclic law. But, man must not be "like one of us," says the Creative Deity, one of the Elohim "intrusted with the fabrication of the lower animal." And thus it was, when the men of the first race had reached the summit of the first cycle, they lost their balance, and their second envelope, the grosser clothing (astral body), dragged them down the opposite-arc (*SD* ii 298, 299).





ALTRUISTS AT WAR

I produce myself among creatures...of virtue and an insurrection of vice and injustice in the world; and thus I incarnate from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of righteousness.

—*The Bhagavad-Gita*

TO be relevant in a war-prone world, valid teachings must meet all needs, whether that of a peace advocate, soldier, or victim. The doctrines found in theosophical works do not prescribe behavior, and proof is found among the numbers of the well studied, pacifists and warriors alike. Theosophy offers specific principles, however, for consideration. As Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) advised:

In deciding what you must do and what you must not do, you should acquire the knowledge of fundamental and immutable principles...and think and act accordingly.

Participants of a recent theosophical workshop on unity reviewed relevant guiding principles during wartime, which are easily illustrated here by that timeless debate in *The Bhagavad-Gita* (Wm. Q. Judge's, Theosophy Company, 1986), the dialog between our inner god and the inner warrior. The workshop had taken a Promethean turn, having earlier declared its participants as gods in the making, or at the very least as bricks in the guardian wall that protects humanity from its own evils. With this premise, as well as deference to the natural laws such as the harmonizing influence of karma,

the burden of responsibility—as gods and guardians to be—was prodded onward by HPB’s observation that “nature unaided fails.” In *The Secret Doctrine* (ii 302), she notes: “Karman is action, the Cause; and Karma again is ‘the law of ethical causation’; the effect of an act produced egotistically, when the great law of harmony depends on altruism.”

The word *altruism* (Lat.) comes from *alter*, meaning “other,” “a quality opposed to Egoism,” and “actions tending to do good to others, regardless of self,” according to HPB’s *Theosophical Glossary*. Related perhaps is the origin of “altar,” usually associated with religious burning (for purification)—the metaphysical equivalent of that which transmutes the lower principles and ideals of the mind into the higher divine nature of the true self.

As willing spirits of gods and guardians, our innate nature is described (*Gita*, 16.1-3, p. 110):

Fearlessness, sincerity, assiduity in devotion, generosity, self-restraint, piety, and alms-giving, study, mortification, and rectitude; harmlessness, veracity, and freedom from anger, resignation, equanimity, and not speaking of the faults of others, universal compassion, modesty, and mildness; patience, power, fortitude, and purity, discretion, dignity, unvengefulness, and freedom from conceit—these are the marks of him whose virtues are of a godlike character, O son of Bharata.

In theosophical study, every seed has potential perfection and, with it, the possibility of attaining these godlike qualities in our lifetimes. Krishna promises: “...thou art born to a divine destiny” (*Gita*, 16.3, p. 111).

In the *Gita*, Arjuna regains his conviction to fight on—reinvigorated as a fearless warrior, having sought freedom through spiritual enlightenment, and finding an unwavering,

steadfast devotion to a higher divine nature within himself. Many of the workshop participants, however, were wary of the godlike rigor of the task. The spiritual and moral basis for individual action (*Gita*, 4.8, p. 31)—“preservation of the just, destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of righteousness”—was eerily fanatical in light of recent political rhetoric. Yet, the theosophical path calls on us to take action. And Krishna tells us we may as well “fight” since karma will push us forward (18.59). More pointed to some perhaps are author Paulo Coelho’s words: “It’s better to lose some of the battles in the struggles for your dreams than to be defeated without ever knowing what you’re fighting for.”

Sattvic qualities (of true essence, energizing, wise, and balanced) outlined in Chapter 18 relate action as “purifier of the wise”:

- Know that the wisdom which perceives in all nature one single principle, indivisible and incorruptible, not separate in the separate objects seen, is of the *sattva* quality.
- The action which is right to be done, performed without attachment to results, free from pride and selfishness, is of the *sattva* quality.
- The doer who performs necessary actions unattached to their consequences and without love or hatred is of the nature of the quality of truth—*sattva*. (pp. 124-126.)

Sattvic qualities bring an understanding of action and inaction, duty and karma, sources of fear and fearlessness, and what it is that’s binding and what frees us. Applying this to today’s environment is good training, particularly for future gods. The guiding principles reviewed at the workshop can be summarized in four points:

POINT 1: LOOK AT WAR AS IT IS AND FACE IT WISELY.

Questions can be asked: Is there a common danger? What action accomplishes the best for all people? The underlying principle in these questions is in the identification we have with all peoples, not separate groups. Justice for all (regardless of any qualifier), the rights of all (and everything), and freedom for all (in thought, speech, and action) are unequivocal, without exception.

Brotherhood, or unity, is the first principle of the theosophical movement. The lesson of nonseparateness is found in the *Gita's* sixth chapter (6.29, pp. 48-49):

He who seeth me in all things and all things in me
looseneth not his hold on me....And whosoever, believing
in spiritual unity, worshipeth me who am in all things,
dwelleth with me in whatsoever condition he may be.
He, O Arjuna, who by the similitude found in himself
seeth but one essence in all things, whether they be evil
or good, is considered to be the most excellent devotee.

Without exception—good or evil, in whatsoever condition—is the reality of unity. To unify your conscious spiritual awareness is to move beyond evil.

Arjuna initially makes his argument not to fight—but, as Gandhi has pointed out, his logic is flawed (if not, why is Krishna able to convince him to fight). Through Krishna, Arjuna learns to discern enduring realities, the eternal in nature. The lesson, even if Arjuna doesn't have all the answers, is to fight for that which is meaningful and substantive, rather than transient and incidental. Theosophy seeks causes, not effects.

**POINT 2: KNOW YOUR INTENTIONS (MOTIVATIONS)
AND SET THEM HIGH.**

Clarity requires a person be freed of the fear and anger that paralyzed the despondent Arjuna. Unity requires clarity instilled by a lifetime focus and an understanding of our true nature (our godlike qualities). Knowing that baser, lower qualities cannot prevail reinforces this lifelong mediation on a higher Buddhic, or spiritual, nature (*Gita* 2.47, p. 16): “Let, then, the motive for action be in the action itself, and not in the event. Do not be incited to actions by the hope of their reward, nor let thy life be spent in inaction.”

We can ask: Are we generally headed the right direction? When do our actions show a broad vision and strength of character? Removing the obstacles to right action, the disciplined mind lives spiritually while living in the manifest world (*Gita* 4.42, pp. 36-37): “...having cut asunder with the sword of spiritual knowledge this doubt which existeth in thy heart, engage in the performance of action. Arise!”

POINT 3: BE CONSISTENT IN YOUR PRINCIPLES.

Remain the master of your destiny (*Gita* 2.45-48, pp. 16-17), by being “constant in the quality of *Sattva*, free from worldly anxiety and the desire to preserve present possessions, self-centered and uncontrolled by object of mind or sense... Firmly persisting, in Yoga, perform thy duty, O Dhananijaya, and laying aside all desire for any benefit to thyself from action, make the event equal to thee, whether it be success or failure. Equal-mindedness is called Yoga.” Equalmindedness, meaning serenity or steadiness, detaches a person from desire and anger. Putting away self-interest is a quality of equalmindedness (5.10, p. 39): “Whoever...puts aside all

selfish interest in their result is untouched by sin, even as the leaf of the lotus is unaffected by the waters.”

Many commentaries note that steadfastness is key to enlightenment, or at least to aligning one’s daily practice with higher ideals, to “firmly persist.” Actions give up their binding nature through equanimity. Yoga can be more fully defined as a meditative practice leading to clear “perception of eternal truths” (*Theosophical Glossary*), with full control, knowledge of oneself in one’s divine state, and knowledge of universal reality. *Om*, a sacred word associated with cosmic vibration, a constancy of devotion to the divine, presents itself in the 17th chapter as a *sattvic* quality.

**POINT 4: SET IN MOTION RIGHT AND JUST IDEAS AND ACTIONS
THAT MAKE FOR THE GOOD OF ALL LIVES AND COUNTER EVIL:**

...Yoga is skill in the performance of actions: therefore do thou aspire to this devotion.” In other words, as former U.S. president Jimmy Carter said it, “My faith demands—this is not optional—my faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference (*The Gita* 2.51, p. 17).

Most workshop discussions struggled with the superlatives on the point of action. What is best? More admonitions arose than sanctions, such as, “Never act solely for national or special interests”—a unity-based adage that must be explored to sort out the nature of unity, duty, and loyalty. Just as people cloak motives with patriotism during war, some people want to rely solely on karma to weigh efforts—to the same extreme that an escapist takes a good book to bed during a raging storm.

Mostly, we have only the assumptions of our culture and time to set ourselves on self-devised paths of spiritual

evolution. While this may lead us more or less in the same direction, evolution requires individual freedom—to live and let live, to disagree (more than not).

Beyond this, in discussions, the workshop participants offered sayings of the heart, which can be added to and interpreted as fits the individual:

- “Only love dispels hate.” (Buddha, *The Dhammapada*)
- “Help Nature and work on with her: and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance.” (HPB, *The Voice of the Silence*)
- “Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profundity. Kindness in giving creates love.” (Lao Tse)
- “For every flower of love and charity he plants in his neighbour’s garden, a loathsome weed will disappear from his own, and so this garden of the gods—Humanity—shall blossom as a rose.” (HPB, *The Key*, Section 4)
- “Even if the good of mankind only is considered by thee, the performance of thy duty will be plain; for whatever is practiced by the most excellent men, that is also practiced by others.” (*Gita* 3.20, p. 25)

These and other tenets shape the decisions we make no matter how we stand to fight. But, like Arjuna, we fight on—for nature unaided fails. Efforts to act “as if” we were gods in training will serve to provide the altruistic support the universe requires. In a letter read to Third Annual Convention of the American Section of the Theosophical Society (1889), HBP advised:

The life of altruism is not so much a high ideal as a matter of practice.... There, then, is part of your work: to lift high the torch of the liberty of the Soul of Truth that all may see it and benefit by its light.



FROM THE OXFORD BOOK
OF ENGLISH VERSE

*I skill'd to prize
Those living stars, mine Eyes;
Before I knew these hands were mine
Or that my sinews did my Members join...
I was within
A House I knew not, newly cloth'd with skin.
Then was my Soul my only All to me.
A living endless Eye
Scarce bounded with the sky
Whose Power and Act and Essence was to see;
I was an inward sphere of Light
Or an interminable Orb of Sight
Exceeding that which makes the days
A Vital Sun, that shed abroad its rays,
All Life, all Sense,
A naked, simple, pure intelligence.*

—Thomas Traherne





MAKING THEOSOPHY PRACTICAL¹

True theosophy and its great mission are, first, the working out of clear unequivocal conceptions of ethical ideas and duties, such as shall best and most fully satisfy right and altruistic feelings, and second, the modelling of these conceptions for their adaptation into such forms of daily life, as shall offer a field where they may be applied with most equitableness. Such is the common work placed before all who are willing to act on these principles.

—A Sage, 1888

IT is divine philosophy alone—the spiritual and psychic blending of man with nature—which, by revealing the fundamental truths, can promote a spirit of unity and harmony in spite of the great diversities of conflicting creeds. Theosophy, therefore, expects and demands a great mutual toleration and charity for each others shortcomings, and mutual help in the search for truths in every department of nature—moral and physical. And this ethical standard needs to be applied to daily life.

Hence, Theosophy should not represent merely a collection of moral verities, a bundle of metaphysical ethics, epitomized in theoretical dissertations. It *must be made practical*; and it has, therefore, to be disencumbered of useless digressions, in the sense of desultory orations and fine talk.

¹ Collated from “Some Words on Daily Life,” *Theosophical Articles and Notes*—Publisher, The Theosophy Co.

Reward and acknowledgment are in yourself and inseparable from you, as it is your Inner Self alone which can appreciate them at their true degree and value. For each one of you contains within the precincts of his inner tabernacle the Supreme Court-prosecutor, defense, jury and judge—whose sentence is the only one without appeal; since none can know you better than you do yourself, when once you have learned to judge that Self by the never wavering light of the inner divinity—your higher Consciousness.

Take into account, theosophy can only find objective expression in an all-embracing code of life thoroughly impregnated with the spirit of mutual tolerance, charity and brotherly love. As a body, it has to fight intolerance, prejudice, ignorance and selfishness, hidden under the mantle of hypocrisy and has to throw all the light it can from the torch of Truth.

Ethics is the sense of solidarity with other human beings.

—Albert Schweitzer, *Physician-Philosopher*





A COMMENTARY ON THE GAYATRI

By Wm. Q. Judge¹

Unveil, O Thou who givest sustenance to the Universe, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, that face of the True Sun now hidden by a vase of golden light, that we may see the truth and do our whole duty on our journey to thy sacred seat.

—*The Gayatri*

I have adopted a translation as above, which is excellent in its giving of the meaning of this verse. What is the Gayatri? It is the sacred verse of the Hindus and begins with Om, their sacred word and letter. Its first words are: *Om, Bhur, Bhurvah!*

The first word contains in it a declaration of the three periods of a Manvantara and the three powers of that great Being who alone Is. Of a manvantara it is the beginning, the middle, and the end, and the three powers are Creation (or manifesting), Preservation (or carrying on), and Destruction. The three first words, Om, bhur, bhurvah, draw attention to and designate the three worlds. The whole verse is an aspiration in the highest sense. Every Brahman at his initiation is further instructed in this verse, but from giving that I am necessarily excused, as I cannot give it in a way in which I have not received it.

¹ "An Obscure Brahman" was a pseudo-name occasionally used by Mr. Judge.

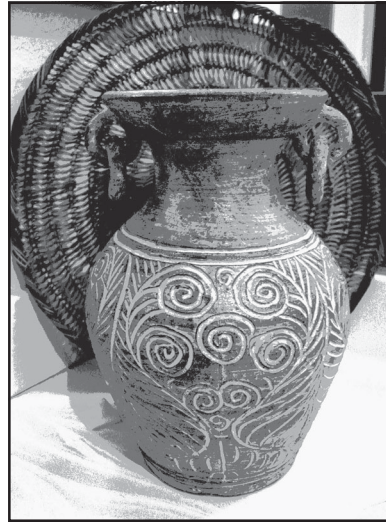
Unveil is the cry of the man who is determined to know the truth and who perceives that something hides it from him. It is hidden by his own Karmic effects, which have put him now where the brain and the desires are too strong for the higher self to pierce through so long as he remains careless and ignorant. The cry is not made to some man-made god with parts, passions, and attributes, but to the Self above who seeth in secret and bringeth out to light. It is directed to that on which the Universe is built and standeth,—no other than the Self which is in every man and which sitteth like a bird in a tree watching while another eats the fruit.

From this the whole Universe proceeds out into manifestation. The ancients held that all things whatsoever existed in fact solely in the idea, and therefore the practitioner of Yoga was taught—and soon discovered—that sun, moon, and stars were in himself, and until he learned this he could not proceed. This doctrine is very old, but today is adopted by many modern reasoners. For they perceive on reflection that no object enters the eye, and that whether we perceive through sight or feeling or any other sense whatever all objects are existing solely in idea. Of old this was demonstrated in two ways. First, by showing the disciple the actual interpenetration of one world by another. As that while we live here among those things called objective by us, other beings were likewise living in and among us and our objects and therein actually carrying on their avocations, perceiving the objects on their plane as objective, and wholly untouched by and insensible to us and the objects we think so material. This is no less true today than it was then. And if it were not true, modern hypnotism, clairvoyance, or clairsaudience would be impossible. This was shown by a second method precisely similar to mesmeric and hypnotic experiments, only that to these was added the power to make the subject step

aside from himself and with a dual consciousness note his own condition. For if a barrier of wood were erected in the sight of the subject which he clearly perceived and knew was wood, impervious to sight and an obstacle to movement, yet when hypnotised he saw it not, yet could perceive all objects behind it which were hidden in his normal state, and when he pressed against it thinking it to be empty air and feeling naught but force, he could not pass but wondered why the empty air restrained his body. This is modern and ancient. Clearly it demonstrates the illusionary nature of objectivity. The objectivity is only real relatively, for the mind sees no objects whatever but only their idea, and at present is conditioned through its own evolution until it shall have developed other powers and qualities.

The request made in the verse to *unveil the face of the True Sun* is that the Higher Self may shine down into us and do its work of illumination. This also spreads forth a natural fact unknown to moderns, which is that the sun we see is not the true sun, and signifies too that the light of intellect is not the true sun of our moral being. Our forefathers in the dim past knew how to draw forth through the visible Sun the forces from the True one. We have temporarily forgotten this because our evolution and descent into the hell of matter, in order to save the whole, have interposed a screen. They say in Christian lands that Jesus went into hell for three days. This is correct, but not peculiar to Jesus. Humanity is doing this for three days, which is merely the mystical way of saying that we must descend into matter for three periods so immense in time that the logarithm of one day is given to each period. Logarithms were not first known to Napier, but were taught in the pure form of the mysteries, because alone by their use could certain vast calculations be made. *Which is*

now hidden by a vase of Golden Light. That is, the light of the True Sun—the Higher Self—is hidden by the blood contained in the vase of the mortal body. The blood has two aspects—not here detailed—in one of which it is a helper to perception, in the other a hindrance. But it signifies here the passions and desires, *Kama*, the personal self, the thirst for life. It is this that veils from us the true light. So long as desire



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and the personality remain strong, just so long will the light be blurred, so long will we mistake words for knowledge and knowledge for the thing we wish to know and to realize.

The object of this prayer is that we may carry out our whole duty, after becoming acquainted with the truth, while we are on our *journey to thy Sacred Seat*. This is our pilgrimage, not of one, not selfishly, not alone, but the whole of humanity. For the sacred seat is not the Brahmanical heaven of Indra, nor the Christian selfish heaven acquired without merit while the meritorious suffer the pains of hell. It is that place where all meet, where alone all are one. It is when and where the three great sounds of the first word of the prayer merge into one soundless sound. This is the only proper prayer, the sole saving aspiration.

—An Obscure Brahman





ALTRUISM, PEER PRESSURE, OR PROFIT?

Ethical axioms are found and tested not very differently from the axioms of science. Truth is what stands the test of experience.

—Albert Einstein

IS corporate social responsibility a contradiction? Not quite. Actually it has become something of a buzzword in 21st century business. In an era when companies now reach across all kinds of borders (geographical, ethnic, religious, and technological, to name a few), actions and their reactions are becoming more visible to more observers, and the actors are being held to account.

In the 20th century, bad corporate behavior was certainly seen and addressed, in court and in boycotts, whether that behavior was monopolistic (AT&T), predatory (Nestle's baby formula disaster in Africa), or simply cruel (Gillette's horrific animal testing).

What's different in the 21st century? Now, many companies aren't waiting until they're caught out—they are holding themselves accountable in a new way, called the "balanced scorecard." On a balanced scorecard, companies assess their performance each quarter not only financially (are we making or losing money) but also environmentally (are we harming or helping the earth) and socially (are our workers and our neighbors happy or unhappy with us). The new trend in corporations is not to become too focused on one aspect of the scorecard to the detriment of the others.

What would cause such a sea change in the world of business? Altruism, peer pressure, or profit? Well, it would seem a little of each.

It turns out that people like to do business with those they see as ethical and responsible. Even those industries that clearly have an adverse impact on their environments, like oil and heavy manufacturing, have caught on to this and launched massive public relations campaigns touting their good works. Environmentally sensitive advertisements by Chevron ask “Do people really care this much...people do.” Meanwhile BP has adopted a new moniker, “Beyond Petroleum,” and posts billboards that say “Solar, natural gas, wind, hydrogen. And, oh yes, oil.”

But marketing aside, is being ethical good business? In the world of finance it is. A new category of mutual funds, called “Socially Responsible,” has emerged. These mutual funds refuse to make investments in arms, fossil fuels, tobacco, or in companies with troubling records regarding race and gender. Parnassus is currently the number one equity income fund, while Calvert and Pax World are also outperforming their peers.

It is also profitable to avoid being sued. Many companies have now expanded their Legal Departments to include a team for “Ethics and Compliance,” which is responsible for making sure everyone in the company, from top executives down to the mailroom, is operating legally and, what’s more, ethically. “Ethical behavior” is now a category frequently found on employees’ annual appraisal. Some companies even provide employees paid leave for volunteer work in the community, along with matching employee donations to charities dollar-for-dollar (usually up to a ceiling of around \$2500).

One organization devoted to helping the public and private sectors become more conscious of ethics and social responsibility is the Institute for Global Ethics (www.globalethics.org/) based in Camden, Maine. Their Mission Statement reads:

To promote ethical behavior in individuals, institutions, and nations through research, public discourse, and practical action.

And, United Kingdom based Trust for Global Ethics includes this vision in their Mission Statement:

A world where shared moral values shape relationships, determine decisions, and guide actions for every individual, institution, and nation.

Besides hosting their trademark “Ethical Fitness” seminar for educators, politicians and business people, the Institute consults with major companies like Shell, KPMG and Reuters on developing in-house ethics training. The Institute also hosts international conferences, like one in September 2002 on “Businesses for Middle East Peace-building.” A paragraph from the Summary Report reads:

While private-sector involvement in the region [West Bank and Gaza] has been tried in the past, the case for it has usually been limited to the promise of financial reward and has not extended to other motivations....As we heard from our participants, leading global business leaders [now] recognize that, while they must focus on the financial bottom line, they have a moral and ethical obligation to consider other “bottom lines” as well, concerning environmental and social issues. Leaders of socially responsible firms understand that investment toward these “bottom lines” contributes strongly to their company’s reputation, strength, and long-term profitability.

Stability and peace between Israelis and Palestinians is thus good for business, but it's also good for the employees, their families, their people, and the region.

Globalization, expanding markets and corporate profit is not necessarily exclusive of ethics, community, and the aspiration to help humanity. In fact, a number of top business leaders are deliberately trying to bring them all together.

A recent book, *Walking the Talk: The Business Case for Sustainable Development*, written by the CEOs of Shell, DuPont, and Anova, makes the case for the integration of sustainable development goals, including economic growth, social justice and ecological balance. Integrating all three forces businesses, big and small, to take account of their long-range responsibilities, which are not merely to remain profitable but to make opportunities available to those who currently have none, while protecting our environment so that we may carry on at all.





LORD BYRON'S PROMETHEUS




A Poem


*Titan! to whose immortal eyes
The sufferings of mortality,
Seen in their sad reality,
Were not as things that gods despise;
What was thy pity's recompense?
A silent suffering, and intense;
The rock, the vulture, and the chain,
All that the proud can feel of pain,
The agony they do not show,
The suffocating sense of woe,
Which speaks but in its loneliness,
And then is jealous lest the sky
Should have a listener, nor will sigh
Until its voice is echoless.*

*Titan! to thee the strife was given
Between the suffering and the will,
Which torture where they cannot kill;
And the inexorable Heaven,
And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
The ruling principle of Hate,
Which for its pleasure doth create
The things it may annihilate,
Refus'd thee even the boon to die:
The wretched gift Eternity
Was thine—and thou hast borne it well.
All that the Thunderer wrung from thee
Was but the menace which flung back
On him the torments of thy rack;*





*The fate thou didst so well foresee,
But would not to appease him tell;
And in thy Silence was his Sentence,
And in his Soul a vain repentance,
And evil dread so ill dissembled,
That in his hand the lightnings trembled.*



*Thy Godlike crime was to be kind,
To render with thy precepts less
The sum of human wretchedness,
And strengthen Man with his own mind;
But baffled as thou wert from high,
Still in thy patient energy,
In the endurance, and repulse
Of thine impenetrable Spirit,
Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
A mighty lesson we inherit:
Thou art a symbol and a sign
To Mortals of their fate and force;
Like thee, Man is in part divine,
A troubled stream from a pure source;
And Man in portions can foresee
His own funereal destiny;
His wretchedness, and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence:
To which his Spirit may oppose
Itself—and equal to all woes,
And a firm will, and a deep sense,
Which even in torture can descry
Its own concenter'd recompense,
Triumphant where it dares defy,
And making Death a Victory*

—George Gordon Lord Byron (1788-1824)





PROMETHEUS AND DARWIN

By John P. Van Mater

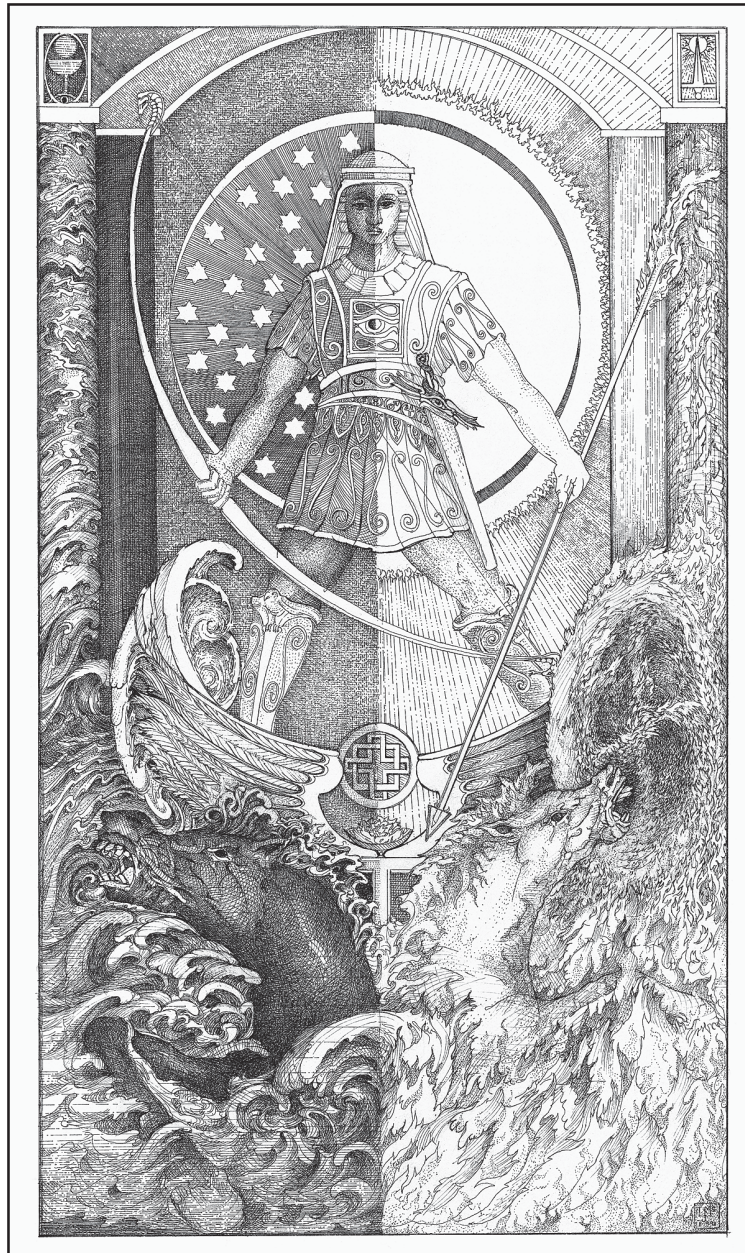
OUT of the deeps of space galaxies emerge, ablaze with the lights of countless worlds. One such world is our sun with its family of planets. And this tiny earth, our home, has seen the birth of man and his brothers of all the kingdoms.

Scientists have been pondering this genesis, starting with the premise that life, so called, sprang from nonlife through a series of complex chemical combinations, organizations of matter (and organizations of organizations), until the whole panorama of the kingdoms was unfolded, climaxed by the appearance of thinking, self-conscious man. We have on the one hand organic matter, the “living” kingdoms vegetables, beasts, and men. All else, by scientific definition, is inorganic, lifeless, that is to say, the great solar orb is a majestic astrophysical phenomenon, nothing more, which by a kind provision of “nature” pulses forth energies titanic enough to cross vast space and nourish earth’s tender “life.” But the sun itself is not living, nor is this rocky lump we call earth; or the billions of fellow suns that look down upon us from the night sky—or the great disc of the universe itself, wheeling its way across seemingly infinite space, along with countless other universes.

Perhaps because of the overwhelming prevalence of this scientific philosophy, little genuine attention is given the fact

that the greatest minds of the past have also considered how worlds are born and how our life here has reached the point where man's intelligence can probe the ultimate cause of his own being. These "other" explanations have somehow been made to appear alien to our modern outlook, as though only in our time have we attained a clear insight into realities. Yet surely there is more to universal nature than the outer shell that science explores.

How time erases the past! The surge and resurge of empires brings now this race, now that to cyclic prominence, often obliterating the achievements of conquered folk, so that with the next flow of conquest even their names become legendary—consult the list of allies of Troy and Greece in the *Iliad*. But races have a lore that survives the evanescent life of states. In the area of philosophy and religion there often remain lofty epics, myths of creation, stories of wars. These are usually woven into accounts that have historical value for they are, after all, the memory of the race. And mixed with these landmarks, whether of Troy, Babylon, or the Plain of the Kurus, are symbolic accounts of genesis, the birth of worlds, the origin of man. These scriptures and epics are first handed on by oral tradition, bridging eras of turbulence when any sort of writing had perished; but are finally set down, usually grandly, in later times—the *Mahabharata*, *Kalevala*, *Iliad*, and *Eddas*, the *Puranas* of ancient Aryavarta, the *Gilgamesh* epic of Sumeria, the Babylonian Genesis, and hosts more. Whereas the names employed by the various ancients may differ, the settings also, they all ask the same searching questions: How was our world born? Whence came the kingdoms of life? How did man achieve his self-consciousness? It is this last topic we seek to explore: man's self-conscious mind, that instrument which allows him to speculate upon his own nature and that of his world.



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The main thrust of the old mythological tales is that early humanity did not “evolve” civilization by trial and error, but was taught it by godlike forerunners. To make this thought more understandable, we have to go behind the veil of secrecy and the panoply of ritual and seek the true intellectual framework prevalent among the ancients. For one thing, they believed in reïmbodiment or reincarnation, in the concept that evolution is an individual concern, not national or racial except incidentally. In any life a person is what he has made of himself in former lives. He is drawn to incarnate now here, now there, to work out old causes, to reap the harvest of past sowings together with those with whom he had previously sowed. The central concept was that man has within godlike potentials, and in the course of many incarnations he is afforded innumerable opportunities to bring these forth—as have the wisest and most compassionate figures of human history.

Once admit the possible existence of this enduring element in man, however, and we must allow the same spiritual individuality to all creatures and even things unless we assume that man is unique, all other lives being but temporary sparks of awareness that cease when the body dies and exist no more. But, if so, we would then have to explain where the enduring part of man came from. It is logically more consistent to hold that all units are alive, even the worlds in which we live and move. This was the reasoning behind the ancient panorama of gods and goddesses immanent in the cosmos, hierarchies of them “above” ourselves. And we cannot stop there; we must consider those kingdoms or universal activities “below” the so-called living kingdoms, the forces and energies which are the fuel-stuff of life itself. These too have been looked upon as lesser lives from most ancient times by peoples the world over. This, then, was the archaic picture

of the universe, infilled with living suns and planets, within which coursed an infinite variety of sentient life on many levels or degrees of unfoldment; all parts of a process of cosmic evolution through repeated reimbodiments.

Generally speaking, however, our mental outlook is not conditioned to understand how or why the ancients set forth their history as they did, or to accept these fragments as legitimate interpretations of the same story that scientists describe in other terms. As with former eras where the thought life was dominated by a prevailing view, religious or scientific, we have the notion that it is only in our time that we have put aside our superstitious origins—peopled as it was with hosts of gods and demons—and emerged into the bright sunlight of a true perspective. We forget that even recent history urges us to rise above the egotism of current dogmas. Among our forebears of olden times were men and women as intelligent as we are. In their often secret schools they undoubtedly discussed the very topics that engage modern researchers—Plato in his Academy, Plotinus in the Alexandrian School, and other enlightened figures in numerous centers in the Near East, India, and the Orient.

The mystery of man's self-conscious mind is a good subject to illustrate how science and the ancient traditions can be combined to give more profound interpretations. Little special emphasis is placed by science upon how man attained self-awareness, yet it was a truly spectacular achievement. It is presumed (without going into details) that man's supply of inner endowments accumulated step by step with his outer development. The modern view assumes that man, like all creatures, gradually acquired abilities and that these through long evolution became the refined inner qualities that distinguish the human species. But if man had sought only

those features that would equip him to survive in a given environment, how account for the extraordinary development of his brain and his aesthetic and religious attributes and longings which are and, as far as can be determined, have always been present? This difficulty is currently sidestepped by the concept that genetic mutations explain how descendants may become endowed with capacities that do not necessarily spring from their contact with environment. And so, with an airy wave of the hand, we are led to believe that we can disregard any metaphysical explanations about man.

Almost at the outset, however, Darwinism had its critics among the scientists themselves, as the late poet-scientist Dr. Loren Eiseley points out in several of his books. He discusses the views of Alfred Russel Wallace, co-discoverer of the theory bearing Darwin's name. As early as 1864, Wallace claimed that man's evolution took place in two stages. Phase one had to do with the evolution of his body, which has remained fairly stable. The second phase was the arrival (or awakening) of the human mind, which introduced a wholly new factor into evolution. With thinking man, bodily specialization, he claimed, became outmoded, for environment no longer gripped him. But his brain, meanwhile, underwent astonishing changes. While the surrounding animals were producing extensive physical modifications, man's "skeleton has remained nearly stationary..." The human race "has been evolving mostly in the head."—*My Life: A Record of Events and Opinions*, vol. I, p. 419.

Wallace's study of so-called primitive peoples led him to observe that they are in fact not primitive at all insofar as what would today be termed their genetic endowment. In the modern world we see countless examples of individuals who leap from their "savage" background of a generation or two ago and take their place intellectually, culturally, and

aesthetically in our universities and in “civilized” society. But this is only an outward fact hiding an inner truth that has not been squarely faced: if these peoples have existed for untold ages in often primitive or barbaric environments, how explain their genetic potential? This is not something acquired overnight but needs countless millennia to implant under the step-by-step Darwinian process. And in this area they are not primitive in the least, having the same endowment we all have and needing only the proper environment to prove the fact. It is obvious that due to the cyclic rise and fall of races, nations, and tribes, there are times of power and ascendancy, and intervals (that may endure for centuries) when peoples seem to lie fallow until the call of circumstance awakens them to another more active destiny.

The explanations given by peoples of former times parallel in many respects the two-phase theory put forward by Wallace. They held that the human race spent countless ages developing an appropriate vehicle for its inner powers. At this point man was but an unthinking shell living a Garden-of-Eden existence. The time arrived, however, when this vehicle was ready, and higher beings, man’s higher self in fact, incarnated in him, quickening, waking to self-consciousness his slumbering mind. These Manasaputras (“sons of mind,” Hindu), Elohim (Hebrew), Prometheus (Greek), Loki (Norse), Ahriman (Persian), or whatever name or names peoples may have given them, were the rebellious Angels (Lucifer) who brought the fire of the gods to man. Tradition also has it that gods incarnated to teach the arts and sciences to Adam (mankind), so recently “cast out of Eden.” These great ones, it is said, remained as the Divine Kings of universal legend, finally withdrawing as material cycles advanced, not however without founding the Mystery Schools where the archaic lore could be preserved and

expounded—thus forming for the intuitive mind the esoteric background that pecks out beneath the symbols and parables of the exoteric or popular mythologies coming down to us.

The myth of Prometheus is remarkably suggestive of these forgotten incidents in our past—incidents which philosophers, poets, and dramatists of former eras elaborated in their descriptions of the birth of worlds and men. The story has taken several forms. In one version Prometheus created man out of the earth, in which there still resided “heavenly seeds” and, further, invoked the winds to breathe life into him. But man was still without fire, which many believe referred more to the fire of mind than to earthly fire. So Prometheus stole the fire of the gods and brought it to man hidden in a hollow reed. He also remained to teach mankind the arts and sciences. For these acts he was banished by Zeus, chained to a rock on Mount Caucasus, where an eagle preyed upon his liver; but he was eventually freed by Hercules, who can be taken to represent god-man or man perfected. One interpretation is that man’s spiritual nature (Prometheus) is chained by its incarnation in man until man himself becomes consciously godlike (Hercules) and can set it free. The Christian story, although couched differently contains the same basic elements: Lucifer (literally, “lightbringer”) is thrown out of heaven, but appears in Eden to tempt man with the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Corresponding myths may be found in nearly every part of the world.

Now if indeed the human race received such a spiritual-intellectual stimulus, surely we should find physiological evidence of this fact. One clue, presently downgraded but commented upon favorably by Dr. Eiseley, is that the human individual in his growth from conception to birth to adulthood reveals in the small what the human species has undergone in the large. In his *Immense Journey*, he notes the

interesting fact that the human brain at birth is only slightly larger than that of a baby gorilla (330 cc); but in the first year of life the child's brain trebles in size. There is no parallel to this phenomenon anywhere in the animal world. Eiseley wonders "at what point in time or under what evolutionary conditions" did our human ancestors begin their remarkable transformation. Certainly the ancient tradition of the incarnation in man of higher intellectual qualities and the subsequent nurturing of infant mankind by more advanced souls, would have produced extraordinary changes. The rapid growth of his brain is evidence that something of this nature must have taken place. He refers to the "old biological law" that the development of the individual reflects the history of the race, which would confirm this "sudden or explosive increase" somewhere back in the prehistory of mankind.

Wallace supports this by pointing out that after man's brain had been prepared "there occurred the spiritual influx which alone enabled him to begin a course of intellectual and moral development (*Social Environment and Moral Progress*, p. 30)." He also asserted (to Darwin's disappointment) that the artistic, musical, and mathematical abilities of man could never have been evolved by natural selection and the mere struggle for existence.

If we assume that nature, the cosmos, is as real spiritually as it is tangible physically, the ideal philosophy describing it would have to illuminate both worlds. And since we cannot in ourselves discover where body ends and spirit begins, we should not try to divide and separate the realm of science from that of religion, but allow the insights of each to penetrate the other. What we seek, after all, is not material truth or spiritual truth, but the actual truth—as far as we humans can perceive it. And there is no other subject, perhaps, that lends itself so aptly to a universal outlook as

the mystery of man's self-conscious mind. For mind partakes of both worlds: it is housed in a brain, but wings its way unfettered by physical chains, touching the stars with its immediate glance, but in the next moment pausing hesitantly over the immensity of a flower.

(From *Sunrise* magazine, November 1979. Copyright © 1979 by Theosophical University Press.)



NOTIONS ON IMAGINATION

An idea is salvation by imagination.

—Frank Lloyd Wright

Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine and at last you create what you will.

—George Bernard Shaw

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams! Live the life you've imagined. As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler.

—Henry David Thoreau

Everything you can imagine is real.

—Pablo Picasso

ON THE LOOKOUT

RATIONAL MYSTICISM

A LOOKOUT FEATURE

PERENNIAL QUEST

With the parade of human events and the attending flow of time, an increased number of books and articles have appeared in print that reflect a special interest in the changing states of human consciousness. A recent book by John Horgan (*Rational Mysticism*, Houghton Mifflin, New York, 2003), a former senior writer for *Scientific American*, examines the fine line, which at times seems virtually indelible, drawn by psychologists and others between the mystic awareness of “spirituality” and the mental faculty of “reason.” In the Introduction, John Horgan acquaints his readers with a number of the people who have written on this subject. Among these are William James, Richard Bucke, a number of Buddhists, a mixed assortment of Mystics, Huston Smith, various psychologists who in one way or another have scrutinized the paranormal world, and last, but not least, Ken Wilber. The Postmodernist and the work of evolutionary biologist Edmund O. Wilson were also discussed. Biologist Wilson had decreed that “you cannot tread the path of spirituality and the path of reason; you must choose between

them.” This rather definite statement caught John Horgan’s eye. As a result he determined that a principal goal of his book would be to put Wilson’s dictum to the test. Be that as it may, in the closing pages of *Rational Mysticism* John Horgan confesses that he did not arrived at any positive position on this important issue. It would seem that one who is trained in the methods of inductive science has difficulty letting go of the proposition that physical organisms are the true source of life and consciousness.

WHAT IS TRULY REAL?

John Horgan was favorably impressed with Huston Smith’s idea of enlightenment, which defines enlightenment as a subjective “quality of life” rather than an objective “state of consciousness.” Yet much of the mysticism Horgan discusses appears to be largely associated with psycho-physical causes. In one instance, he asks Sasha Shulgin, a psychedelic chemist, if a perfect consciousness expanding compound were to be developed how he would rate the ultimate altered state attained? Shulgin responded, saying; “A rare and precious transcendental state, a blissful peak experience, in which one feels a connectedness with both the interior and exterior universes....The evolutionary pressure for survival no longer exists. I believe that this would be the end of our species.” In other words, Horgan replies, “the perfect mystical technology could bring about the end of novelty—or at least human generated novelty.” It becomes quite evident that many intelligent people have great difficulty accepting the occult teaching that consciousness does not have its true and ultimate source in some form of gross matter.

STARING PARADOX IN THE FACE

Near the end of this exploration of *Rational Mysticism*, John Horgan comments that although he has difficulty understanding the meaning of this mysterious life lived on earth, he accepts his lot as a caring human being who lives among compassionate and worthy companions. That fact alone, he suggests, gives life great meaning. He then points to an unseen reality he can neither explain nor ignore:

But free will *must* exist if some creatures have more of it than others, in the same way that truth must exist if some statements are truer than others. My daughter and son have more free will—more choices to consider and select from—than they did when they were infants. I have more free will than my children do. I also have more than adults my age suffering from schizophrenia or obsessive-compulsive disorder. Moreover, our belief in free will has social value. It provides us with the metaphysical justification for ethics and morality. It forces us to take responsibility for ourselves rather than entrusting our fate to Jehovah or Allah or the Tao or the timewave. We must accept that things will get better and better only as a result of our efforts, not because we are fulfilling some preordained supernatural plan. If free will is an illusion, it is one that we need—that I need—even more than God. I have no choice but to choose free will. Of course, I can't be sure that free will exists. There is very little I am sure of, actually, I have ended this mystical inquest as I began it—mystified, or “convictionally impaired,” to borrow a phrase from Huston Smith.

The thought occurs after reading *Rational Mysticism* that the writer, John Horgan, has come to believe that deep and unconditional human caring qualifies as a lofty mystic state. He seems to imply, in fact, that it is the realization of “Ultimate reality” here on earth.

HPB in her article, “Spiritual Progress,” comments on the permanent presence of this ultimate reality:

In this connection we would warn all who are seeking spiritual knowledge, to beware of persons offering to teach them easy methods of acquiring psychic gifts; such gifts (*laukika*) 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 (*lokothra*), once reached, is never lost.

RANDOM OBSERVATION

“FLOWER OF POWER”

A March 1st report on MSNBC tells of a new plastic coating that sheds ice and debris like water off a ducks back. This remarkable product will soon be adapted to make self-cleaning materials. An innovative team of Turkish researchers worked as a unit in developing this remarkable plastic coating. Members of this working group had noted that the ability of any surface to avoid becoming wet seems to relate directly to a special sort of roughness. They cite the leaves of the lotus plant, an aquatic plant originally found in India and Indonesia, as having the sort of smooth *roughness* that sheds water. They discovered that a leaf from the “sacred lotus plant” possesses a waxy, though



rough, surface coating that resists the accumulation of just about any foreign substance. Hence, the report observes, the lotus plant symbolizes purity.

The Secret Doctrine (ii, 424, 472) affirms that the sacred Lotus plant, the “flower of power” not only bears its own seed for periodic renewal, it also represents spiritual life. Hence, the lotus symbolizes the manifested universe, with seeds in the mud (material), a stem in the water (psychic) and a flower that floats on the water and opens to the light of truth (spiritual).



FROM AROUND THE WORLD

(Translated from their original sources)

FROM FRANCE...

“CULTURE ALONE DOESN’T MAKE US HUMAN”

In an interview that appeared in *L'Express* (Paris, September 2002), George Steiner, an acclaimed writer, critic and philosopher, establishes the theme for his comments by drawing upon the cutting logic of Voltaire, the eighteenth century French philosopher. Steiner quotes Voltaire as saying: “The great promise of humanity has always been to humanize the population through culture. Yet, history reveals that the more formal religions decline, the more hatred disappears.” Considering Voltaire’s words, Professor Steiner says that it seems quite evident that the indoctrination of beliefs turns out to be a dangerous process. Politicians and theologians in the past not only didn’t anticipate this result, many continue to deny it even today.

RENUNCIATION OF REASON

George Steiner continues:

Searching for a hell, we have built it and put it into motion here on earth. Not only does this bring us face to face with a cultural crisis, it also flies in the face of reason. Libraries, museums and universities are known to have flourished in the shadow of concentration camps. As we

see it, culture not only does not make us more human, it may even desensitize us to the suffering of our fellow human beings. At times an island of high culture will catapult people onto a transcendent plane of consciousness while they remain indifferent to the hardships of others. The important question that arises, can our “high culture” establish a true balance with concern for truly humane conduct?

A WORD TO THE WISE

In answer to the above question, George Steiner adds a personal note:

My greatest lesson after all of these many years of teaching at Cambridge came from a woman who, after her graduation, told me: “I fear all you taught me and I detest what you appear to represent. I do not want to hear more talk about high and polished culture. I leave your tutelage to become a ‘Doctor without Borders’ in China.” So she did, she is still there in a village without water, helping suffering humanity. But the event that shocked me into speaking out on this subject was when it was discovered that Polpet buried 100,000 people alive in Cambodia. Who cares about political, economic or juridical concerns when a holocaust such as this can still occur in our common world. Human beings must come first.



NOTE:

Unless otherwise noted, authors and works (with reprints of original editions available from Theosophy Company) that are frequently cited have been identified by the following abbreviations:

HPB—Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891)

Judge—William Quan Judge (1851-1896)

Gita—*The Bhagavad-Gita*, rendition by Judge,
ISBN 0-938998-09-9

Glossary—*The Theosophical Glossary* by HPB, 1892,
ISBN 0-938998-04-8

Isis—*Isis Unveiled* by HPB, 1877, ISBN 0-938998-01-3

Key—*The Key to Theosophy* by HPB, 1889,
ISBN 0-938998-03-X

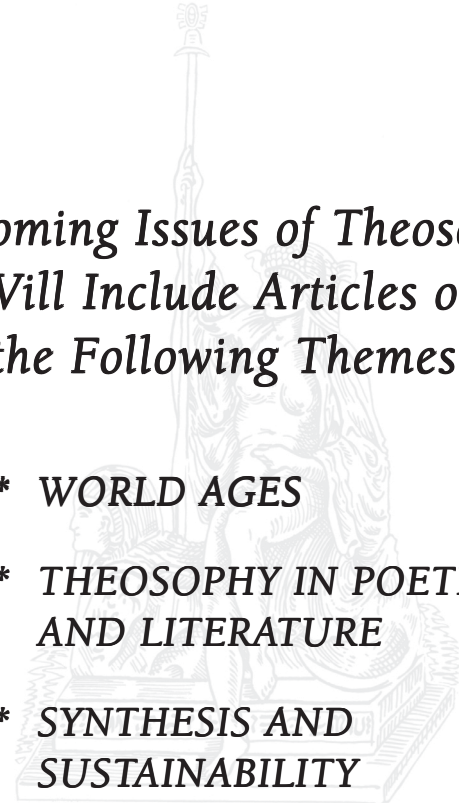
Ocean—*The Ocean of Theosophy* by Judge, 1893,
ISBN 0-938998-07-2

Patanjali—*Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms*, translation by
Judge, ISBN 0-938998-11-0

SD—*The Secret Doctrine* by HPB, 1888,
ISBN 0-938998-00-5

Voice—*The Voice of the Silence* by HPB, 1889,
ISBN 0-938998-06-4

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