

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

A Magazine Devoted to
The Living of the Higher Life

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- (a) To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour;
- (b) The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and
- (c) The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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TRUE SELF-RELIANCE

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There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried.

Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment of the times, and hurl in the face of custom and trade and office, the fact which is the upshot of all history, that there is a great responsible Thinker and Actor working wherever a man works; that a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of things.

It is easy to see that a greater self-reliance—a new respect for the divinity in man—must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men; in their religion; in their education; in their pursuits; their modes of living; their association; in their property; in their speculative views.

—EMERSON

EVERY tyro in Theosophy knows that "in the world mental as in the world spiritual each man must progress by his own efforts"; that human evolution is by "self-induced and self-devised ways and

means." Ways and means to what? To become the holiest of archangels, a Dhyani-Buddha. For this great achievement no special gifts are possible; it is only personal effort and merit that will win the prize.

From numerous statements of H.P.B.'s it seems clear that the real struggle of the coming cycle will be by individual souls for their psycho-moral independence. The present is undoubtedly a time of the disintegration of authority—every sort of authority. The circumstances of our time give the indication that all external sources of security and authority will gradually be withdrawn from view, until human beings are constrained to think for themselves, to decide for themselves. Mr. Judge wrote in the closing issue of the first volume of *The Path* :

...we implicitly believe that in this curve of the cycle, the final authority is *the man himself*. In former times, the disclosed Vedas, and later, the teachings of the great Buddha, were the right authority, in whose authoritative teachings and enjoined practices were found the necessary steps to raise Man to an upright position. But the grand clock of the Universe points to another hour, and now Man must seize the key in his hands and himself—as a whole—open the gate....

Student-aspirants of the present generation need to understand the implications of the true self-reliance which both H.P.B. and Judge preached. The admonition to be self-reliant is so common that we are apt to pass it by; to overlook the fact that in occultism common things and homely sayings acquire new meanings. Self-reliance in its deepest sense implies that *nothing* of an external character, whether in the visible or invisible worlds, can ever be the final arbiter of Truth. It is the fundamental duty of everyone to stand on his own feet; for, in the words of Kipling, "the race is run by one and one and never by two and two." We grow ever from within; hence the ultimate objective of all true teaching is to throw the pupil back *upon himself*. "Desire only that which is within you," states *Light on the Path*; "for within you is the light of the world—the only light that can be shed upon the Path. If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere." Further:

There is a law of nature which insists that a man shall read these mysteries for himself. By no other method can he obtain them. A man who desires to live must eat his food himself: this is the simple law of nature—which applies also to the higher life. A man who would live and act in it cannot be fed like a babe with a spoon; he must eat for himself. (p. 30)

For long centuries, men and women have fought shy of breaking customs and traditions, of doing anything which is not in conformity with social taboos, religious superstitions, scientific fetishes, political ideologies. "Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist," writes Emerson in his essay on "Self-Reliance." "The objection to conforming to usages that have become dead to you is that it scatters your force. It loses your time and blurs the impression of your character." The need of the hour is a change from dogma or creed to faith in law and justice impartial. This calls for iconoclasm toward the illusionary beliefs which like clamps of steel have been held tightly on the race-mind by vested interests. The practice of ceremonial and ritual for appeasing powers, sub- or super-human, has driven mankind further than ever from the goal. To all those who adhere to religious, philosophic, scientific, social or political systems which teach dependence on any power, force or law outside of man himself, Theosophy says—"Come out from among them and be ye separate." Emerson further states:

What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

"For nonconformity," Emerson continues, "the world whips you with its displeasure." So long as an individual is content to imitate the humdrum course of life followed by his neighbours, friends and relations, no one may give him a thought. But once it becomes

known that he has been able to detect the hollow mockery of social life, its hypocrisy, selfishness and other bad features, and has determined to "come out from among them and be...separate," the general mass of his friends and acquaintances who do not view life as he does and who are wedded to the "established order" immediately array themselves against him and he is hated. He has in addition to contend with his own lower tendencies and faculties which up to this time had been accustomed to the conventional mode of living and which now rise in rebellion. The despondency which overcame Arjuna when he beheld in the opposing army his own "near relations" and "bosom friends" may well overcome any sincere aspirant who has determined to rely on himself, to follow his own Inner Monitor and hold fast to the truth as his lamp, seeking salvation in the truth alone. *Virya*, the dauntless energy, is what the aspirant needs to fight the antagonists without as well as within himself.

Self-reliance is not only freedom from dependence upon others but also liberation from enslaving desires of every kind. Only when we free ourselves from the bondage of the lower personal self, which is greedy and egotistic, and follow the dictates of our true and immortal nature, can we become truly independent in the spiritual sense.

The word "independence" is very much misunderstood in our age. Self-reliance does not imply that braggart "independence" that the men, women and youth of our modern civilization claim for themselves, failing to perceive the true interdependence which binds all things into one vast whole. Nor does it call for the ignoring of the thoughts, opinions and theories of other men. All human endeavour is of value, but only the truly self-dependent can estimate its value.

True freedom or self-reliance is absolute dependence upon Law. To seek to subject others to our way of looking at things, or to fear and be intolerant towards the views of others, is to have no real confidence in the justice of the universe and the everlasting triumph of Truth.

We need not ask for authority in our pursuit of Truth. There is

no such thing as authority in spiritual teaching save the authority that the teaching itself carries. One mode of testing these teachings is by our intuition. Within the consciousness of each human being are impacted certain divine intuitions or inherent ideas. "It is just as if we had within us a series of wires whose vibrations are all true, but which will not be vibrated except by those words and propositions which are in themselves true," says Mr. Judge. To develop this intuition, unselfish effort is required. By mentally referring all propositions to it, it will get an opportunity for growth.

Within us is a source of strength that will always spring up if only we will look there. Self-distrust is the cause of most of our failures. The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual. There are crucial moments in the lives of all when every prop, every external aid, is gone, and unless one has the power to face one's trials alone, one is sure to fall. We are born alone and we die alone. When finally we are prepared for a greater birth, we must pass over alone. To quote again from *Light on the Path* (pp. 55-57):

Each man has to accomplish the great leap for himself and without aid; yet it is something of a staff to lean on to know that others have gone on that road....in the early state in which man is entering upon the silence he loses knowledge of his friends, of his lovers, of all who have been near and dear to him; and also loses sight of his teachers and of those who have preceded him on his way. I explain this because scarce one passes through without bitter complaint. Could but the mind grasp beforehand that the silence must be complete, surely this complaint need not arise as a hindrance on the path. Your teacher, or your predecessor may hold your hand in his, and give you the utmost sympathy the human heart is capable of. But when the silence and the darkness comes, you lose all knowledge of him; you are alone and he cannot help you, not because his power is gone, but because you have invoked your great enemy.

By your great enemy, I mean yourself.

TRUTH IN MANY SYSTEMS

THE second object of the Theosophical Movement, of which the U.L.T. is an integral part, is the comparative study of Aryan and other scriptures, of the world's religions and sciences, in order to (1) vindicate the importance of old Asiatic literature, as of the Brahmanical, Buddhist and Zoroastrian philosophies; and (2) select therefrom universal ethics.

It is interesting to note that, as far back as the third century A.D., Ammonius Saccas used the word Theosophy. He and his disciples started the Eclectic Theosophical system, to show that the tenets of all the various sects that have sprung up over the ages have one and the same source and objective. The founders of this School tried to interpret all sacred legends, myths and mysteries by the principle of analogy and correspondence. The object of this system was to inculcate certain great moral truths in its disciples. Its aim was "to reconcile all religions, sects and nations under a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities." So also today, many years after Ammonius Saccas, it is the aim of Theosophy to show that all religions are based on one and the same truth. The various sects are the minor twigs or shoots grown on the larger branches which represent the various religions, and these branches in turn have sprung from the same trunk—the Wisdom-Religion. The source of all religions is the same, but every one of them, without exception, is overlaid with superstition, corruption and dogmatism. All are true at the source, but false, or at best partially true, on the surface.

In such a situation, to accept all that any religion offers would be a wrong kind of tolerance, and to reject a religion outright would be equally unfair. We need to remove the cobwebs of superstition, ceremonies, etc., to reach at the truth. We have to lay aside the sense of religious superiority and exclusiveness. If a Parsee, for instance, feels that the "path of purity" is taught only in Zoroastrianism, then let him look up the *Dhammapada*, the *Gita*, or the *Sermon on the Mount*, and he will find there the same teaching on "purity."

One wonders that, if a particular religion was already teaching purity and goodness, then why should another prophet come and

give the same teaching under a new name? This is precisely what has not happened. Theosophy says that no Buddha, Christ or prophet ever tried to establish a religion. Each and every one of them was a reformer, a *Protestant* in the true sense of the word—one who protests against the prevailing religious system of the time. They never came to establish a *new* religion. For instance, the Buddha never founded Buddhism. He was a Hindu born in the Kshatriya caste, who saw that the Brahmins, for their own selfish interest, were being reticent and preventing the laity from getting at the true teachings. He took these teachings to the masses. So also Jesus strove to restore Judaism to its pristine purity. It is the followers of these teachers who gave a name to the teachings and it came to be known as a religion.

How is it then that each seems different from the others? If one goes through the history of any religion, one finds that in the first phase there is a teacher or a reformer who tries to restore the existing religion to its pure form. But, after the death of the reformer, the disciples try to systematize the teachings—which have mostly been passed on orally—and to promulgate them in their own way. Some misinterpretations and distortions may take place at this stage, unconsciously to the disciples. Then steps in the intermediary, the priest, who deliberately misinterprets the teachings in order to have sway over the laity. The Christian Church Fathers, for instance, pronounced anathemas against many teachings so that people would have to depend upon the priests for their passport to heaven.

Oriental scholars have shown that the rite of widow-burning in India was not only unsanctionable, but was forbidden by the earliest and most authoritative scriptures. Professor Wilson was the first to point out the falsification of the text, where "*yonim agre*" was changed to "*yonim agne*" (womb of fire). Max Muller in his *Comparative Mythology* states:

According to the hymns of the "Rig-Veda," and the Vaidic ceremonial contained in the "Grihya-Sutras," the wife accompanies the corpse of the husband to the funeral pile, but she is there addressed with a verse taken from the "Rig-Veda," and

ordered to leave her husband, and to return to the world of the living. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 541 fn.)

In Chapter IV of the *Gita*, Krishna says:

This exhaustless doctrine of Yoga I formerly taught unto Vivaswat; Vivaswat communicated it to Manu and Manu made it known unto Ikshwaku; and being thus transmitted from one unto another it was studied by the Rajarshees, until at length in the course of time the mighty art was lost.

Vivaswat is the Sun, the first manifestation of divine wisdom at the beginning of evolution. He was the Being appointed to help and guide the race at its beginning, having himself reached that stage by his efforts and achievements in prior cycles of manifestation. Truth is to be found in the One Reality itself. Vivaswat taught that Truth to Manu, the presiding cosmic intelligence over our universe. It was next passed on to Ikshwaku, who was the progenitor of the present human race; and then followed a long line of Royal Sages. Infant humanity was guided, taught and ruled over by beings who were not the products of our earth, who had gone through their evolution on other planes. In course of time, from among the earthly humans there arise those who by their self-effort become perfected in Wisdom and Compassion, and who transmit the original divine teachings to struggling humanity. Unfortunately, at a later stage, these teachings are misinterpreted, get deteriorated and lost.

They are lost only to the outer world. There is a system called the esoteric tradition where the teachings being passed on from Guru to pupil retain their pristine purity and the link is kept unbroken. Whenever there is deterioration in the exoteric transmission, a being from the inner chain enters the arena to revive the true teachings.

Deterioration in the teachings began in the Fourth Root Race. Humanity of the Third Root Race had no beliefs, no system of faith and no outward worship that could be called religion in the present acceptation of the word. But they had true religion in the sense that they were bound together by the reverence and devotion that they felt for their Divine Instructors. It was the people of the Fourth Root

Race who set up their own idols and worshipped them.

If we are searching for truth and points of similarity in different religions, then let us not look for them in ceremonies and rituals. Even what is given in the sacred books is often ambiguous and is clothed in the language of imagery and symbolism. In these sacred texts, their authors sometimes purposely put "blinds," to prevent the unprepared and the selfish from getting at the real truth that might be misused.

We are asked to look for points of similarity in the ethics of various religions. A true philosophy always has as its counterpart universal ethics. These moral teachings are not the monopoly of any person or persons, nor do they keep changing. Universal ethics are not like social morals or customs that change from time to time. Universal values arise out of the very nature of things.

No single religion can have exclusive claim on ethics. No religion gives out new ethics; only the emphasis varies. Certain basic truths or moral codes are common to all. People belonging to different religions may not agree on their ideas of hell and heaven, or their concept of God, or belief in Karma and Reincarnation, but they will agree on being good, kindly, loving, honest, etc.

For instance, if we look at the teachings in different traditions and religions on "honesty," we notice the similarity:

Has he drawn false boundaries? (Babylonian)

Choose loss rather than shameful gains. (Greek)

Justice is the settled and permanent intention of rendering to each man his rights. (Roman)

If the native made a "find" of any kind (*e.g.*, a honey tree) and marked it, it was thereafter safe for him, as far as his own tribesmen were concerned, no matter how long he left it.

(Australian Aborigines)

So when we engage in comparative study, we find that the same ethical principles have trickled into most religions. Yet it is difficult to discern the truth in a given system. We must undertake the comparative study in the light of the one Wisdom-Religion, which today we know as Theosophy. Theosophy gives the universal framework. It appeals to reason. Just as we notice that a ship as it

moves further and further away eventually disappears from view, and after noticing this we conclude that if the earth were flat this would not happen, therefore the earth must have a curvature, so also in any system of philosophy one must see if it satisfies reason. Mr. Crosbie says that "Truth, as we ought to know, always explains. When we have the explanation, we have the truth." Also at times there is heart response. We have the intuitive feeling from within that this is true.

When we take truth in its higher sense, however, we find that the teachings of all the scriptures put together do not contain the whole truth. A different mode of spiritual experience is necessary to grasp the full truth. There has to be direct intuitive apprehension of spiritual facts. So the claim of any religion that it alone possesses the whole truth is absurd. It is like the story of six blind men. When they came across an elephant, one of them felt its trunk and said that the elephant was like a thick rope. Another touched the legs and concluded that the elephant was like a pillar, and so on. They were all right, but each had only partial truth or partial description. So also each religion gives out partial truth; each needs to cultivate tolerance towards other religions. There must be willingness to accept truth from whichever quarter it comes.

Confusion arises because we refuse to see that any religion is but a means of reaching the truth. Religions are only guides. Can we take the finger that points to the moon to be the moon itself?

IF the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

—WILLIAM BLAKE

ASPIRATION

And Love aspired with Faith a heavenward flight.—SOUTHEY

Prayer opens the spiritual sight of man, for prayer is desire, and desire develops WILL; the magnetic emanations proceeding from the body at every effort—whether mental or physical—produce self-magnetization and ecstasy.—*Isis Unveiled*, I, 434

To ask is to feel the hunger within—the yearning of spiritual aspiration.—*Light on the Path*, p. 20

ASPIRATION is a luminous breath of pious longing which, having filled the heart, rises upward on its wings. Unfortunately, this sacred word through usage has lost its true and original meaning. It seems to cover a range of eager pursuits, from personal desires to lofty yearning. In old English usage, ASPIRATION is simply an act of breathing, a drawing out, a reaching upward.

The true aspirants are those devotees who *strive*, not petition, for the spiritual and the sublime, in pursuance of their long-felt soul's need and silent yearning. It is therefore important to distinguish between "prayer" as ordinarily understood and the fullness of heart of an aspirant who steadily looks "heavenward"—a figure of speech. In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. is at great pains to show the futility and hazards of formal and ritualistic prayers and propitiations. These practices, though popular and sometimes emotionally gratifying, lead to other-dependence. They encourage the false notion that the petitioner is privileged to receive favour and "grace," if he asks, with offerings and piteous pleadings, from an ever-obliging and indulgent god or gods. "Ask, and it shall be given you," an occult law, is often quoted to justify this, without the least knowledge of its spiritual implication. Indeed, there is a power of human thought which enlists the other two faculties of Will and Imagination to bring about the desired result. But this does not qualify as true worship of a spiritual kind, nor does it imply an effulgent act of soul aspiration. "To desire is to realize in proportion to the intensity of the aspiration; and that, in its turn, is measured by inward purity" (*Isis*, II, 592). Aspiration is not an emotional

frenzy or a *rajasic* demand. It is a quiet but concentrated yearning to be led and regenerated so as to become worthy of the "inward and spiritual grace."

There is another form of worship referred to by H.P.B. in *The Key to Theosophy* (p. 68): "The intensity of our ardent aspirations changes prayer into the 'philosopher's stone,' or that which transforms lead into pure gold. The only homogeneous essence, our 'will-prayer' becomes the active or creative force, producing effects according to our desire."

There is a hidden fount in every human heart, long forgotten but awaiting the right condition and hour to spring forth. Its presence is felt as a vague craving for "something" out there, even the unreachable space beyond, till it gets crystallized into a conscious need and becomes the striving after a lofty ideal. The soulful aspirations which look upward—"heaven-aspiring" as H.P.B. would say—call from below and rise like the flame, becoming the basis for the gradual building of a higher life. To be effective, they have to be unreserved acts of dedicating oneself to the Divine, and willingness to obey its behests.

When do the first stirrings of a desire for the higher life begin? Most people have to graduate from the ordinary habits of meaningless roaming, or being "imprisoned" within the narrow breathing space of the commonplace. Even then, for some there may exist a vague attraction for something higher, excellent and worthwhile, a need for something superior to our present state. It may take the form of religious or ritualistic expressions and formal prayers. A person may believe that his creed answers to his need for a relationship with something "sacred." And there he is stuck because he cannot see beyond.

A definite advance is made when he is stirred by the noble qualities of goodwill, etc., and a genuine sympathy toward human suffering. Soon he may feel his own inadequacy to lift even a little of the stupendous burden under which the world groans. This need brings to birth sincere aspirations for true knowledge and purity that may fortify his soul with the ability to sympathize and serve. "It is impossible to help others till you have obtained some certainty

of your own," says *Light on the Path* (p. 24). One's selfless aspiration and resolve then get a permanent foothold and grow in intensity. An undying seed is implanted in the individual's consciousness, which has latent within it all the higher stages of growth. "If one becomes a student, and learns to look partially within the veil, or has found within his own being something that is greater than his own outer self" (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 36*, p. 1), then he can become a true aspirant for higher Knowledge which can support his ideals and inspire his efforts.

Fortunate is the soul if early in life he gets acquainted with the Ancient Wisdom, THEOSOPHIA. For, this contact is like finding the beginning of the old, old Way and may satisfy his hunger for right guidance and inspiration. With this knowledge also comes an increasing awareness of the needs of other beings and the way their good can be served. With the dawn of higher understanding and compassion, comes the need to maintain a conscious relationship with, and to fall back upon, the Divine within, which is the source of all power and knowledge.

A great inner *force* accumulates if one forges this relationship by aspiration and self-surrender. Aspiration, *i.e.*, a burning desire for light, guidance, understanding and support, becomes a power that surely invites a corresponding *response* from on high. Can there be a striving for the spiritual life, for self-purification and selfless work, without an answering support and inspiration from within?

With every resolve to press upward, it is proper that we call out: "So help me, my Higher Self." It is a call and a covenant that never fails to work its potency upon the sincere aspirant. The intuitive feeling that without the Divine aid one cannot manage all alone, does not arise out of servile weakness or dependence. It is an acknowledgement of one's reliance on and gratitude toward the Source of all faith and aspiration. "To them thus always devoted to me, who worship me with love, I give that mental devotion by which they come to me," says Krishna (*Gita*, X, 10). "Forsake every other religion and take refuge alone with me; grieve not, for I shall deliver thee from all transgressions" (XVIII. 66), is the responding grace of Lord Krishna to the aspiring Arjuna who has *fulfilled the*

condition. Arjuna has resolved to surrender everything, his strength and weakness, for Lord Krishna to help transform. He has expressed his loyalty and obedience to his Teacher.

Like Arjuna, each aspirant gets the response according to his nature and receptivity, his faith and *tapasya* (discipline). For, Krishna does not say to Arjuna: "You relax, I will fight your battle!" The condition is to keep the divine Soul in front and fall back upon its Source with expectancy *while engaged in the discipline of Yoga.* Simone Weil, the author of *Waiting On God*, says: "When one hungers for bread one does not receive stones"—if the prior inner conditions are fulfilled.

They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint. (*Isaiah*, XL, 31)

This "waiting upon the LORD" is not a passive folding of hands or inactivity, but a quiet exercise of the higher Will with expectancy. To wait also means to accept, and "to conform to the pleasure and disposition of the Divine Will." (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 36*, p. 1)

How does the ray of grace descend upon the aspirant when he "seeks communion and intercourse only with the God within his own soul" (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 22*, p. 11)? There must be an obscure "channel" of communication both ways between the aspirant and his higher Manas or inner Ego. This channel—*Antahkarana* as it is called—becomes activated through regular aspiration and the *opening of oneself* to the divine inspiration. Therefore, to aspire is to soar upward along this neglected bridge, to cultivate it and keep it free from long-accumulated weeds that have obstructed the way.

Speaking about the obscurities and hindrances along the aspirant's path, W.Q.J. says: "The great struggle must be to open up my outer self, that my higher being may shine through, for I know that in my heart the God sits patient, and that his pure rays are merely veiled from me by many strivings and illusions that I bring on outwardly" (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 85). But he also affirms that "Every aspiration higher brightens up the road connecting the

higher and lower self." (*Ibid.*, p. 9)

Mr. Crosbie puts it differently: " 'To blend thy Mind and Soul' is to make the Mind subservient to the purposes of the Soul, an instrument for use" (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 51). This "blending" or this communion along the open corridor has to be steadily maintained as the flowing undercurrent of our life's meditation. This practice is as important as the sacred hour set apart for concentration upon the ideal end. "In proportion as the Personality, the lower Soul (or *Manas*), unites itself to its higher consciousness, or Ego, does the action of the latter upon the life of mortal man become more marked." (*Transactions*, p. 63)

OWING to circumstances still unknown (Karmic provision, H.P.B.) there appear from time to time great thinkers, who, devoting their lives to a single purpose, are able to anticipate the progress of mankind, and to produce a religion or a philosophy by which important effects are eventually brought about. But if we look into history we shall clearly see that, although the origin of a new opinion may be thus due to a single man, the result which the new opinion produces will depend on the condition of the people among whom it is propagated. If either a religion or a philosophy is too much in advance of a nation it can do no present service but must bide its time until the minds of men are ripe for its reception....Every science, every creed has had its martyrs. *According to the ordinary course of affairs, a few generations pass away, and then there comes a period when these very truths are looked upon as commonplace facts, and a little later there comes another period in which they are declared to be necessary, and even the dullest intellect wonders how they could ever have been denied.*

—H. T. BUCKLE in *History of Civilization*
(Quoted by H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine*)

THE TRIPLE LINE OF EVOLUTION

EVERYONE, whatever his creed, whether he be religious-minded or scientifically inclined, believes in some kind of evolution. Evolution implies growth, progress, whether it refers to the body and its sense, to the mind and its faculties, or to the powers of the Soul which is divine. But, though all believe in evolution, each one gives different answer to the preliminary questions: What is it that evolves? Evolves from what position to what status? And so forth. Science begins with particulars and goes to universals. It concerns itself with the detailed observation of facts with the help of the senses and arrives at conclusions by means of the mind faculties. Religions, on the other hand, generally proceed by positing a god or an assemblage of gods, and then interpret the evolution of man from the point of view of the supreme will of that god or gods. The method of theology is speculative, and in the process of such speculation mind and reason take a secondary place, often no place at all. Thus exploitation of the aspirations, emotions and feelings of human beings takes place.

There is a third method, the method of the mystic, of the occultist, which unifies the first two and is unencumbered by the limitations of either. The mystic or the occultist is one who tries to understand the workings of the divine mind in Nature, which is Law. The mind works under law in our own constitution, and the occultist endeavours to see the unity of the mind of man with the activities of the mind in Nature. For him matter and mind are not independent realities, as with the scientist; nor does he separate spirit and matter, the real and the unreal, into watertight compartments, as do the religionists. The method of the mystic is to see the real in all forms, to perceive the fact that all forms are evolving.

Theosophy posits a triple line of evolution, of body, mind and Soul. These three are not independent one of the other. The rhythmic growth of the one is dependent on the harmonious unfoldment of the other two. No Soul can ever unfold unless the senses and the mind co-operate. No mind can really evolve without the help of the senses and the Soul. Nor can the body grow unless

it has the aid of the mind and the Soul. Matter and Spirit are but two aspects of one and the same reality, and mind is the connecting link between them. Matter is evolving into Spirit; Spirit is crystallizing itself into matter. The two meet in man, conjoined by self-conscious intelligence. Man, the thinker, the analyzer and synthesizer, the self-conscious intelligence, is the link between the beings above him and those below, between the gods or super-men above and the birds, beasts, plants and minerals below.

Wherever this triple evolution is not recognized, there come into existence wrong forms of thought or belief which enslave us and thwart our progress. Where the growth of body, mind and Soul is recognized as interdependent, there we have the spiritual scheme of evolution which requires no belief, no priests, no popes, but only man who is unto himself a priest. Recognition of the fact that we are free beings, not dependent on anyone, is the first step in spiritual evolution, in transforming the selfishness of matter, by the power of the Soul, into selflessness. For our spiritual Self, the slumbering God in us, to wake up, the atmosphere of freedom must exist. We are economic or political slaves or social slaves or slaves of culture or of science or of philosophy. Why? Because we have not recognized our spiritual freedom. Every kind of slavery proceeds from non-recognition of spiritual freedom. Every kind of pain and suffering arises from disregard of the fact that the Soul is bliss. We therefore want to create in us and around us the atmosphere of freedom.

What enslaves us? Dependence on, instead of obedience to, the laws of Nature. Between obedience and dependence a distinction has to be made. We are dependent on the laws of Nature because we are ignorant of them. We can obey the laws of Nature when we know and understand them. We are dependent on them because of our sense of possession which makes us slaves to the things we possess. How many people who have accumulated wealth after years of hard work and toil have learned the lesson that wealth has to teach them? They learn only when they lose their wealth. In proportion as we cease being dependent on the possessions of the desire-mind and of the senses, in that proportion the light of the

Spirit enters the cave of the heart, the temple of the intellect. This sense of possession can be weakened by following the laws of purity. Purity departs from our lives as we begin to accumulate that on which we ultimately depend. The laws of purity co-ordinate the mind and the senses, and ultimately bring about the birth of the Soul, the awakening of the slumbering God.

This body of senses, then, must be purified by getting rid of the sense of possession. It has a fivefold sense of possession, belonging to the eyes, the ears, the nose, the taste and the touch. We can get rid of the sense of possession not by running away from sense objects but by inculcating the attitude that everything that comes to us comes for a certain purpose, that these gifts and bounties are in our hands not for our own gratification, not to be stored away, but because we are their trustees, that they have to be used not for our self-glorification but for the spiritual glorification of these objects in themselves. When we have recognized this, the sense of possession weakens and we get detached. Spiritual life is not a life of inaction; it is a life of detached action, and the evolution of the body of senses implies the bringing of that body to a position where the mind sees *through* the eyes and not *with* the eyes, the mind hears *through* the ears and not *with* the ears, and so on with all the other senses. Objects of possession thus get transformed into objects of trust. That is the purification of sense life.

Evolution of matter, or of the body of senses, then, is the application of the principle of purity. How different is this idea of purity from the conventional idea! It does not matter in the ordinary conventional life what one does provided one is not found out, but in the spiritual life it matters supremely, because we are trustees of all that comes to us. To misuse these objects of trust is to thwart their evolution, and as Nature is one, unified, this must ultimately react on us. In proportion as we give, we grow; in proportion as we accumulate possessions, *they* grow, not *we*.

It is *Kama*, desire, that produces in us the sense of possession. It is the desire-mind that teaches us how to plan so that we may come to possess the objects of our liking. Human evolution is at the present stage concentrated in this desire-mind. And that brings us

to the second line of evolution. We do not live altogether a sense life; we live in our desires, and the senses are directed by the desire nature; so much so that as one of the Upanishads puts it, "The Soul is desire-formed." People speak of self-expression, which really amounts to "I must live as I desire to live," for what else is there of the self to express? Desire and mind have become allies to direct the kingdom of the senses. People do not want to be directed by anything else. Then comes the reaction, the pang of conscience, and many people say, "If I had not this voice of conscience I would be free." It is the voice of accumulated experience of our past and it can tell us how not to rush in the direction of the objects of possession because they have proved painful in the past.

What makes the mind go wrong? What makes desires run riot? What makes the voice of conscience ineffective? Absence of the recognition of the third line of evolution. What makes this civilization of ours materialistic? What makes us give way to struggles, strifes, wars? Acceptance of the doctrine preached by Aristotle, that man is a social animal, as against the doctrine taught by Plato, that man is an unfolding god. "The Mind is the great Slayer of the Real," says *The Voice of the Silence*. The desire-mind has usurped the authority of the Soul, and because it undertakes that which is the function proper of the Soul, it hinders the latter and becomes the slayer of the Real. The life of the desire-mind without the inspiration and energization of the Spirit or Self is a life of hypocrisy. And hypocrisy rooted in Kama-Manas is the great curse of our modern civilization—to think of oneself as something that one is not.

How then shall we take hold of this slumbering God and make it energize the mind? What shall we do to the mind so that it recognizes the Soul's sacredness? The spirit of sacrifice must touch the mind, so that instead of becoming the slayer of the Real it becomes the sustainer and nourisher of the Real. Instead of hating our own blemishes, limitations and weaknesses, we must begin to evaluate them and so train ourselves that we cease to look upon them as enemies, as something that is heinous or satanic. In proportion as the spirit of mental sacrifice purifies all blemishes, in that proportion the divine in us begins to operate on and in the mind.

Knowing our own weaknesses and purifying them, we are able to understand the weaknesses of others and help them to purify them. Who is the priest who can help others? He who has purified his own weaknesses by the power of the God in him. There is no forgiveness of sins save forgiveness by the real priest within who, through a mind purified by compassion and love, transforms the weaknesses, blemishes, demerits and vices of our material nature into virtues.

When we see that the vices of today were once virtues, that impatience or irritability was once the virtue of energy and activity which saved us from sloth and laziness, that pride was once a virtue of self-respect which saved us from many a blunder—when we begin to see this we come to understand what Krishna means when He says that apparent evil also emanates from Him. We must learn to see that all virtues, unless they are inspired and energized by the Soul, run the same risk of becoming vices tomorrow. Unless this is recognized, we are bound to alternate between the joys of heaven and the anguish of hell. "Light and darkness are the world's eternal ways," and we have to learn to see in the perpetual changes the eternal fitness of things. That is possible only when the three lines of evolution are taken note of. When we have seen how these three lines give birth to the religion of freedom, the religion of the Spirit, we begin to see that our Monadic or Spiritual nature, the psychic or intellectual nature and the bodily or sensuous nature have their own place in the evolutionary scheme, and all three working together harmoniously and in a rhythmic way make us pass from the condition of selfhood into that of selflessness.

No one could tell me where my Soul might be;
I searched for God, and God eluded me;
I sought my brother out, and found all three.

—E. CROSBY

COURAGE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

HOW we admire courage! The courage of the warrior who fights on and on, unmindful of his bleeding wounds; the courage of the fighter whose imagination tells him beforehand what the consequence of his action will be, and who still plunges into the battle; the courage of the ordinary person who goes on and on, through difficulty after difficulty, through mental and emotional strain, which he will not let destroy him and make him a coward in his own sight.

Fear of hell or of punishment after death has mainly died out from people's minds, and most of us go through life fearless in many ways, fearful in others, and with mixed feelings in still other conditions. It is when we begin to struggle to change from a drifting life to purposeful living that we find a different form of fear besetting us. It results from not knowing what to do, and yet being aware of what dire consequences might follow a wrong decision. Why should this be? Because we are beginning to tread the path of discrimination, of responsibility, and, like Arjuna, long to be told just what *is* the right line of action.

We often think that acceptance of Karma is all that is required of us. We miss out that Karma brings us to crossroads over and over again, and only our discrimination will enable us to choose the right road. The *Gita* brings us solace and quenches this fear of consequences of wrong choice. From Arjuna's "Instruct me in my duty" to Krishna's "Act as seemeth best unto thee," after he has explained different philosophies through many chapters, we go over and over again. We have been taught that no one else can make the choice for us. But Krishna goes on to say that even if we choose wrongly because of our folly, we will be led to do right because of our very nature—"thou...wilt involuntarily do from necessity that which in thy folly thou wouldst not do." Note, he says "in thy folly"; he does not say "in thy ignorance." It is when we have the knowledge and refuse to act up to it that we go wrong. Is not this of the greatest help to us? Should it not give us confidence? Do not all of us know what is right in our mind-heart, and what seems right to our emotional

self? Why then should we err? We have to discriminate, therefore, between what we know to be right in our mind-heart and what we long to do from the personal point of view.

But there is also another side to discrimination. In this world of illusions and delusions, we have to discriminate at every step, even if no personal choice is involved. Everything that can happen is a reflection from higher spheres, a reflection of the archetype. Sometimes the reflection is seen through ruffled matter, disturbed and murky. Then we should turn to the law of analogy and correspondence in order to try to find what the archetype really is. To attain true discrimination we need another virtue—*Vairagya*. Only with complete indifference, the higher indifference, can we attain freedom from fear of wrong action and choose aright. The causes of the condition we are in, and the effects of the step we are about to take, must be seen from a higher level of consciousness, and this can best be described as the plane of *Dana*, charity and love immortal, which will itself produce *Shila*, harmony, which "leaves no further room for Karmic action," and both result from *Kshanti*, "patience sweet, that nought can ruffle."

A constant awareness of these steps will bring to us self-confidence—not the self-conceit of one without roots, but the self-confidence which is the result of reliance on the Law. Self-confidence is also based on will. There is no need then for fear or for arrogance. We have done our best, we have looked at that best and are confident that it is our best. That is all we are expected to do, all we *can* do in fact. Even if events prove that our action was wrong, ill-timed, or disastrous, we can learn if we hold an impartial post-mortem on the course of events.

Can such actions bring trouble to others? No, they cannot. Only such actions can bring trouble as are based on personal motives and desires and are carelessly performed. For, no one can suffer save through his own Karma. Where we have erred is that we have allowed ourselves to be the agents of Karma, bringing suffering to others.

Why should we bother to be fearless? Because we have a goal in sight which is well worth all the effort. And in climbing to the

goal no setback is final if we pick ourselves up and go forward again.

Fearlessness, discrimination and compassion are the triad that the student needs in order to progress on the Path. The tenderness of compassion will make the fearless individual harm no one and discriminate only in terms of the good of all.

The Chela's daily life is full of challenge. Let him welcome each new difficulty, for thus he "wins his spurs."

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GOD AND FORGIVENESS

PEOPLE often seek forgiveness for their misdeeds and sins by prayer or supplication, or by professing belief in the doctrine of vicarious atonement. This seeking of forgiveness implies an innate recognition of a wrongdoing, a sense of guilt at ignoring the promptings of conscience.

Trying to evade the legitimate consequences of any act which gives us a sense of guilt is as prevalent today as it was in the past, and the method of salving an uneasy conscience remains the same—seeking forgiveness or remission of the sinful act by prayers, petitions and propitiation. Those who use such methods to salve their conscience and escape the results of their sinful acts usually believe in a Personal God, who, they think, has the power to absolve them from the consequences which they dread.

Theosophy does not believe in a Personal God, nor in prayers offered to such a God, nor in the doctrine of vicarious atonement. Why this is so is explained by H.P.B. in *The Key to Theosophy* (p. 197):

Christians...believe in the pardon and the remission of all sins. They are promised that if they only believe in the blood of Christ (an *innocent* victim!), in the blood offered by Him for the expiation of the sins of the whole of mankind, it will atone for every mortal sin. And we believe neither in vicarious atonement, nor in the possibility of the remission of the smallest sin by any god, not even by a "*personal* Absolute" or "Infinite," if such a thing could have any existence. What we believe in, is strict and impartial justice. Our idea of the unknown Universal Deity, represented by Karma, is that it is a Power which cannot fail, and can, therefore, have neither wrath nor mercy, only absolute Equity, which leaves every cause, great or small, to work out its inevitable effects.

That the concept of a Personal God has to be replaced by the more philosophical one of a Universal Deity, represented by the great Law of Karma, is not alone a Theosophical teaching. It was clearly enunciated by Gautama the Buddha, as shown by these

verses from Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*, a beautiful rendition of the Buddha's teachings:

Before beginning, and without an end,
 As space eternal and as surety sure,
 Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,
 Only its laws endure....

It will not be contemned of any one;
 Who thwarts it loses, and who serves it gains;
 The hidden good it pays with peace and bliss,
 The hidden ill with pains.

It seeth everywhere and marketh all:
 Do right—it recompenseth! do one wrong—
 The equal retribution must be made,
 Though DHARMA tarry long.

It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter-true
 Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs;
 Times are as nought, tomorrow it will judge,
 Or after many days.

How revealing and satisfying to our minds and hearts is the acceptance, even as a hypothesis, of this basic teaching of a Universal Power or Deity "which moves to good"! When we place this conception before the tribunal of our conscience, a sense of at-one-ment with the ray of that Deity reflected within us takes place temporarily, because our mental and feeling natures are attuned to it. This feeling may last but for a few brief moments, but the memory of it remains within our minds and hearts indefinitely, and demands from us the necessary effort that will in time make this at-one-ment conscious and permanent.

The effort demanded from us will entail the giving up of many of our cherished beliefs, including that of a Personal God with the concomitant one of the remission of sins by prayer or belief in the doctrine of vicarious atonement. These can be replaced by the concept of Deity as the Power in Nature which moves to Good, a

Power which can be realized within ourselves because it is the Power of motion, mental, emotional and physical. It is the Power which moves all beings, visible or invisible, because it is "the *fons et origo* of force and of all individual consciousness, and supplies the guiding intelligence in the vast scheme of cosmic Evolution" (*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 15). We can become aware of its presence within us, and this awareness can become permanent by usage. The first step toward "at-one-ment" with the "Power divine which moves to Good" can be taken by everyone, because it is simply the effort to apply the "Golden Rule" of doing unto others as we would they should do unto us.

In *The Voice of the Silence* we are told: "To live to benefit mankind is the first step. To practise the six glorious virtues is the second." This effort "to live to benefit mankind," which is the endeavour to do good, awakens in us the awareness of our ignorance of how to perform the good that we would do. As St. Paul is reputed to have said, "...the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." For the candidate for the true service of humanity, this is one of the obstacles that must be overcome, if he or she would follow in the footsteps of the Great Altruists, those Servants of Orphan Humanity who willingly sacrifice Themselves to remain with us to "point out the Way."

Such Great Teachers incarnate among us and accept the Karma of the race to which They come, as the body which they have to use belongs to that race and is heir to its Karma. This is the nearest one can come to the concept of "vicarious atonement," because in taking up a body of the race, They encounter the prevalent sins and evil tendencies of humanity, and by the process of osmosis, give in exchange the impulse toward redemption by transforming the principle of desire (*Kama*) into its compassionate element, and the principle of intellect into its intuitive basis. Compassion and Wisdom form the foundation upon which all true Altruism and Knowledge rest, and these find their perfect embodiment in the Great Teachers, who by both precept and example spread their teachings to those who are prepared to accept the full responsibility of their own "redemption."

The resolve to accept the responsibility for all our thoughts, feelings and actions enables us to evoke from the Deity or Power within us a response that strengthens our resolution. When we seek the knowledge by which this responsibility may be fulfilled, the Path toward Enlightenment begins to open up within us, progressive awakenings begin to illumine our minds and hearts, and, as Krishna says to Arjuna, spiritual knowledge will spring up spontaneously from within in the progress of time.

True prayer is, therefore, a retiring into the inmost chamber of the heart to strengthen the resolution for service. The threefold process advocated by Patanjali in his *Yoga Aphorisms*, Book III, under the terms *Dharana*-attention, *Dhyana*-contemplation and *Samadhi*-meditation, becomes the basis for such prayer. When this threefold practice becomes natural to us, we have reached a state called *Sanyama*, or perfect concentration. *Sanyama* becomes the method by which we begin the process of correction, first mentally, then emotionally, and finally physically.

The following extract from *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge* by H. P. Blavatsky gives a true conception of what atonement means Theosophically:

The Higher Manas or EGO is essentially divine, and therefore pure; no stain can pollute it, as no punishment can reach it, *per se*, the more so since it is innocent of, and takes no part in, the deliberate transactions of its Lower Ego. Yet by the very fact that, though dual and during life the Higher is distinct from the Lower, "The Father and Son" *are one*, and because that in reuniting with the parent Ego, the Lower Soul fastens upon and impresses upon it all its bad as well as good actions—both have to suffer, the Higher Ego, though innocent and without blemish, has to bear the punishment of the misdeeds committed by the *lower* Self together with it in their future incarnation. The whole doctrine of atonement is built upon this old esoteric tenet; for the Higher Ego is the antitype of that which is on this earth the type, namely the personality. (pp. 67-68)

THE FORCES OF OCCULTISM

THERE is a force as limitless as thought, as potent as boundless will, as subtle as the essence of life so inconceivably awful in its rending force as to convulse the universe to its centre would it but be used as a lever, but this Force is not *God*, since there are men who have learned the secret of subjecting it to their will when necessary. Look around you and see the myriad manifestations of life, so infinitely multiform; of life, of motion, of change. What caused these? From what inexhaustible source came they, by what agency? Out of the invisible and subjective they have entered our little area of the visible and objective. Children of Akasa, concrete evolutions from the ether, it was force which brought them into perceptibility and Force will in time remove them from sight of man.... It is *motion* with its resulting conflict, neutralization, equilibration, correlation, to which is due the infinite variety which prevails. You speak of an intelligent and good (the attribute is rather unfortunately chosen) Father, a moral guide and governor of the universe and man. A certain condition of things exists around us which we call normal. Under this nothing can occur which transcends our everyday experience "God's immutable laws." But suppose we change this condition and have the best of him without whom even a hair of your head will not fall, as they tell you in the West. A current of air brings to me from the lake near which, with my fingers half frozen I now write to you this letter—I change by a certain combination of electrical, magnetic, odylic or other influences the current of air which benumbs my fingers into a warmer breeze; I have thwarted the intention of the Almighty, and dethroned him at my will! I *can* do that, or when I do not want Nature to produce strange and too visible phenomena, I force my nature-seeing, nature-influencing self within me, to suddenly awake to new perceptions and feelings and thus am my own Creator and ruler....

How do you or how can you know that your God is all-wise, omnipotent and love-ful, when everything in nature, physical and moral, proves such a being, if he does exist, to be quite the reverse of all you say of him? Strange delusion and one which seems to

overpower your very intellect. The difficulty of explaining the fact that "unintelligent Forces can give rise to highly intelligent beings like ourselves," is covered by the eternal progression of cycles, and the process of evolution ever perfecting its work as it goes along....

And now to your extraordinary hypothesis that Evil with its attendant train of sin and suffering is not the result of matter, but may be perchance the wise scheme of the moral Governor of the Universe. Conceivable as the idea may seem to you trained in the pernicious fallacy of the Christian—"the ways of the Lord are inscrutable"—it is utterly inconceivable for me. Must I repeat again that the best Adepts have searched the Universe during millenniums and found nowhere the slightest trace of such a Machiavellian schemer—but throughout, the same immutable, inexorable law.... You say it matters nothing whether these laws are the expression of the will of an intelligent, conscious God, as you think, or constitute the inevitable attributes of an unintelligent, unconscious "God," as I hold. I say, it matters everything....

The world of force is the world of Occultism and the only one whither the highest initiate goes to probe the secrets of being. Guided by his Guru the chela first discovers this world, then its laws, then their centrifugal evolutions into the world of matter. To become a perfect adept takes him long years, but at last he becomes the master. The hidden things have become patent, and mystery and miracle have fled from his sight forever. He sees how to guide force in this direction or that—to produce desirable effects. The secret chemical, electric or odic properties of plants, herbs, roots, minerals, animal tissue, are as familiar to him as the feathers of your birds are to you. No change in the etheric vibrations can escape him. He applies his knowledge, and behold a miracle!... And to show you how exact a science is Occultism let me tell you that the means we avail ourselves of are all laid down for us in a code as old as humanity to the minutest detail, but every one of us has to begin from the beginning, not from the end. Our laws are as immutable as those of Nature.

—*From a letter of a Master*

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Is there a unity of all knowledge? Is everything relative or are there absolute verities? There is an ongoing debate among scholars on this issue. In a special symposium in *The Wilson Quarterly* (Winter 1998), scientist Edward O. Wilson argues that there is unifying knowledge that combines all disciplines and helps us reach an understanding of ourselves and our world. The new sciences of the mind, he says, are tearing down some of the obstacles to this understanding.

Wilson supports the concept of "consilience," meaning the alignment of knowledge from different disciplines, as opposed to fragmentation. He says it is a mistake to think there are many kinds of "explanations appropriate to the perspectives of individual disciplines." It is a mistake because, he asserts, "there is intrinsically only one class of explanation. It traverses the scales of space, time and complexity to unite the disparate facts of the disciplines by consilience, the perception of a seamless web of causes and effects." In recent times, he says,

physics, chemistry, and biology have been connected by a web of causal explanation organized by induction-based theories that telescope into one another. The entire known universe, from the smallest subatomic particles to the reach of the farthest known galaxies, together spanning more than 40 orders of magnitude (a magnification of one followed by more than 40 zeros), is encompassed by consilient explanation. Thus, quantum theory underlies atomic physics, which is the foundation of reagent chemistry and its specialized offshoot biochemistry, which interlock with molecular biology—essentially, the chemistry of organic macromolecules—and thence, through successively higher levels of organization, cellular, organismic, and evolutionary biology. This sequence of causal explanation proceeds step by step from more general phenomena to the increasingly complex and specific phenomena arising from them. Such is the unifying and highly productive understanding of the world that has evolved in the natural sciences. Its success testifies to a fortunate combination of three circumstances: the

surprising orderliness of the universe, the possible intrinsic consilience of all knowledge concerning it, and the ingenuity of the human mind in comprehending both.

Another contributor to the symposium is biologist Paul R. Gross. Without the universals provided by good science, he insists, "we would have only the 'idiosyncrasies' of tribes." To move about in the knowledge labyrinth of the world with confidence, we need the thread of Ariadne. The thread is Wilson's metaphor of consilience.

The gravest of human issues [observes Gross] are not social problems, are not scientific problems, not matters of local politics, tastes, traditions, beliefs, idiosyncrasies. *They are all of those, together, at one and the same time.* That is the strongest argument for a scholarship of the gaps, that reports honestly and regularly to everyone, not just to allies and competitors in the business. The only question, for me, after long years among intellectuals, is this: are there *ever* going to be enough of them with the brains, skills in knowledge acquisition, honesty, self-confidence in humility, energy, and social support, to follow Ariadne's thread through the labyrinth, to complete enough of the crossword puzzle, to make a difference?

Indeed, knowledge has become so compartmentalized in our time that we cannot see the wood for the trees. Knowledge of the parts avails us little, if it only leads us the more to ignorance of the Whole, or the "nature and reason of the Universal," as Plato put it. The Tree of Knowledge, like Truth itself, is One, though its branches are many. This One Universal Knowledge, says H.P.B., "is prehistoric and is coeval with intelligence."

In recent times, a growing number of scholars and researchers are striving to characterize the way geniuses think. For years, they have tried to study genius by analysing statistics, as if piles of data somehow illuminate genius. Academics have also tried to measure the links between intelligence and genius. The current view, however, is that intelligence is not enough.

Michael Michalko writes on the subject in *The Futurist*:

Genius is not about scoring 1600 on the Scholastic Assessment Test, mastering 14 languages at the age of seven, finishing Mensa exercises in record time, having an extraordinarily high IQ, or even being smart. After considerable debate initiated in the 1960s by psychologist Joy P. Guilford, who called for a scientific focus on creativity, psychologists concluded that creativity is not the same as intelligence. An individual can be far more creative than intelligent, or far more intelligent than creative....

Geniuses think productively, not reproductively. When confronted with a problem, they ask, "How many different ways can I look at it?," "How can I rethink the way I see it?," and "How many different ways can I solve it?" instead of "What have I been taught by someone else on how to solve this?" They tend to come up with many different responses, some of which are unconventional and possibly unique.

With productive thinking, one generates as many alternative approaches as one can. You consider the least obvious as well as the most likely approaches. It is the willingness to explore all methods that is important, even after one has found a promising one.

Without the Theosophical teaching of the persistent struggle of the soul to express itself more and more fully through successive incarnations, the phenomenon of genius must remain inexplicable

The cultivation of certain aptitudes throughout a long series of past incarnations must finally culminate in some one life, in a blooming forth as *genius*, in one or another direction....

Great Genius, therefore, if true and innate, and not merely an abnormal expansion of our human intellect—can never copy or condescend to imitate, but will ever be original, *sui generis* in its creative impulses and realizations. Like those gigantic Indian lilies that shoot out from the clefts and fissures of the Nilgiri Hills, true Genius needs but an opportunity to spring forth into existence and blossom in the sight of all on the most arid soil, for its stamp is always unmistakable. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 13*, p. 5)

The word "superstition" is very loosely used in popular parlance. Derived from *super*, "above," and *stare*, "to stand," the Latin *superstitio* signifies a "standing over" or "survival," describing an irrational or credulous attitude towards magico-religious beliefs and practices in a modern civilized community, long after these old ideas and customs have been abandoned by the more sophisticated sections of society. Rationalists scorn superstition as a hangover of primitive man's obsolete interpretations of the world. Even so, modern behavioural scientists respect superstition as an enduring expression of the human need to master the inexplicable.

Westerners laugh at the superstitions of their Asian and African brothers. In fact, Westerners themselves are no less superstitious, for all their faith in scientific reason, as brought out by Judith Newman in the March issue of *Good Housekeeping* (U.S.A.)

Most superstition [states the author] is rooted in the philosophy that a symbolic act will bring about a physical reality. So before you go feeling too superior, ask yourself this question: When was the last time you crossed your fingers, said "Bless you" to a sneezer, or knocked on wood? Pretty recently, right? And you do it even though you don't consider yourself superstitious. Why? Three words: Just in case.

"If people were to examine their own behaviour, they'd find they do *something* that's superstitious," says Stuart Vyse, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at Connecticut College in New London, CT, and author of *Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition*....Not only is it *not* bad for us, Vyse declares that a certain degree of superstition is a sign of mental health.

"We know that people need to have a sense of control, yet there really isn't very much we can control at all," says Terence Sandbek, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Sacramento, CA, who has studied superstitions. "We derive tremendous comfort from thinking we can either avoid an undesirable result, or bring about a desired result. In this way, superstition is an extremely useful tool."...

Of course, superstitions can be destructive—if they turn into obsessive compulsions that prevent you from getting on with

your life.

While some beliefs are as degrading as they are ridiculous and absurd, wholesale denial of *all* traditional beliefs is hardly "scientific." "If superstition makes a man a fool, scepticism makes him mad," said Fielding—and "never did he utter a greater truth," remarks H.P.B. ("Genius," *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 13*, p. 10). In *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 303) she states: "The writer disagrees with those symbologists, however great their reputation, who find in every myth nothing save additional proofs of the superstitious bent of mind of the ancients."

Earlier this year, a meeting organized by Diversitas, Unesco, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute, brought together participants from the world's leading organizations concerned with the conservation and sustainable use of wild plants and forest. As was brought out, wild plants contribute more to our well-being than realized, and the price paid for ignoring them can be costly. The new edition of the World Conservation Union's *Red Data Book* of threatened plants, out this April, lists more than 33,500 species. "This means that more than 13% of the world's estimated quarter of million plant species are in danger," says Sir Ghillean Prance, director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew (U.K) and chairman of Diversitas, an international programme of biodiversity science research.

Deforestation, urbanization, uncontrolled collection and neglect are among the main causes for the situation, which, if allowed to continue, could cost us dearly. How many of these plants, for example, hold genetic secrets that could help feed the world's population? How many contain material that could be developed as medicines to treat the many diseases afflicting humanity? These were among the questions raised at the meeting.

"The problem is that we don't know," says Diversitas' Vernon Heywood, who chaired the meeting. An educated guess though would be that the potential of wild plants to contribute to

people's health and well-being is enormous.

Traditional societies everywhere rely heavily on wild plants for substitute food crops in times of shortage, for building, weaving and craft materials as well as animal fodder and fuels. In Africa, for instance, 70 to 80% of the population relies on traditional medicines, and medicinal plants play a major role in a healthcare system where "modern" doctors are few and access to "modern" medicines extremely limited.

"But the problem of how to conserve these species has been relegated to the back-burner by many organizations," says Heywood. "This is in large part due to our lack of knowledge about these plants and their uses." Of the 90,000 species in the Central and South American tropics, for instance, only 2% have been screened for their pharmacological potential.

Can we afford to continue neglecting wild species? We must weigh the cost of conservation against the cost of non-conservation. Nature has a lot to offer, but man with his superior intellect and powers must learn how to utilize it.

A team of researchers drilling through the perpetual ice filling shallow lakes in the Antarctica, found teeming communities of microbes living and thriving in temperatures that seldom rose above the freezing point of water. (*The Times of India*, June 27)

The lakes are located in what is, in effect, a desert. The air is very dry and precipitation is very low. Some of the organisms make food through photosynthesis from the weak polar sun. But more than half of the year is spent in twilight or total darkness of the extreme antarctic seasons.

Says Brian D. Lanoli of Oregon State University in Corvallis, co-author of a study being published:

This is more proof that life is a lot more hardy than we once thought....If microbes can thrive in such frigid, hostile surroundings as the Antarctic lakes, then it could perhaps also be found in the frozen seas of Europa, a moon of Jupiter, or the ice caps of Mars.

"Since we know there is ice elsewhere in our solar system, this discovery makes us wonder if life might not exist there also," says Stephen J. Giovannoi, another co-author of the study.

According to the Unesco Global Study on Media Violence, the action film hero Terminator "seems to represent the characteristics which children think are necessary to cope with difficult situations." (*Unesco Sources*, March 1998)

Five thousand 12-year-olds in 23 countries took part in the survey. It notes that an average hour of television programming contains five to ten episodes of violence, most of them presented as either thrilling and/or rewarding. With 91% of the children surveyed having access to a television set at home, they spend at least 50% longer time sitting in front of the box than doing any other out-of-school activity, including homework.

This is surely a cause for concern, calling for parental intervention. Children's interests rather need to be channelled into games and programmes that make them use their intelligence and creativity.

THROUGH all the changes of the past we have gone; through all the changes of the future we must go. The past changes have perished; the present changes are perishing; the future changes will also perish; but "we" remain through them all, unchanged and unchanging. If we can grasp this idea and hold to it, we will have taken the first step towards right knowledge and freedom, for, as an ancient sage has put it, "The soul is the Perceiver; is assuredly vision itself pure and simple; unmodified; and looks directly upon ideas."

—Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita

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The United Lodge of Theosophists

DECLARATION

THE policy of this Lodge is independent devotion to the cause of Theosophy without professing attachment to any Theosophical organization. It is loyal to the great Founders of the Theosophical Movement, 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. That work and that end is the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Philosophy of Theosophy, and the exemplification in practice of those principles, through a truer realization of the SELF, a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood.

It holds that the unassailable *Basis for Union* among Theosophists, wherever and however situated, is "*similarity of aim, purpose and teaching*," and therefore has neither Constitution, By-Laws nor Officers, the sole bond between its Associates being that *basis*. And it aims to disseminate this idea among Theosophists in the furtherance of Unity.

It regards as Theosophists all who are engaged in the true service of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, condition or organization, and

It welcomes to its association all those who are in accord with its declared purposes and who desire to fit themselves, by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and teach others.

"The true Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect, yet belongs to each and all."

Being in sympathy with the purposes of this Lodge, as set forth in its "Declaration," I hereby record my desire to be enrolled as an Associate, it being understood that such association calls for no obligation on my part, other than that which I, myself, determine.

The foregoing is the form signed by Associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists. Inquiries are invited from all persons to whom this Movement may appeal. Cards for signature will be sent upon request, and every possible assistance furnished Associates in their studies and in efforts to form local Lodges. There are no fees of any kind, and no formalities to be complied with.