

The Theosophical Movement

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The Final Authority

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.

—W.Q. Judge

In these words the student of Theosophy has an important idea to reflect upon. Even earnest students are sometimes apt to overlook that there can be no "Theosophical authority," One of the objects of the Theosophical Movement was to make men think for themselves and to break down that reliance upon acknowledged authorities which has been the bane of man for ages. Sometimes the impression has been conveyed that the final arbiters in matters of belief are the Masters, or H.P.B., but at no time has any of them given out such an idea. Theosophists are engaged in trying to develop a truer appreciation of the Light of Life which, however dimly, shines in every man not hopelessly sunk in bestiality; and so, for each, the only true and final authority for anything lies *within*. H.P.B.'s words are unequivocal:

It is just because we have devoted our whole life to the research of truth...that we *never accept on faith any authority* upon any question whatsoever; nor, pursuing, as we do, TRUTH and progress through a full and fearless enquiry, untrammelled by any consideration, would we advise any of our friends to do otherwise. (The Theosophist, Vol I, p. 279)

What, after all, is an "authority" upon any question?

No more, really, than a light streaming upon a certain object through one single, more or less wide, chink, and illuminating it *from one side only*. Such light, besides being the faithful *reflector of the personal views* of but one man—very often merely that of his special hobby—can never help in the examination of a question or a subject from all its aspects and sides. Thus, the authority appealed to will often prove but of little help, yet the profane, who attempts to present the given question or object under another aspect and in a different light, is forthwith hooted for his great audacity. Does he not attempt to upset solid "authorities," and fly in the face of respectable and time-honored routine thought? (Lucifer, Vol. XI, p. 9)

What gauge, then, shall we use for the acceptance or the rejection of any doctrine? The only authority on which we can rely is Faith, defined by Mr. Judge as "the intuitional feeling—'*that is true*'." Any other kind of authority is mere presumption. Even the Buddha admonished his disciples not to accept anything without knowing it for themselves: "Be ye lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Seek salvation alone in the truth."

Constant and consistent devotion to truth is all we need. "There is no religion higher than Truth." What one really *knows* of Truth, which knowledge is not of the intellect but of the heart, is authority for the one who knows, but not for anyone else. Mr. Judge has written:

As far as our private conclusions are concerned, use your discrimination always. Do not adopt any conclusions merely because they are uttered by one in whom you have confidence, but adopt them when they coincide with your intuition. To be even unconsciously deluded by the influence of another is to have a counterfeit faith.
(Letters That Have Helped Me, p. 23)

It might be argued that newcomers to Theosophy do not always possess the capacity to test the truth of the Philosophy, to perceive its constancy and consistency. Their inner feeling, an expression of the inherent idea of Original Devotion, moves them; otherwise they would not have felt drawn to Theosophy. After all, "no one was ever converted into Theosophy. Each one who *really* comes into it does so because it is only 'an extension of previous beliefs'." There is in each the inner monitor who *knows*, who can discriminate between the true and the false. This internal voice, in the words of Mr. Judge, "strikes within us the bell that corresponds to truth...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." Professor Max Müller's definition of this faculty of intuition can hardly be improved upon:

The faculty of apprehending the Infinite, not only in religion but in all things; a power independent of sense and reason, a power in a certain sense contradicted by sense and reason, but yet a very real power, which has held its own from the beginning of the world, neither sense nor reason being able to overcome it, while it alone is able to overcome both reason and sense.

This intuition is the only authority the student of Theosophy can acknowledge. It is the common heritage of man and only needs unselfish effort to develop it. In our age, when "the world is too much with us" and we are inclined to look without instead of within ourselves, the intuitions of the little child are stifled until at last they are almost lost, and man is left at the mercy of judgments based upon exterior reason. But intuition *can* be developed by giving it exercise, by constantly referring mentally all propositions to it. Inevitably at first we shall make errors, but from sincere attempts at use it will gain strength. Practice and an unselfish motive purify the covers of the soul and permit its light to shine down into the brain-mind and illumine all things.

If each one is his own authority, are we to infer that we are left entirely to our own devices in determining the veracity of any proposition? These words of H.P.B.'s need to be reflected over:

There is a canon of interpretation, which should guide us in our examinations of every philosophical opinion: "The human mind has, under the necessary operation of its own laws, been compelled to entertain the same fundamental ideas, and the human heart to cherish the same feelings in all ages." (Isis Unveiled, I, xv)

There are statements and teachings of Theosophy that *are* difficult to understand. The credulous who opine that it is not possible to demonstrate logically the truth of certain teachings and that therefore they should be accepted as matters of belief; the impatient who drop the pursuit of a subject without adequate effort, saying that it is beyond them; the egotistic and the cocksure who ultimately arrive at the position, "Behold, I know," are all misguided. The earnest and sincere student says to himself: "Here is a 'philosophical opinion'; what 'canon of interpretation' will guide me? What are the 'laws' which will enable my consciousness to gain an appreciation of this profound truth? And how can it come to cherish the feeling of reverence for this truth?"

The canon of interpretation of each student is limited and coloured by the particular constituent of his make-up that he uses to look at any teaching. Does he look at it with the senses, aided by the lower mind, *Kama-Manas*? Or with the internal organ called *Antahkarana*, the bridge between the higher and the lower *Manas*? Or with the higher philosophic mind? Or with his intuitive faculty? When intuitive perception is gained, conviction, *i.e.*, enlightened faith in the teachings, arises. Dependence on outside authority is no longer tenable.

The promises I made to myself are just as binding as any others.

—W. Q. Judge

Cyclic Self-Renewal

Higher and lower Manas are figured allegorically as the two inseparable companions of man through life, the one his Guardian Angel, the other his evil Demon.

—H. P. Blavatsky

On the 21st of December, with the Winter Solstice, when the sun begins to move northward, we shall be entering the Cycle of Resolve. It is appropriate, therefore, that we reflect here on the nature of Man. For to know what we really are is the first step toward becoming what we ought to be.

When we say "Man" what do we mean? Of which man do we speak? Is it the man of flesh, of desire, of reason or of conscience? Which aspect of ourselves represents the Real Man in each one of us? The concept we hold of our own nature is vitally significant; for it determines our way of life and moulds our own character.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 52nd anniversary of which was celebrated earlier this month, calls for a recognition of Man *qua* Man, above distinctions of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin,

property, birth or other status. Its Article 1 states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Reason and conscience are indeed the characteristic features of human consciousness. It is they that make man a free and responsible self, endowing him with the power to think. Alas! although a Thinker, a Manasic being, man has to regain his lost kingdom, the kingdom of spiritual perception. Too often, at present, instead of moving prompted by "reason and conscience," man follows blindly the impulses from without, those arising from the objects of sense and his separative and divisive attractions. The key to his self-reform lies within his own mind.

As St. Paul, a great Initiate, has said:

That ye put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

What better resolve could we make than to put off the old man, and, renewing ourselves in the spirit of our minds, put on the new man?

Should not this be our common resolve? The higher consciousness is within each one of us; for we are all emanations from the Divine, on our return path thereto. This higher consciousness is what St. Paul rightly designates "the spirit of our minds" and it is through this spirit that we can renew ourselves, abandon the old ways of lust and greed, of enmity and wrath, of selfishness and bitterness, and take to the path of nobility, of purity and of brotherhood.

Mind, then, is the key of this renewal which brings to birth the New Man, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

The mind, through long association with lower desires and separative tendencies, has lost its moorings in the Spirit and become the slave of matter. Thus enslaved, it views all things from a material basis and has become almost totally divorced from its own higher nature. It is awake to the call of *ahamkara*, egotism, and asleep and deaf to the voice of altruism which is that of the Spirit, one and indivisible. The mind, thus imprisoned by *kama*, lower and selfish desires, is passionate and unclean. To liberate it and make it clean, self-discipline is essential, that divine discipline taught by all the great Teachers of humanity down the ages.

The *sadhana* of self-restraint and of the control of the mind constitutes the renewal referred to by St. Paul, which is followed by the birth of the New Man.

Through positive control, through deliberate efforts, must the mind be freed from its imprisonment in matter and made receptive to the divine influx from above. The human mind is

dual in its potentiality. It is both physical and metaphysical. The physical mind is the lower aspect, connected with the spiritual consciousness. The bridge between them lies in reason and conscience.

Reason must be directed towards the values of the Spirit and conscience awakened and made responsive to them through the presentation of divine ethics before man becomes truly Man. The animal man must become the human man.

The race-mind must be brought to think on the higher plane, and then men will act as brothers to one another. We need urgently a different basis for thought and action—a basis so fundamental as to bring about a total change of attitude. Man must be transformed, or rather must transform himself, in the renewal of his mind and thus obtain a conscious direction.

The transformation requires control of the mind, and such control is attainable through direct methods. Distractions must first be eliminated through patient and persevering effort and the habit of control established. The Silent Thinker behind the mind must be given back his rightful place and will assume control and watch the thought processes, rejecting all those which are undesirable and cultivating the true, the good and the beautiful.

Should not this be our resolution for Nature's New Year on December 21st and our celebration of the Christmas season? What better contribution could we make to the world than to create in us the New Man? And so, again in St. Paul's words, let the following be our resolve:

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Nurture your mind with great thoughts. To believe in the heroic makes heroes.

—Disraeli

The Concentrated Life

When we look at the human kingdom, we find three classes of men and women: (a) those who live without a purpose; (b) those who live with a purpose which proves false; (c) those who live with a purpose which is true.

It is in our purpose of life that we find our motive for action. If no purpose is conceived, no motive exists. Our motive is the motorforce, and with it life's car is driven.

When we have a definite purpose, our life is a concentrated life. Concentration requires an object as centre. If we want to concentrate our mind, we must have a point to which all mental forces are gathered together. This point is provided by our conception of the purpose of life.

Let us study the three classes of people mentioned above.

1. A vast majority have no purpose. Ordinary men and women have hardly thought why they are here on earth. Whence, whither, are not inquired into. Many so-called educated people shelter behind the pretext that "No one can know the meaning and purpose of life." They drift; from day to day and year to year they live according to the same pattern which other mortals have adopted. They are born, brought up and educated, pass through the routine of existence, and then they die—liked by some, disliked by others, loved by a few, remembered by less. Soon after their death, the world forgets that such men and women ever existed.
2. The second class of people conceive a purpose in terms of their education and according to their temperament, which means according to their assemblage of desires. Many think the purpose of life is happiness. But what is happiness? There are many types: lasting and ephemeral; happiness of senses, or of mind, or of heart, or of soul; and so on. According to what we understand of the nature of man and of the universe, do we formulate our purpose of life. If our knowledge is false, the goal we try to reach as also the methods adopted to reach that goal are bound to take us astray. False knowledge and false purpose lead to false concentration.
3. The third class of people are those who have perceived with the mind the purpose of life and are trying to fulfil the mission of existence. The methods they adopt are not always and uniformly correct. One may have seen the purpose of life and yet in fulfilling that purpose may go wrong. It is one thing to determine that we desire to reach Mount Everest, the majestic peak of the Himalayas; it is another to find the right way to that lofty peak.

Thus concentration or its lack is intimately related to our perception of the meaning and purpose of existence.

Concentration does not mean only fixity of mind on any given subject. Culture which produces successful concentration has to be examined. The wandering mind will not come under our control till we examine the principles involved in concentration.

So how shall we determine what is the purpose of life for each one of us? There is a phrase which Mr. Judge uses and which is in the form of a question. If we answer that, we shall find for ourselves the purpose of our own present existence. The question is: "What is the secret desire of your heart? It is not the expressed desire: "I want to be happy, or I want to do this or that." There is at the back of expressed desires our secret desires. Now let us apply this question to the three classes of people mentioned above. These three divisions are not fanciful. We can

examine and evaluate the entire human kingdom in the light of this central question. What are the answers that we get when we ask people: "What is the secret desire of your heart?" According to the "secret desire," knowingly or unknowingly, consciously or unconsciously, we live our life. We may not like the pattern of our own life, but it is our own secret desire that has built that pattern.

It is often said, "As we think, so we become." This is true. But we think in a particular way because of our secret desire. The Rig-Vedic hymn says that "Desire first arose in It," the Brahman; and in response to that Primal Desire, *Mahat* or Divine Mind manifested its activity. So it is our own secret desire which impels our mind to activity.

If we ask everyone that question, there will be, broadly speaking, three answers:

1. "We have no secret desire," is the first; "what is there to desire? We must live as our fathers did before us and then die like them." This mentality may be compared to the simple villager's attitude of life. Humble people, simple folk, give us such an answer. Wordsworth in his "Ode to Duty" refers to this simple-minded class of humble people "who do thy work, and know it not." The desire in them has not become active.
2. Next, there are those who are cunning and crafty, who are apt to give false answers (call them diplomatic) to the question, "What is your secret desire?" The vague term "happiness" is used. Many people of this class say, "To be happy and to make others happy—that is the purpose." But if we watch them doing small things day by day and hour by hour, their expressed words prove false. This second class have secret desires in terms of ambitions—wealth, fame, power and influence, to love and especially to be loved—and they concentrate accordingly; their centre is outside of themselves. There *is* concentration, not its lack, on the part of the politician, the professional man; the clerk often secretly desires, whatever he might say, to rise to the position of the manager, and so on. Successful people possess what they desire; but though triumphant, they are not really happy. Final failure is sure for the worldly-minded whose secret desires are for worldly possessions and who are concentrated in obtaining them.
3. Turn to the third class of people. These are those who feel that real purpose is not in possessing the world, but in recognizing that the realities of life are not in and of this earth, which is only a playground for sports or a school for learning. Recognizing that behind the senses and the mind is the soul, that behind the world of matter is the world of mind, and behind the world of mind is the world of Spirit, such people labour to separate the grain from the chaff. Their concentration is on the world of Spirit. But unless they possess correct and accurate knowledge, they go astray. All kinds of false and dangerous practices are followed by many aspirants to yoga. They conceive Spirit to be somewhere away from matter; they think of the body to be the enemy of soul, and so on; and thus they go astray. Those who aspire to practise yoga, to live the Higher Life, need to be warned; we know there are many today who so aspire; for them correct knowledge is available in Theosophy.

We often say, "Theosophy is for all," and we include even the illiterate who may not be able to read and write but who have a culture of their own. Theosophy is also for those who have

ambitions. And it is for the spiritual aspirant who feels the urge of divinity within himself. Theosophy is for all who want it. Whatever our station in life, whatever the state of our mind, there is help for us in Theosophy; but we must want it—want to study it, want to use it for ourselves.

Let us see how Theosophy helps in a practical way. First, Theosophy reveals the true purpose of life and thus provides the true motive for concentration—to raise the self by the Self. For the simple folk and for the highly educated, for all and not only for the aspirant, that is the purpose of life. To the simple-minded who have not erected false purposes, this comes easy; to the complex-minded it proves difficult; to the aspirant, because of Karma, it comes as an overwhelming conviction. The "secret desire" of the human heart is—altruism and philanthropy; everyone, even the most selfish, has this innate idea burnt imperishably in his consciousness. But, while the simple-minded have forgotten and are easily reminded, the sophisticated have become cumbersome and in devious ways contrive to practise altruism and philanthropy along with selfishness, ambition, greed and so forth. Real altruism and philanthropy cannot possibly be practised without a grasp of the teaching—"Raise the self by the Self." Knowledge of psychology is required, which Theosophy provides.

Secondly, knowledge of what is to be raised and who raises it is necessary. Theosophy explains what the higher and lower selves are—Atma-Buddhi-Manas, or the Triad, *versus* body-energy-desires-lower mind, or the Quaternary. No one can adequately help another who has not in some measure raised his lower self by his Higher Self. Culture of concentration means this—the process of raising.

Thirdly, Theosophy teaches the right technique of praying. Prayer is dual: personal prayer, that used by us for our own improvement; and impersonal prayer used for the good of others. Prayer is not mere muttering of words; prayer is the formation of thoughts. Whether we desire self-improvement or the helping of others, for both "formation of thoughts" is necessary. As far as our minds are concerned, we are like babes—we howl and cry and try to articulate, but can only make futile noises. Unless the mind is trained by correct technique in concentration we cannot formulate thoughts. The baby tries to learn to speak; we have to do that with our minds.

Concentration is the first step for both kinds of prayer.

How shall we use concentration for the first kind of prayer—prayer for self-improvement? It is a twofold process: purificatory prayer which cleanses the lower nature, and invocatory prayer which brings the Inner God (Higher Self) down into the temple of the body. The body or temple must be clean and pure and the God established there must radiate beneficence. In other words, what is required is (i) self-examination, and (ii) Ideation-Imagination which uses knowledge about the nature of the Higher Self. The body will not become pure nor will the Divinity in us enter the brain and the heart just by our wishing it. Thought has to be purified, and by thought the road is built for the Higher to infuse itself into the temple of the body.

The second kind of prayer, which is for the good of others and for which deeds and actions are necessary, does not become possible without the first kind of prayer. People do not get

response to their prayers for others, even when unselfishly uttered, because they are uttered by those who lack inner purity. Even doling out alms, without inner purity, will avail us nothing.

What practice shall we adopt? (a) Study; without it no good and much harm will accrue. (b) Self-examination—of the lower self by the aid of the Higher and also by searching the scriptures. This is real *vesper*, the evening prayer. (c) Invocation of the Higher by the mind which has subdued lower desires and passions, with the aid of Imagination and Ideation—the company of Ideas and Idea-Builders. This is real *matin*, the morning exercise.

But these three are of little avail unless the secret desire of the heart is for nothing else but raising the self by the Self. Theosophy reiterates true Ideas given out by great Idea-Builders—the real Gurus, not of this caste or that class, but of the whole human race. The Ideas which They always and ever project on the Screen of Space and Time become the real food of our souls in waking days as in nights when the body sleeps. "Dreams" are futile as prayers are futile; but true dreams can be made aids and inspiration, as true prayers are. False dreams confuse, true ones help. Concentration is required for both prayers and dreams. The Gurus pray for us, dream for us; let us make ourselves worthy of Them.

The constant verification of geological and meteorological predictions besides its scientific value is of the utmost philosophical importance to the student of Theosophy. For it shows: (a) that there are few secrets in nature absolutely inaccessible to man's endeavours to snatch them from her bosom; and (b) that Nature's workshop is one vast clockwork guided by immutable laws in which there is no room for the caprices of *special providence*. Yet he, who has fathomed the ultimate secrets of the Proteus-nature—which changes but is ever the same—can, without disturbing the LAW, avail himself of the yet unknown correlations of natural FORCE to produce *effects* which would seem miraculous and impossible but to those who are unacquainted with their *causes*. "The law which moulds the tear also rounds the planet." There exists a wealth of chemic force—in heat, light, electricity and magnetism—the possibilities of whose mechanical motions are far from being *all* understood. Why then should the theosophist who believes in *natural* (though occult) *law* be regarded as either a charlatan or a credulous fool in his endeavours to fathom its secrets? Is it only because following the traditions of ancient men of science the methods he has chosen differ from those of modern learning?

—H. P. Blavatsky

The Signs of the Time

The One Spirit of the Universe, present everywhere, is the source of the Spirit in Man. As above, so below. The law of analogy and correspondence holds good in every direction, as the

investigations of science are increasingly proving. Perhaps the teachings and findings of the ancients will be looked upon with a little more attention as they are vindicated further and further. Science and knowledge, like civilization, also have their cycles, and we are in fact returning to a point on the spiral of time when the wisdom of the past is being resurrected. Perhaps the myths and fables of the ancients might be found on examination to be the ancient method of expressing truths and facts.

Where do we find that science has paid the least attention to the ancients? Perhaps in the study of the mind, the soul and the emotions of man. The psychological truths recorded by Sri Krishna in the Gita, by the Buddha in the Dhammapada, by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras, and finally clearly expressed and defined by H. P. Blavatsky in modern terms in her works, will, it is hoped, gain the popular recognition they deserve.

Otherwise? Otherwise there is no hope for the *moral* reformation of society as it is presently constituted, and it is more than likely that our civilization will disappear into that "sea of horror," of brutality and destruction as prophesied by H.P.B. Does this sound too extreme? Well, the times are also extreme and people need awakening. Realize for a moment the state we are all in. The most horrible and destructive engines of war are at the command of a few politicians—not patriots or humanitarians; for politicians, of whatever country, have rarely been either. Behind them stands what is now termed "big business." Their aims and objects are not seen by the majority of people, who gather their information from the penny papers and the weekly tabloids—sops to the inquiring mind and dullers of the common wit. Truly, one of the extraordinary manifestations of this "literate" age is the uneducated mind—eyes that can see and heads that whirl in every conceivable direction, visions of confusion instead of the steady flame of Truth. No wonder television is one of the most popular among the media in this age; its flickering pictures fascinate and hypnotize the viewers, not only into an emotional trance of identity with the fortunes or tribulations of the actors, but simultaneously imbue them with concepts of morality and methods of speech and of dealing with others that are often the reverse of the noble, the generous, the brotherly, the kind, the sympathetic.

One of the curses of our civilization is the false system of economics prevalent today, that competition alone is the law. It is *not*. If the sun and the planets and the whole universe can live in harmony, if law is seen to be everywhere, if rhythm and unity in diversity are everywhere present, then to say that competition is necessary for growth and progress is as palpable a falsity as any lie that was ever perpetrated.

Let us turn for a while to the question of cycles. The mere fact of a weather cycle in itself is important. It helps to incline the mind to the idea of ebb and flux in everything. Fluctuation becomes rhythm. Hitherto the average person has not been much concerned with cycles in an analytical sense. Vaguely they are said to exist. Vaguely he lives within them: cycles of inflation and of depression, financially; of ease and of anxiety, moodwise; of national amity and of wars and manoeuvres, internationally. A thousand examples can be advanced to prove that we live in and are surrounded by all kinds of cycles. Applications thereof remain *terra incognita* to most. Yet, if they are to prove of any value, that is what must be searched for.

We of the present age are interested mainly in physical and objective results and events. We are inclined to demand visible rapidity in results and visible changes, social, economic, political and what-not. This produces a kind of impatience and we are not generally calm enough to look for the *trend* of the present cycle or to be able to recognize it. We look to politics, economics, sociology, education, transportation, the "news of the day." All these are the ephemera of the age; they point to a trend, but are results rather than causes. Where do the causes and the sources of trends lie? What about the urge among persons of many nations to unite in friendliness and to do away with the fear of wars and invasions; the suggestion of the elimination of the barriers of trade and commerce, of national currencies and barrier-tariffs, so that plenty may flow to areas of scarcity; the generosity, disguised or blatant, of many nations prepared to give to those who have not; the freedom of study and of education and the travelling students and itinerant professors from all over the world, who have been crossing and recrossing it till the unity of knowledge and the similarity of thought and psychological make-up is impressed on all who have made contacts with such persons; the great interest in art and music and drama, and in the international appreciation of various cultures; study of various philosophies, religions and histories of countries and groups—there is a gradual building-up, an amalgamation, going on right before our eyes. Are we helping it on or hindering it? Or are we merely being passively tossed by the waves of this sea of the cycle in its onward movement? Are we going to strive for fraternity, for liberty and for equality of opportunity? For duties and responsibilities before rights and privileges? Or the reverse?

The forces that would oppose this trend are equally well defined: There is the sneaky politician who strives for power over others, first in his city, then in his district and finally in his country. He and his kind are everywhere in our capitals and speak on behalf of our many governments. That we should permit it is a proof of the weakness of our conviction that principles of right and of truth and of co-operation are the true rulers of the world. The clever priest, of whatever religion, comes next. He enslaves the ignorant masses, generates vague fears and prevents the light of open inquiry from touching those who seek it. Then there is the economist who closes frontiers and debars people from meeting one another out of fear of "loss." Here the perversion of thought is very clear: the basis for all economy has been pre-chosen: it is competition. Co-operation, on the other hand, has a smaller group of protagonists. Its voice is lost in the shuffle of currencies manipulated by "big business," which knows no frontiers (artificial barriers created to imprison the thoughtless multitudes). Next we have the scientist who degrades himself and places his knowledge at the disposal of the warmonger (another name for big business in a new disguise), the manufacturer of arms and ammunitions. And fears of retaliation and attack are created by the propagandist and spread by the news-agencies and the papers, so that even the educationist who should honourably spread knowledge among the ignorant masses becomes himself confused and ineffective.

Ask yourselves why it is that many governments have devoted half if not two-thirds or three-quarters of their revenue to preparation for war and acquisition of weapons, and only a quarter or less to education. Ask yourselves, upon reading Plato's Republic, if a shift should not be immediately insisted upon in government legislatures and administrative positions, so that the philosophers and educationists be properly employed there to see that the people receive their just dues. The fact that this is not the case in most countries is an indication to all of us of

the unnatural situation the world is in and of its seriousness. Each one of us has a choice before him. The forces of construction and of destruction allure and beckon us, the one to self-sacrifice and the other to self-destruction. Is it for the latter that we live and labour? Shall we not learn from the lessons of history? Learn these lessons we must—if not the easy way then the hard way, through pain and suffering.

There are some good signs. Tyranny as a form of government has become outmoded and has been replaced by republics and democratic methods (in theory if not entirely yet in practice). The tyranny of religious creeds has also been broken and freedom of thought under secular states prevails. The days of nationalism appear now to be over and the international State is bound to arise and autocracy under one form or another still prevail in the world and will continue to prevail under new disguises until exposed for what they are. Freedom of knowledge alone will relieve us from fear, ignorance and anxiety. H.P.B. tells us in earnest that two-thirds of the world's evil would be done away with if only we would learn to treat others as brothers and give them the trust that we accord to members of our family.

We may well ask, What is our *true* family? Is it not the family of the wise and the friendly and the just and the free? Do not the Great Masters of Wisdom down the ages stand exactly for that? Do They not oppose the forces of desire, of anger, of greed, of depression, of dejection, of doubt, with the force of Truth and the light of Knowledge? Well, if so, then where do we stand? Are we with Them or not? Let us take our stand. The paths are two indeed, and each one has to choose for himself or herself. Shall we choose the path of light and love, of help and co-operation, or of selfishness, of darkness and of eventual destruction? Each passing moment marks our progress in one direction or the other. Let us choose!

Mankind is caught in a great illusion. It thinks it can solve its problems through legislation, through political and social reform, through scientific and technological progress, through greater knowledge, greater wealth, greater power and greater control. It may solve some problems with this strategy, but those are trivial problems and temporary cures. By these methods we shall go on creating new difficulties on the one hand and trying to solve them on the other to maintain the illusion of progress....If we human beings do not transform inwardly, we shall soon join the list of those unfortunate creatures that lived a million years or so and then became extinct, for they could not adapt themselves. Only time will tell. Survival requires not the intelligence of "progress" but the ability to co-operate and love each other and to live in harmony with nature. The ant has survived longer than man. What we need now is not more ability and more efficiency, but greater cohesion, greater compassion, greater capacity to share and work together.

Education in the twenty-first century must therefore concern itself not with greater "progress" but with the inner transformation of the human consciousness. This has been pointed out before by the Buddha, Socrates, Christ and innumerable other sages in all cultures.

—P. Krishna

Magnetic Exhalations

Theosophy affirms that a powerful current of magnetism emanates from ideas as well as from all physical bodies and all human beings. More, that such is the sympathy existing between the kingdoms of Nature that the magnetic emanation of one object or being can affect another, albeit unconsciously. Man, with his power of will, occupies a superior position in the scheme of things, and, by that will-force, can impart his own life or the magnetic atmosphere developed in him to so-called inanimate objects, thereby animating them to a certain degree. The magnetic influence he imparts may be good or evil, depending on his own motive and magnetic purity or impurity.

There is a persisting and widely-prevalent belief that misfortune, unhappiness and even death sometimes attach themselves to certain objects. This may be branded by the sophisticated as superstition, nevertheless Theosophy not only asserts that this is possible but also offers an explanation.

Ample evidence has been put forward for the protective power of talismans "imbued by the influence of that greatest of all magnets, the human will, with a potency for good" (Isis Unveiled, I, 462); but a potency for ill can also be communicated to an object by a malevolent will.

The evil magnetism of certain objects can be explained in more than one way. One explanation is the deliberate laying of a curse. Disaster dogging the path of the possessors of stolen treasure, for instance, might, perhaps, be attributable to such a curse. Ideas of the "evil eye," the ability to lay curses, bewitchings, etc., have been deeply embedded in the common mind since the earliest times, and are no less so at present, despite all the efforts of science to discredit the notion. One reason for this is that the traditions are largely true and rest upon a truly scientific basis, though unrecognized by modern science. Many a phenomenon that science pooh-poohs would be understandable if the interrelation between man and the elemental world were understood. In one of his "Conversations on Occultism" Mr. Judge explains that anything used by a person is connected with elementals and his magnetism. Each object "has certain magnetic relations peculiar to itself, and all of them are soaked, to a greater or less extent, with your magnetism as well as nervous fluid....The elementals are connected, each class according to its substance, with those objects by means of the magnetic fluid." These elementals are acted upon by our thoughts and desires, and can be imbued with potentialities for harm by an evilly-inclined powerful will. Some elementals are described as being "of horrible malignity." It needs to be borne in mind, however, that the power to bless that some individuals have is just as potent as is the power of a curse, and that the latter affects not him who has a pure conscience and the welfare of humanity at heart.

Even if a curse has not been wilfully laid upon an object, the associations clustering about it could affect a sensitive. Through the astral emanations of the things contacted, a certain class of sensitive persons are brought in contact with the current of the astral light connected with those things, and which retains pictures of the events associated with their history (Isis Unveiled, I, 182 ff.). The evil use to which an object has been put leaves its indelible impress

upon it, and a sensitive person handling that object might, through the power of suggestion, fall a prey to its evil influence. On the other hand, the association with an object of good, beneficent and happy events would also leave upon it their indelible impress.

There is still another possible explanation as to why some things carry with them a fiendish, devilish influence. The ancients taught that the astral light is projected from the eyes, the thumbs and the palms of the hands. The pure life-giving Light, or magnetic fluid, is called in The Secret Doctrine (I, 76 fn.) "Od," while "Ob" is the name given to "the messenger of death," "the nefarious evil fluid" charged with malicious will and hatred and used by sorcerers. This invisible fluid may be directed against a given object or person with fatal force. But, as said before, the pure in heart have naught to fear.

The following quotations from Theosophical writings throw further light on what has been said above:

Study magnetism with the help of occult doctrines, and then that which now will appear incomprehensible, *absurd* in the light of physical science, will become all clear. (A Master of Wisdom)

Magnetism...is the alphabet of magic. It is idle for anyone to attempt to understand either the theory or the practice of the latter until the fundamental principle of magnetic attractions and repulsions throughout nature is recognized.

Many so-called popular superstitions are but evidences of an instinctive perception of this law. An untutored people are taught by the experience of many generations that certain phenomena occur under fixed conditions; they give these conditions and obtain the expected results. Ignorant of the laws, they explain the fact by supernaturalism, for experience has been their sole teacher.

In India, as well as in Russia and some other countries, there is an instinctive repugnance to stepping across a man's shadow, especially if he have red hair; and in the former country, natives are extremely reluctant to shake hands with persons of another race. These are not idle fancies. Every person emits a magnetic exhalation or aura, and a man may be in perfect physical health, but at the same time his exhalation may have a morbid character for others sensitive to such subtle influences. Dr. Esdaile and other mesmerists long since taught us that Oriental people, especially Hindus, are more susceptible than the white-skinned races. Baron Reichenbach's experiments—and, in fact, the world's entire experience—prove that these magnetic exhalations are most intense from the extremities. Therapeutic manipulations show this; hand-shaking is, therefore, most calculated to communicate antipathetic magnetic conditions, and the Hindus do wisely in keeping their ancient "superstition"—derived from Manu—constantly in mind....*Oriental experience for a hundred centuries has shown that the germs of moral contagion linger about localities, and impure magnetism can be communicated by the touch.* (Isis Unveiled, II, 610-11)

Apply a piece of iron to a magnet, and it becomes imbued with its subtile principle and capable of imparting it to other iron in its turn. It neither weighs more nor appears different from what it was before. And yet, one of the most subtile potencies of nature has entered into its substance. A talisman, in itself perhaps a worthless bit of metal, a scrap of paper, or a shred of any fabric, has nevertheless been imbued by the influence of that greatest of all magnets, the human will, with a potency for good or ill just as recognizable and as real in its effects as the subtile property which the iron acquired by contact with the physical magnet. Let the bloodhound snuff an article of clothing that has been worn by the fugitive, and he will track him through swamp and forest to his hiding-place. Give one of Professor Buchanan's "psychometers" a manuscript, no matter how old, and he will describe to you the character of the writer, and perhaps even his personal appearance....

With these familiar illustrations of the possibility of a subtile fluid communicated from one individual to another, or to substances which he touches, it becomes less difficult to understand that by a determined concentration of the will an otherwise inert object may become imbued with protective or destructive power according to the purpose directing. (Isis Unveiled, I, 462-63)

TALISMAN. From the Arabic *tilism* or *tilsam*, a "magic image." An object, whether in stone, metal or sacred wood; often a piece of parchment filled with characters and images traced under certain planetary influences in magical formulae, given by one versed in occult sciences to one unversed, either with the object of preserving him from evil, or for the accomplishment of certain desires. The greatest virtue and efficacy of the talisman, however, resides in the faith of its possessor; not because of the credulity of the latter, or that it possesses no virtue, but because faith is a quality *endowed with a most potent creative power*, and therefore—unconsciously to the believer—intensifies a hundredfold the power originally imparted to the talisman by its maker. (The Theosophical Glossary)

The Pattern of Life

Can one department of life be entirely dissociated from another? Thus, for instance, politics cannot be rightly conceived as performing its own legitimate functions without sociology, and the problems of the social servant have their political aspects, which are by no means negligible. Again, here in India, because of the presence of different religious creeds, there is an attempt, surely understandable, to dissociate religion from social service; while in Western countries, because the power of theology and sectarian fanaticism is on the wane, to retain their influence most churches resort to programmes of social service.

The attempt at arbitrary division of life into numerous departments often strikes us as perhaps the main cause of that which is recognized on all hands as the failure of our civilization. Ours is an age of specialists; in medicine, in science, in psychology, we have specialists of many degrees; and so in other departments. The spirit of the age focuses itself in every man and woman and in each of us is raging a conflict—conflict of loyalties, of duties, of principles; the resulting confusion is greater even than that conflict. The Pattern of Life is disturbed out of recognition; the Path of Life is lost in the jungle of that conflict and confusion. To find that Path, to restore that Pattern, is the task before us all; and none is so poor as cannot lend a helping hand.

Life has a pattern; a single glance at Nature reveals that fact. In fleeting snow-flakes as in enduring crystals, in every bud and blossom, in every bird on its wings, in the deadly reptile and in the beast of burden—everywhere we see design of form and colour, pattern woven by the infallible hand of Life itself. To quote the American poet W. H. Carruth, "Some call it Evolution, others call it God"; but call it what we will, and whether we reverence Nature or Nature's omnipresent God, the one unmistakable truth is there—the Pattern of Life exists.

The second fact brought to our notice by the joint study of history and philosophy is that it is only in the human kingdom that the Pattern is lost. Look for a moment at the animal kingdom. There the Pattern of Life, working through the laws of heredity, is maintained in every species, generation after generation. But the sign of progress and evolution in the kingdom of man is—change. Growth and transformation, rapid and incessant, marks all our activities, and the result is the covering over of old foundations, loss of old familiar moorings. The spirit of experiment and adventure, man's great privilege and prerogative, is both a blessing and a curse; nay, we might say is a blessing because it is a curse.

To find the lost pattern of Life in our human kingdom it is necessary to destroy the heresy of separateness. We must try to see life as one whole, as a unit. Let us not divide life into sacred and secular; into political and social; into religious and scientific. Let us not separate home from club, school from hostel, the place of worship from the place of business. But we cannot succeed in seeing life as a whole unless the mind's eye has been trained to observe carefully, nay more, to penetrate the surface appearance of things. The instinct of the animal which enables it to follow the Pattern of Life, makes it do so in a servile manner. If we want to observe a real servile state, let us turn to the animal kingdom. But the human intelligence, with its power of free-will, of self-choice and of self-determination, has the advantage and disadvantage which the adventure of life brings—loss of old familiar moorings.

To the mind's eye must be brought the aid of intuition, which in the philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita is named *Buddhi*, higher intellect, superior to ordinary human mind. That which Krishna describes as *Buddhi-Yoga* in the second chapter of the Gita, is the gospel *par excellence* of the social servant, using that term in its broadest sense. In labouring and serving and sacrificing for our fellowmen we need more than mind-intelligence; we need the vision of the Higher Intellect, the Pure Reason of Kant, the *Buddhi* of the Gita. In perceiving Life as one unit, one whole, though it is a perpetual motion, a mighty flux, we destroy that which is named the heresy of separateness. We see the kingdom of humans as one whole, in which

sub-kingdoms and species exist; but unless we notice the value of the whole we are apt to lose ourselves in the parts. The Pattern of Life is one and the same for the entire human race.

An example will make it clear: the Pattern of the human body is definite; there are not two designs for the corpus, only one. All humans have ten toes and ten fingers, two eyes and two ears. The number of orifices, of senses and organs, is identical in each. Leaving aside freaks of nature for whom also there is adequate explanation, all human bodies are built on one pattern. But there are many kinds and types of bodies. If we classify according to ethnology, we have racial divisions—we have yellow and white, brown and red bodies; or if we divide according to intelligence, we have dull and sensitive types, irrespective of races; again, if we separate them according to ethical standards, we have intelligent liars and truthful savages; and so on. Doctors of medicine will classify the human body in one way, the educationist in another. No two human beings are ever identically the same. Now we see what has emerged as a principle in our study: Unity in diversity. The great problem of the Greeks—One in many and many in One—is the very same problem that the Vedic hymns and the Upanishads discuss—the One Brahman and its myriad expressions in an endless series.

The spiritual basis of any social service should be its starting point. All human beings are equal—as souls, not in bodily development, nor in moral character, nor in mental evolution. All of us are diverse in strength and sensitiveness of body, have different depths of moral stamina and different breadths of mental outlook, but at the back of these, at the very core of our being, is the principle of identity. Says the Bhagavad-Gita:

There dwelleth in the heart of every creature, O Arjuna, the Master—*Ishwara*—who by his magic power causeth all things and creatures to revolve mounted upon the universal wheel of time. Take sanctuary with him alone, O son of Bharata, with all thy soul; by his grace thou shalt obtain supreme happiness, the eternal place.
(XVIII, 61-62)

On Dealing with Injustices

Why can we not be caring and friendly with one another? Why do we feel so annoyed with those who hold views that differ from our own? Individuals, groups, nations, all feel annoyed with one another, and the sum-total of annoyance seems to be increasing in the world. Why cannot people stop being annoyed?

Can we not stop our *own* annoyance with these people? If we cannot, why do we expect that *they* should stop feeling annoyed? Do we not see that we are just as foolish as they are?

It might seem that their annoyance is in some cases based on right principles, and we sympathize with them in that respect. Why should people have to suffer "injustices" and why are

all reforms made possible only after struggle? So we are truly annoyed only with those who, in our opinion, are perpetrating injustice in the world! But are we sure that our ideas of right and wrong, justice and injustice, are one hundred per cent right in terms of Universal Law or Karma? Can we not imagine that in some respects, with more knowledge, we may change our mind?

Yes, we must change with further knowledge of the Law, but how does that help us now? Human nature is such that each sees things from his individual point of view. The Masters see things from the universal point of view. Let us use our knowledge of Karma to help us widen our outlook; that is, use our mind, rooted in compassion, to understand. It will help us to see that we must feel sorry for the wrongdoer, not just for those who we think are wronged. None can suffer except through their own actions inspired by ignorance and hatred, or through their voluntary actions for the sake of others. How can we help them? By trying to see the difference between the true and the false methods of righting wrongs. Between fighting the wrongs we think other people are perpetrating and regarding them with apathy is the struggle to find the best *means* or righting the wrongs. It is an old saying, pregnant with meaning, that two wrongs do not make a right. Our effort today should be to find out *how* to produce concord in place of discord; *how* to produce brotherliness in place of "*my rights*."

It is believed that only the use of force will prevent wrongs being done in many cases. Force may mean physical force—assaults, deaths, capture and imprisonment; or it may mean the force of example, or the force of ideas, or the force of love. Let us think over these points. Is physical imprisonment a greater punishment than mental and emotional isolation? Is a person changed for the better by imprisonment, or by an inner change brought about by his victim's attitude towards him? Tolerance is a fine word, but it, as also its opposite, annoyance, needs to be understood. How many lovers of animals, for instance, become irritated when they see someone ill-treating an animal? It is good to fight against cruelty to animals, but anger is of no use. It is neither apathy towards cruelty nor annoyance and anger, but compassion, not only for the animal but even more for the one who is ill-treating it, that will bring about the necessary reform. All problems have to be examined with logic, reason and knowledge *before* we are faced with the necessity for action.

So with humanity's many discords. We need to search for the cure, the plan of action. Theosophy has it, but how difficult it is for students to apply the knowledge! Yet the history of the Theosophical Movement should show us the way the Great Ones look at the mistakes of others. We have plenty of examples.

We can *begin* to live an ordered mental life in this age of discord by applying the teachings of the Gita and other devotional books; by practising perseveringly those truths we dimly perceive. Then we shall slowly find that we can sense the great universal ideas and begin to put them into practice.

And the first and last idea is: LOVE your neighbour as yourself and do to others that which you wish other to do to you. Everything that can be said on the line of conduct to be adopted is there in that teaching. LOVE is not a mere sentiment or emotion. To love truly is to be *at one with* the

object of one's love. It is "to live and breathe in all" because of the Unity that exists and because all have to pass through the same sufferings and trials on the path of evolution.

Let us try to understand through love.

In the Light of Theosophy

The "Call of the Time" group—a world forum instituted by the Brahma Kumaris—met in New York this September for a week of presentations and workshops. Their closing Declaration on the "Inner State and the Outer State of the World" makes some salient points. It states among other things:

It is becoming increasingly evident that the "outer state" of the world is just the mirror image of the "inner state" of its citizens. As the inner is the outer, this calls for new solutions to world problems—solutions whose point of departure must be the transformation of the mind, soul, heart, values and beliefs. The limits of "manipulating the outer" have been reached, notwithstanding the importance of many outer elements of our lives. Thus, if peace is to be attained, we must start with inner peace. If social coherence is to be achieved, inner coherence is the point of departure. If crime is to be eliminated, we must eradicate crime from our minds. If world stability is needed, we must start by inner stability. We cannot offer the "supermarket solutions" to the world problem any longer. Peace will be sold in these markets.

The inner solutions are holistic and all-embracing and, therefore, when we easily assert our rights we cannot fail in accepting our corresponding responsibilities. When technology enables us to amplify and broadcast the cries of the world's people, it must also help us listen to people. When we act in response to our individual interest, we must also be deeply concerned with the collective (or public) interest—the needs of others. When we strive for material prosperity, we must also strive for spiritual prosperity....

The key responsibility and fundamental need is to change ourselves first. Change will start when we focus on our inner transformation. This is a very concrete and practical guide to changing the state of the world in which we live....On the personal front, we have to reach towards the highest values and a deep respect for life in its several forms. We must love and respect each and every one and enliven our own lives, for example, with the cultural and ethnic diversity that is with us on this planet. Inner transformation and outer transformation are part of the same wheel of life in all its forms and manifestations, including economics, finance and development. (Purity, October 2000)

In brief, we are the architects of our own future. We are all interconnected in a global community of seekers of common interests. World leaders are so preoccupied with the outer state of the world that the inner state of the individuals making up that world is hardly ever thought of. The needed transformation is within our reach and we cannot afford to miss this opportunity.

It is now a matter of common knowledge that sleep is not just an interval of quiet rest, but is filled with intense mental activity. Research over the past several years has led scientists to new findings on the function of sleep. The latest among the theories is that sleep can improve memory and enhance learning. Some experts say the findings are "stunning," others are unconvinced; yet the dispute has created quite a stir in the scientific community. (The Sunday Times, London)

The latest research comes from a team led by Pierre Maquet at the University of Liege, in Belgium, using a Pet scanner to monitor brain activity before and during sleep. The volunteers were taught to perform a computer task before going to sleep. It was found that their skill improved after a night's sleep. What is more, while the volunteers were sleeping their brains showed patterns of activity very similar to those when they were awake and performing the keyboard task. This may be evidence, say the researchers, that sleep plays a role in strengthening memories.

Similar studies were carried out in America by Robert Stickgold, a psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School, and the results were almost identical to those of the Belgian studies. To find out exactly what part of the sleep cycle was important, the student volunteers were monitored in a sleep laboratory. Sleep researchers recognize two main types of sleep—rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, so called because of the flickering eye movements taking place (which is mainly when we dream), and the deeper kind called "slow wave" sleep. The study showed that students performed best only when allowed to have both during the course of a night. Other researchers say that it is really the "slow-wave" sleep or deep sleep that is essential for learning.

Professor Stickgold believes his research provides more proof that the brain is tracing out memories as we sleep, strengthening them overnight. Anyone trying to learn a skill, he says, "really needs a good sleep *after* intensive studying or training." Although the research is far from complete, there are many who believe the findings hold important clues to the role of sleep.

Theosophy has always asserted that the states of consciousness during sleep are an extension of the waking state. Consciousness continues to function in the dream state and in the dreamless state. Freed from the trammels of the senses and organs, the consciousness assimilates the experiences of the waking state and gains the benefits and knowledge of *Sushupti* or deep sleep.

Scientists are so preoccupied with the theory that it is certain structures in the brain that are reactivated during sleep, that the nature and function of *real* sleep activity remains *terra incognita* to them. The key to what is still an unsolved mystery to science is knowledge of man's

dual nature—the existence of an immortal Ego, the inner man (not to be confused with the Higher Self), which acts independently during the sleep of the body. The dim recollection we might have of experiences of this inner man during the hours of sleep becomes more or less distorted by our physical memory at the moment of awakening.

Research into the relationship between sight and sound is continuing apace. A new study shows that sound can help direct visual attention. Dr. John J. McDonald and his colleagues report in the British journal *Nature* (October 19) the results of their study at the University of California at San Diego. People were more accurate at detecting a flash of light when a sound was produced at the same location, suggesting that sound can help direct visual attention. It will be interesting to see, say the researchers, what happens to the ability to pay attention when one of the senses does not function as well as it should, as in a person who is blind or hearing impaired. They also noted that research into the relationship between sight and sound could affect the way we look at people with attention disorders—those who have a hard time paying attention. In some people, the researchers say, the problem may stem from hearing or sight deficits, or in relating sight and sound together.

The many ramifications of the sight-sound relationship are now receiving due attention. Many sensitive people see a colour for every sound. "It is sound which produces the colour, and not the opposite," says H.P.B. ("Occult Vibrations," *The Path*, June 1893). In *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge* (p. 44), she further explains:

In the Eastern philosophy, the sense of sound is the first manifested, and next the sense of sight, sounds passing into colours. Clairvoyants can see sounds and detect every note and modulation far more distinctly than they would by the ordinary sense of sound—vibration, or hearing....Such vibrations can be seen at a greater distance than they can be heard....

One sense must certainly merge at some point into the other. So also sound can be translated into taste. There are sounds which taste exceedingly acid in the mouths of some sensitives, while others generate the taste of sweetness; in fact the whole scale of senses is susceptible of correlations....

The senses are interchangeable once we admit correlation. Moreover they can all be intensified or modified very considerably. You will now understand the reference in the Vedas and Upanishads, where sounds are said to be perceived.

The notion that tiny creatures like parasites are an immensely dominant force might seem disturbing to many. Scientists are just beginning to discover exactly how powerful these hidden inhabitants can be for every ecosystem on Earth. *Discover* magazine (August 2000) prints an article adapted from Carl Zimmer's *Parasite Rex*, which gives an inkling of the role parasites play:

Scientists have no idea of the exact number of species of parasites, but they do know one fact: Parasites make up the majority of species on Earth. Parasites can take the form of animals, including insects, flatworms, and crustaceans, as well as protozoa, fungi, plants, and viruses and bacteria. By one estimate, parasites may outnumber free-living species four to one. Indeed, the study of life is, for the most part, parasitology.

Most of the past century's research on parasites has gone into trying to fight the ones that cause devastating illness in humans, such as malaria, AIDS, and tuberculosis. But otherwise, parasites have largely been neglected. Scientists have treated them with indifference, even contempt, viewing them as essentially hitchhikers on life's road. But recent research reveals that parasites are remarkably sophisticated and tenacious and may be as important to ecosystems as the predators at the top of the food chain. Some castrate their hosts and take over their minds. Others completely shut down the immune systems of their hosts. Some scientists now think parasites have been a dominant force, perhaps *the* dominant force, in the evolution of life....

As scientists discover more and more parasites and uncover the extent and complexity of their machinations, they are fast coming to an unsettling conclusion: Far from simply being along for the ride, parasites may be one of nature's most powerful driving forces...and may shape an entire region's ecology.

Even after Copernicus took Earth out of the centre of the universe and Darwin took humans out of the centre of the living world, we still go through life pretending that we are exalted above other animals. Yet we know that we, too, are collections of cells that work together, kept harmonized by chemical signals. If an organism can control those signals—an organism like a parasite—then it can control us. And therein lies the peculiar and precise horror of parasites.

All this goes to show that even the most inconspicuous and primitive of organisms has its place and function—beneficial or otherwise—in the scheme of things. Scientists are realizing that their idea of how even physical nature really works needs revision. That there is more to nature than just its physical side is still beyond their ken.

Recent archaeological finds go to show that Asians were technologically advanced long before what is known as the "modern" age commenced. The evidence comes from the discovery by Chinese and American palaeoanthropologists of thousands of sophisticated stone-cutting tools in a region of southern China called the Bose basin. The tools have been dated to the time of a large meteorite impact 803,000 years ago. The significance of the find, says excavation co-leader Richard Potts of the Smithsonian Institution, is the date. Until now, he says, it was believed that Africans made sophisticated tools long before East Asians; but now that theory has been turned upside down. (The Sunday Review, October 15)

Those who know have ever maintained that civilization has proceeded from the east westward.

Is today's young generation "going up in smoke"? A recent WHO survey of 13-15-year-olds says that one in five school-children in developing countries smokes. Nearly 25 per cent of them started the habit before the age of 10. More than half, and in some countries almost 90 per cent of them, wishes to stop the habit, and two-thirds had actually tried to do so in the 12 months before the survey. (India Today, October 9)

According to another study, reported in the American Journal of Pediatrics, teen-agers who smoke cigarettes may damage more than their lungs. They are four times more likely than non-smokers to develop symptoms of depression. The study concludes that nicotine and other by-products of cigarettes smoke have a depressive effect on the central nervous system.

The WHO report mentions that tobacco companies are now targeting developing countries as the anti-smoking lobby gets more vociferous in the industrialized nations.

The dangers of smoking, mental, moral and physical, and the millions of teen-agers who are getting addicted, are of little concern to the tobacco companies out to make a profit. Teen-age smoking, like alcohol drinking, is but a symptom of the underlying malaise of our age. It is one of several signs that all is not well with the form of civilization we are evolving.

Tobacco prohibition, however, is not the answer. Unless we go to the root of the problem it would only lead to some worse form of indulgence and increase the consumption of alcohol and sedative drugs. The right policy is educational.

As H.P.B. said: "Educate! Educate!! The children are our salvation."

Humanity only *seems* to progress in achieving one discovery after the other, as in truth, it only finds that which it had lost. Most of our modern inventions for which we claim such glory, are, after all, things people were acquainted with three and four thousand years back. Lost to us through wars, floods and fire, their very existence became obliterated from the memory of man. And now modern thinkers begin to *rediscover* them once more.

—Ragon