

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

VOL. 48, No. 3

17th January 1978

OUR TRIPLE TASK

[Reprinted from THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, November 1937.—EDS.]

It is the custom among some people to glance back at their life's path from the hillocks of time they annually surmount.

—MAHATMA K.H.

SELF-EXAMINATION is of the past and out of it naturally prospective vision emerges. This happens for the Devachanee at the end of his dreams and before he assumes the new mask of a new body. What is true of the individual is true of a Lodge of students, for a Lodge is composed of individuals. Both in the past and in the future the human soul who has entered the sphere of Theosophical influence is concerned with three major ingredients of his life: Self-control of the Personality; Self-expression of the Individuality; Service of the Theosophical Cause. Let us consider this triple task.

I. CONTROL OF THE PERSONALITY

The three gates of Hell mentioned in the Sixteenth *Gita* are Desire, Anger, Covetousness. All human vices are but aspects of these three, which three in their turn spring from the sense of egotism of the lower self. This is the lower aspect of self-control and even the ordinary religious man often tries to overcome them. But there is another aspect of the personality to which the attention of the Theosophist has to be particularly directed. It is the personality which begets the fivefold “distinction of race, creed, sex, caste and colour,” which each one has to transcend. Without overcoming the force of these distinctions there is no likelihood of our really practising Universal Brotherhood. While it may

not be possible to attain that transcendence completely in this incarnation, it is possible to achieve a fair measure of success in weakening the personal distinctions along all five lines. To become a Theosophist one has to *transcend* and not only make some outer change in these five distinctions.

II. EXPRESSION OF THE EGO

Thinking and not only good feeling, ideation and not only fanciful imagination, enables the Ego to cut a canal in and through the personality to show its power, virtue and beauty. Study of psychology and metaphysics, as expounded in Theosophy, should be utilized regularly every day. Self-knowledge alone is the mode by which the Ego can be attracted to work through the brain. Fancy, dreaming, etc., in waking consciousness must be brought under control, and active thinking and right imagination founded on the study of the writings of H.P.B. and W. Q. Judge must find a place in the routine of daily life.

III. SERVICE OF THE CAUSE

It is the duty of the efficient student-server to test all outer events, new knowledge, etc., by the aid of and in the light of the Esoteric Philosophy. It is his duty to watch and to avoid the two extremes — dogmatizing Theosophy, so that it becomes a religious creed, is one; accepting new “facts” of science, new “ideas” in any and every branch of knowledge, so that in “broadening” Theosophy its very principles are shaken or rejected, is the other. A sense of proportion and discrimination are very necessary in Theosophical propaganda and an adequate remembrance of the goal for which the U.L.T. is working — not only to change the Mind of the Race, but to change it with a view to the cyclic event of the last quarter of our century. Read with attention the closing section of H.P.B.’s *Key to Theosophy*.

Wrote the Mahatma K.H.:

None of you can be so blind as to suppose that this is your first dealing with Theosophy? You surely must realize that this would be the same as to say that effects came without causes. Know that it depends now upon each of you whether you shall henceforth struggle alone after spiritual wisdom through this and the next incarnate life, or, in company of your present associates and greatly helped by the mutual sympathy and aspiration.

THE NEW CYCLE

[This article by H. P. Blavatsky appeared originally in French in the first issue of *La Revue Théosophique* (Paris), a monthly magazine founded by her in March 1889. We are indebted for the translation to H. P. Blavatsky's *Collected Writings*.—Eds.]

NO INITIAL ISSUE of an orthodox and official Theosophical Journal should be allowed to appear without giving to our readers some information which we deem to be of absolute necessity.

As a matter of fact, the ideas which people have had until now concerning the Theosophical Society of India, as it is known, are so vague and so varied that many of our Fellows themselves hold very erroneous opinions on the subject. Nothing could show better the necessity of thoroughly explaining the objective which we strive to attain in a Journal devoted exclusively to Theosophy. Accordingly, before we ask our readers to show any interest in it, or even venture on it, we very definitely owe them certain preliminary explanations.

What is Theosophy? Why this pretentious name, we are asked at the very outset? When we reply that Theosophy is divine wisdom, or the wisdom of the gods (*Theo-sophia*) rather than of God, another even more extraordinary objection is made: "Are you not Buddhists? We know that the Buddhists believe neither in one God, nor in many Gods..."

Entirely correct. But to begin with we are no more Buddhists than we are Christians, Mohammedans, Jews, Zoroastrians or Brahmanists. Then again, on the subject of the Gods, we hold to the esoteric method of the *hyponoia* taught by Ammonius Saccas; in other words, to the occult meaning of the term. Was it not said by Aristotle:

The divine essence permeating nature and being diffused throughout the universe which is infinite, what the *hoi polloi* call the gods, are simply the First Principles...

—in other words, the creative and intelligent forces of Nature. It does not follow from the fact that Buddhist philosophers recognize and know the nature of these forces, as well as anyone else, that the Society, as a Society, is Buddhist. In its capacity of an abstract body, the Society does not believe in anything, does not accept anything, and does not teach anything. The Society *per se* cannot and should not have any one religion. Cults, after all, are merely vehicles, more or less material forms, containing a lesser or greater degree of the essence of Truth,

which is One and universal. Theosophy is in principle the spiritual as well as the physical science of that Truth, the very essence of deistic and philosophical research. Visible representative of universal Truth — as all religions and philosophies are contained therein, and as each one of them contains in its turn a portion of that Truth — the Society could be no more sectarian, or have more preference, or partiality, than an anthropological or a geographical society. Are the latter concerned whether their explorers belong to this or the other religion, as long as every one of their members carries out his duties courageously?

If, then, we are asked, as so many times before, whether we are deists or atheists, spiritualists or materialists, idealists or positivists, royalists, republicans, or socialists, we will answer that every one of these views is represented in the Society. And I have merely to repeat what I said exactly ten years ago in a definitive article in *The Theosophist*,¹ to show how much that which the public thinks about us differs from that which we are in reality. Our Society has been accused at various times of the most singular and the most contradictory errors, and motives and ideas have been ascribed to it, which it has never had. What has not been said of us! One day, we were a society of ignoramuses believing in miracles; the next day we were proclaimed to be thaumaturgists; our objectives were secret and altogether political, was said in the morning; we were Carbonari and dangerous nihilists; but in the evening, it was discovered that we were spies salaried by monarchical and autocratic Russia. At some other time, and with no transition of any kind, we became Jesuits seeking to ruin Spiritism in France. American Positivists saw in us religious fanatics, while the clergy of every country denounced us as the emissaries of Satan, etc., etc. Finally, our brave critics, with a most impartial urbanity, divided Theosophists into two categories: *charlatans* and *ninnies*.

But, one slanders only that which one hates or dreads. Why would anyone hate us? As to dreading us, who knows? It is not always wise to tell the Truth, and we tell, perhaps, too many *true* truths. In spite of everything, from the very day of the formation of our Society in the United States, fourteen years ago, our teachings have met with an entirely unforeseen reception. The original programme had to be enlarged, and the area of our combined research and exploration at the present moment is lost to view beyond the infinite horizon. This expansion was

¹ "What Are the Theosophists," *The Theosophist*, October 1879 (reprinted in *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 22*).—EDS., THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

brought about by the ever increasing number of our adherents, a number which grows every day; the diversity of their races and their religions requires of us more and more profound studies. However, while our programme was enlarged, it was not in the least altered as far as its principal objects were concerned, except, unfortunately, in the case of the one which was closest to our heart, namely, the first one, *i.e.*, Universal Brotherhood without distinction of race, creed or colour. In spite of all our efforts, this object has been almost constantly ignored, or became a dead letter, especially in India, thanks to the innate haughtiness and the national pride of Englishmen. With that exception, the other two objects, namely the study of Oriental religions, especially of the ancient Vedic and Buddhist cults, and our research in the latent powers of man, have been pursued with a zeal which has had its rewards.

Since 1876, we have been forced to depart more and more from the broad highway of generalities, as outlined at first, in order to venture upon collateral roads which go on widening forever. Thus it happened that in order to satisfy all Theosophists and to trace the evolution of every religion, we had to circle the whole globe, beginning our pilgrimage at the dawn of the cycle of nascent humanity. These researches have led to a synthesis which has just been outlined in *The Secret Doctrine*, some portions of which will be translated in the present Journal. The doctrine is barely sketched in our two volumes, and yet the mysteries unveiled therein concerning the beliefs of prehistoric peoples, cosmogony and anthropology, have never been divulged until now. Certain dogmas, certain theories, clash therein with scientific theories, especially that of Darwin; contrariwise, they explain and clarify that which was to this day incomprehensible, and fill more than one gap which, *nolens volens*, was left void by orthodox science. We had to present these doctrines, such as they are, or else never broach the subject. He who dreads these infinite perspectives and who would try to shorten them by means of the shortcuts and suspension bridges artificially erected by modern science over these thousand and one gaps, would do better not to venture into the Thermopylae of archaic science.

Such has been one of the results of our Society, a very poor result, maybe, but one that will certainly be followed by other revelations, exoteric or purely esoteric. If we speak of this, it is to show that we do not preach any one religion in particular, leaving to every member complete and entire freedom to follow his own particular belief. The principal aim of our organization, which we are labouring to make a real

brotherhood, is fully expressed in the motto of The Theosophical Society and all of its official organs: "There is no religion higher than Truth." As an impersonal Society, we must seize the truth wherever we find it, without permitting ourselves more partiality for one belief than for another. This leads directly to a very logical conclusion: if we acclaim and receive with open arms all sincere truthseekers, there can be no place in our ranks for the vehement sectarian, the bigot, or the hypocrite, enclosed in Chinese Walls of dogma, each stone bearing the words: "No admission!" What place indeed could such fanatics occupy amongst us, fanatics whose religion forbids all inquiry and does not admit any argument possible, when the mother-idea, the very root whence springs the beautiful plant we call Theosophy, is known to be — absolute and unfettered liberty to investigate all the mysteries of Nature, human or divine!

With this exception, the Society invites everyone to participate in its activities and discoveries. Whoever feels his heart beat in unison with the great heart of humanity; whoever feels his interests are one with those of every being poorer and less fortunate than himself; every man or woman who is ready to hold out a helping hand to those who suffer; whoever understands the true meaning of the word "Egoism," is a Theosophist by birth and right. He can always be sure of finding sympathetic souls in our midst. Our Society is actually a sort of miniature humanity where, as in the human species at large, one can always find one's counterpart.

If we are told that in our Society the atheist elbows the deist, and the materialist elbows the idealist, we would reply: What does it matter? Be an individual a materialist, *i.e.*, one who would find in matter an infinite potency for creation or rather for the evolution of all terrestrial life; or be he a Spiritualist, endowed with a spiritual perception which the former does not have — in what way does this prevent the one or the other from being a good Theosophist? Moreover, the worshippers of a personal god or a divine Substance are much more materialistic than the Pantheists who reject the idea of a carnalized god, but who perceive the divine essence in every atom. Everyone knows that Buddhism does not recognize either one god or many gods. Yet the Arhat, for whom every atom of dust is as much replete with Svabhavat (plastic substance, eternal and intelligent, though impersonal) as he himself, and who strives to assimilate that Svabhavat by identifying himself with the All, in order to attain Nirvana, must travel the same painful road

of renunciation, of good works and of altruism, and must lead the same saintly life, though less egotistical in its motive, as the beatified Christian. What matters the passing form, if the goal to be attained is the same eternal essence, whether that essence manifests itself to human perception as substance, as an immaterial breath, or as *nothing*! Let us admit the Presence, whether called personal God or universal substance, and recognize a cause if we all see its effects. But these effects being the same for the atheist-Buddhist and for the deist-Christian, and the cause being invisible and inscrutable for the one as for the other, why waste our time in running after a shadow that cannot be grasped? When all is said, the greatest of materialists, as well as the most transcendental of philosophers, admit the omnipresence of an impalpable Proteus, omnipotent in its ubiquity throughout all the kingdoms of nature, including man; Proteus indivisible in its essence, and eluding form, yet appearing under all and every form; who is here and there and everywhere and nowhere; is All and Nothing; ubiquitous yet One; universal Essence binding, bounding, containing everything, contained in all. Where is the theologian who could go any farther? It is sufficient to recognize these truths, to be a Theosophist, for this recognition is tantamount to admitting that not only humanity — composed as it is of thousands of races — but everything that lives and vegetates, in short, everything that is, is made of the same essence and substance, is animated by the same spirit, and that, consequently, everything in nature, whether physical or moral, is bound in solidarity.

We have already said elsewhere, in *The Theosophist*, that “born in the United States of America the Theosophical Society was constituted on the model of its Mother Land.” The latter, as we know, has omitted the name of God from its Constitution, for fear, said the Fathers of the Republic, that the word might one day become the pretext for a State religion; for they desired to grant absolute equality to all religions under the law, so that each form would support the State, which in its turn would protect them all.

The Theosophical Society was founded on that excellent model.

At the present moment, its one hundred and seventy-three (173) Branches are grouped in several Sections. In India, these Sections are self-governing and provide for their expenses. Outside of India, there are two large Sections: one in America and the other in England (*American Section* and *British Section*). Thus, every Branch, like every member, being free to profess whatever religion and to study whatever

philosophy or science it prefers, provided all remain united in the tie of Solidarity or Brotherhood, our Society can truly call itself a "Republic of Conscience."

Though free to pursue whatever intellectual occupation pleases him the best, each member of our Society must, however, furnish some reason for belonging thereto, which amounts to saying that each member must contribute his part, small though it be, in mental or other labour for the benefit of all. If one does not work for others one has no right to be called a Theosophist. All must strive for freedom of human thought, for the elimination of selfish and sectarian superstitions, and for the discovery of all the truths that are within the reach of the human mind. That object cannot be attained with more certainty than by the cultivation of unity in intellectual labours. No honest worker, no earnest seeker can remain empty-handed, and there is hardly a man or woman, busy as they think themselves to be, incapable of laying their tribute, moral or pecuniary, on the altar of truth. The duty of Branch and Section Presidents will be henceforth to see to it that the Theosophical beehive is kept free from those drones which keep merely buzzing.

One word more. How many times have not the two Founders of The Theosophical Society been accused of ambition and autocracy! How many times have they not been reproached with an alleged desire to impose their will upon the other members! Nothing is more unjust. The Founders of the Society have always been the first and humblest servants of their collaborators and colleagues, always ready to help them with whatever feeble light they may have, and to uphold them in their struggle against the egoists, the indifferent and the sectarians; for such is the foremost struggle for which everyone must prepare himself who enters our Society which is generally misunderstood by the public. Moreover, the Reports published after every annual Convention are there to prove it. At our last anniversary, held at Madras in December 1888, important reforms were proposed and adopted. Anything that savoured of a pecuniary obligation ceased to exist, even the payment of the 25 francs for a diploma having been abolished. From now on, the Fellows are free to give what they like, if they have at heart to help and uphold the Society, or to give nothing at all.

In these circumstances and at the present moment of Theosophical history, it is easy to understand the purpose of a Journal exclusively devoted to the promulgation of our ideas. Therein we wish to point to new intellectual horizons, to outline unexplored routes leading to the

amelioration of humanity; to offer a word of consolation to all the disinherited of the earth, whether suffering from starvation of soul or from lack of physical necessities. We invite all great-hearted individuals who desire to respond to this appeal, to join with us in this humanitarian work. Each co-worker, whether a Fellow of the Society or simply a sympathizer, can help us to make of this Journal the only organ of true Theosophy in France. We are face to face with all the glorious possibilities of the future. This is again the hour of the great cyclic return of the rising tide of mystical thought in Europe. On every side we are surrounded by the ocean of universal science — the science of life eternal — bearing on its waves the forgotten and submerged treasures of vanished generations, treasures still unknown to the modern civilized races. The strong current which rises from the watery abyss, from the depths where lie the prehistoric learning and arts swallowed up with the antediluvian Giants — demigods, though but mere outlines of mortal men — that current strikes us in the face and murmurs: "That which has been still exists; that which has been forgotten, buried for aeons in the depths of the Jurassic strata, may reappear to view once more. Prepare yourselves."

Happy are those who can interpret the language of the elements. But where are they bound for whom the word element has no other meaning than that given to it by physics or materialistic chemistry? Will it be towards well-known shores that the surge of the great waters will bear them, when they have lost their footing in the deluge which is approaching? Will it be towards the peaks of a new Ararat that they will find themselves carried, towards the heights of light and sunshine, where there is a ledge on which to place the feet in safety, or perchance is it to a fathomless abyss that will swallow them as soon as they try to struggle against the irresistible billows of an unknown element?

We must prepare and study truth under every aspect, endeavouring to ignore nothing, if we do not wish to fall into the abyss of the unknown when the hour shall strike. It is useless to leave it to chance and await the intellectual and psychic crisis which is preparing, with indifference, if not with crass disbelief, saying that at the worst the rising tide will carry us naturally towards the shore; for it is very likely that the tidal wave will cast up nothing but a corpse. The strife will be terrible in any case between brutal materialism and blind fanaticism on the one hand, and philosophy and mysticism on the other — mysticism, that veil of more or less translucency which hides the eternal Truth.

But it is not materialism which will gain the upper hand. Every fanatic whose ideas isolate him from the universal axiom, "There is no religion higher than Truth" will see himself by that very fact rejected, like an unworthy stone from the new Archway called *Humanity*. Tossed by the waves, driven by the winds, reeling in that element which is so terrible because unknown, he will soon find himself engulfed.

Yes, it must be so and it cannot be otherwise, when the artificial and chilly flame of modern materialism is extinguished for lack of fuel. Those who cannot become used to the idea of a spiritual Ego, a living soul and an eternal Spirit within their material shell (which owes its illusory existence to those *principles*); those for whom the great hope of an existence beyond the grave is a vexation, merely the symbol of an unknown quantity, or else the subject of a belief *sui generis*, the result of theological and mediumistic hallucinations — these will do well to prepare for the worst disappointment the future could possibly have in store for them. For from the depths of the dark, muddy waters of materiality which, on every side, hide from them the horizons of the great Beyond, a mystic force is rising during these last years of the century. At most it is but the first gentle rustling, but it is a *super-human* rustling — "supernatural" only for the superstitious and the ignorant. The spirit of truth is passing now over the face of the dark waters, and in parting them, is compelling them to disgorge their spiritual treasures. This spirit is a force that can neither be hindered nor stopped. Those who recognize it and feel that this is the supreme moment of their salvation will be uplifted by it and carried beyond the illusions of the great astral serpent. The joy they will experience will be so poignant and intense, that if they were not mentally isolated from their bodies of flesh, the beatitude would pierce them like sharp steel. It is not pleasure that they will experience, but a bliss which is a foretaste of the knowledge of the gods, the knowledge of good and evil, and of the fruits of the tree of life.

But although the man of today may be a fanatic, a skeptic, or a mystic, he must become thoroughly convinced that it is useless for him to struggle against the two moral forces today unleashed and in supreme contest. He is at the mercy of these two adversaries, and no intermediary force is capable of protecting him. It is but a question of choice, whether to let himself be carried along without a struggle on the wave of mystical evolution, or to writhe against the reaction of moral and psychic evolution, and so find himself engulfed in the maelstrom of the new tide. At

the present time, the whole world, with its centers of high intelligence and human culture, its focal points of political, artistic, literary, and commercial life, is in a turmoil; everything is shaking and crumbling in its movement towards reform. It is useless to remain blind, it is useless to hope that anyone can remain neutral between the two contending forces; one has to choose either the one or the other, or be crushed between them. The man who imagines that he has chosen freedom, but who, nevertheless, remains submerged in that boiling cauldron, foaming with foul matter called social life, most terribly betrays his own divine Self, a betrayal which will blind that Self in the course of a long series of future incarnations. All of you who hesitate on the path of Theosophy and the occult sciences, who are trembling on the golden threshold of truth — the only one within your grasp, for all the others have failed you, one after another — squarely face the great Reality which is offered you. It is to mystics only that these words are addressed, for them alone have they any importance; for those who have already made their choice they are vain and useless. But you, Occultists, Kabbalists and Theosophists, you well know that a Word, old as the world, though new to you, has been sounded at the beginning of this cycle, and the potentiality of which, unperceived by others, lies hidden in the sum of the digits of the years 1889; you well know that a note has just been struck which has never been heard by mankind of this era; and that a New Idea is revealed, ripened by the forces of evolution. This Idea differs from everything that has been produced in the nineteenth century; it is identical, however, with the thought that has been the dominant tone and the keynote of every century, especially the last — absolute freedom of thought for humanity.

Why try to strangle and suppress what cannot be destroyed? Why struggle when there is no other choice than allowing yourselves to be raised on the crest of the spiritual wave to the very heavens, beyond the stars and the universes, or to be engulfed in the yawning abyss of an ocean of matter? Vain are your efforts to sound the unfathomable, to reach the ultimate of this wonderful matter so glorified in our century; for its roots grow in the spirit and in the Absolute; they do not exist, though they *are* eternally. This constant contact with flesh, blood and bones, the illusion of differentiated matter, does nothing but blind you; and the more you penetrate into the region of the impalpable atoms of chemistry, the more you will be convinced that they exist only in your imagination. Do you truly expect to find therein every Truth and every

reality of existence? For Death is at everyone's door, waiting to close it behind a beloved soul that escapes from its prison, upon the soul which alone has made the body a reality; how can eternal love associate itself with the molecules of matter which change and disappear?

But you are perhaps indifferent to all such things; how then can affection and the souls of those you love concern you at all, since you do not believe in the very existence of such souls? It must be so. You have made your choice; you have entered upon that path which crosses nothing but the barren deserts of matter. You are self-condemned to vegetate herein through a long series of existences. Henceforth, you will have to be contented with deliriums and fevers in place of spiritual perceptions, with passion instead of love, with the husk instead of the fruit.

But you, friends and readers, you who aspire to something more than the life of the squirrel everlastingly turning the same wheel; you who are not content with the seething of the cauldron whose turmoil results in nothing; you who do not mistake the deaf echoes, as old as the world, for the divine voice of truth; prepare yourselves for a future of which but few in your midst have dared to dream, unless they have already entered upon the path. For you have chosen a path that, although thorny at the start, soon widens out and leads you to the divine truth. You are free to doubt while still at the beginning of the way, you are free to decline to accept on hearsay what is taught respecting the source and the cause of that truth, but you are always able to hear what its voice is telling you, and you can always study the effects of the creative force coming from the depths of the unknown. The arid soil upon which the present generation of men is moving, at the close of this age of spiritual dearth and of purely material surfeit, has need of a divine omen above its horizon, a rainbow, as symbol of hope. For of all the past centuries our nineteenth has been the most criminal. It is criminal in its frightful selfishness, in its skepticism which grimaces at the very idea of anything beyond the material; in its idiotic indifference to all that does not pertain to the personal self, more than any of the previous centuries of ignorant barbarism and intellectual darkness. Our century must be saved from itself before its last hour strikes. For all those who see the sterility and folly of an existence blinded by materialism and ferociously indifferent to the fate of their neighbour, this is the moment to act; now is the time for them to devote all their energies, all their courage and all their efforts to a great intellectual reform. This reform can only be accomplished by Theosophy, and, let us add, by Occultism

or the wisdom of the Orient. The paths that lead to it are many; but the wisdom is one. Artistic souls envision it, those who suffer dream of it, the pure in heart know it. Those who work for others cannot remain blind to its reality, though they may not always recognize it by its name. Only light and empty minds, egotistical and vain drones, confused by their own buzzing, will remain ignorant of the supreme ideal. They will continue to exist until life becomes a grievous burden to them.

It must be distinctly remembered, however, that these pages are not written for the masses. They are addressed solely to those who are constitutionally able to comprehend them, to those who suffer, to those who hunger and thirst after some Reality in this world of Chinese Shadows. As for these, why should they not show themselves courageous enough to abandon their world of frivolous occupations, their pleasures above all and even their personal interests, except when those interests form part of their duties to their families or others? No one is so busy or so poor that he cannot create a noble ideal and follow it. Why then hesitate in clearing a path towards this ideal, through all obstacles, over every stumbling-block, every petty hindrance of social life, in order to march straight forward until the goal is reached? Those who would make this effort would soon find that the "strait gate" and the "thorny path" lead to the broad valleys of limitless horizon, to that state where there is no more death, because one feels oneself rebecoming a god! It is true that the first conditions required to reach it are an absolute disinterestedness, a boundless devotion to the welfare of others, and a complete indifference to the world and its opinions. In order to make the first step on that ideal path, the motive must be absolutely pure; not an unworthy thought must attract the eyes from the end in view, not a doubt or hesitation shackle the feet. There do exist men and women thoroughly qualified for this, whose only aim is to dwell under the aegis of their divine nature. Let them, at least, take courage to live the life and not conceal it from the eyes of others! No one else's opinion should be considered superior to the voice of one's own conscience. Let that conscience, therefore, developed to its highest degree, guide us in all the ordinary acts of life. As to the conduct of our inner life, let us concentrate our entire attention on the ideal we have set ourselves, and look *beyond*, without paying the slightest attention to the mud upon our feet. Those who are capable of making this effort are the true Theosophists; all others are but members, more or less indifferent, and very often useless.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

THEOSOPHICAL ENDEAVOURS

It is not the individual and determined purpose of attaining Nirvana — the culmination of all knowledge and absolute wisdom, which is after all only an exalted and glorious selfishness — but the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbour, to cause to benefit by it as many of our fellow creatures as we possibly can, which constitutes the true Theosophist.

—THE GREAT MASTER'S LETTER
(*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 33*)

MEN, even the most slothful of them, constantly make effort. The act and the endeavour begin at birth. They will end only at death.

The child strives to familiarize itself with the functions of its senses and organs. The young man puts in labour to train himself in the art of acquiring a keen intellect. The man of mature age looks back over his past performances and perchance tries to give a wholly different orientation to life. At each such effort his endeavours are centred on himself. The reasoning animal usually seeks its own felicity. This is endeavour in one of its aspects — one with which at any rate all human beings are familiar.

But there are motives for endeavour which do not necessarily revolve round oneself. The fanatic will go through torture and smile at it for what he considers to be right; he sacrifices his own well-being, prostrates and even immolates himself for unworthy causes and for the propagation of false beliefs and fragile ideologies. In such modes of endeavour, there is an underlying sacrifice — a readiness to suffer torture and a willingness to face death through undreamt of agonies. To the average man the act may appear laudable. To the thinker, it but portrays a waste and a sacrilege, because the goal aimed at and the means adopted are both of them a denial of universal brotherhood and of the true essence of charity. Such is yet another aspect of endeavour and definitely the more dangerous, since it seeks to subjugate human minds, to liquidate those who are not of one's fold, and to divide humanity into mutually warring camps. For such, Divinity is a mere word and Brotherhood is invoked in hypocrisy.

There is yet another aspect of endeavour which is relatively harmless. There are men who succumb to the urge to do good and rush into it without acquiring the necessary expertise. Their ideas of goodness

are coloured by the tints of a limited consciousness. Their concepts of charity and tolerance wax and wane with their own reactions towards men, matters and things. They judge another's necessity by their own limited standards, so that appearances come to be overvalued. They fail because the deeper insight into the hearts of men is not assiduously cultivated. They remain flowers without fragrance, or herbs that have lost the property which medicates and heals.

The resolve to do acts of self-sacrifice, the searching of the right modes by which such acts can be performed as also the proper selecting of those who are to be benefited by the acts, have all to be dwelt upon and consciously as well as cautiously envisaged. Many a hasty heart has rushed in either to keep up appearances, or to climb impressive heights, or even to impress somebody whose pleasure has a value and whose sympathy is the chief desideratum. It is well to remind oneself that, if the motivating force was generated in the regions of the lower mind (which itself is mortal), the effect of the sacrifice will not transcend its source and must under law end up on the perishable side of experience and effect. Each discerning inquirer will admit that at some time he has passed through one or the other of these phases.

Self-effacement and self-sacrifice have their motivations in thought and ideation, so that as the meaning of the "self" expands for the student, he finds that within him there are distinct layers of consciousness which can motivate sacrifice. But whatever be the stratum and source of energization, sacrifice becomes something more than the mere act of offering. It connotes an abnegation or a surrender of rights, rewards and dignities. It serves the weaker soul and strengthens and invigorates it to carry on its quest of the true, the good and the beautiful. Sacrifice is seemingly fraught with pain, yet is pleasurable. It is denuding oneself of something that is dear, and yet finds its moments of fulfilment in the joy, the freedom and the solace of another. And this is true even for that sacrifice which is initiated on the lowest plane of consciousness where the objective is to foster and promote human brotherhood. Each of the *Paramitas* needs for its growth and flowering such acts of loving sacrifice as the aspirant can visualize, plan and propel to action from such height of his own Self as he has gained. A selfless desire generated in the lower mind can be a stepping-stone to nobler heights. The inquirer can become the student, and the student, the practitioner, by constant assiduity in devotion.

To initiate a truly self-sacrificing endeavour it is necessary that the

initial preparatory work on oneself be undertaken. It requires, among other things, that the man canalize his time, money and work in the effort to overcome, control and master his own lower nature at all levels of its manifestation. This exercise is to be so undertaken that it does not harden him against those who stumble and fall and fail. It is a duty cast upon him that he fight his own lower nature and yet at the same time be charitable to all those who remain still under the domain of emotions and desires. Until this control is in some measure achieved, it would be risky for him to reach out his hands to help another overcome similar faults and foibles. It is true that in trying to reform himself he is putting in herculean efforts which to some may appear selfish. But these endeavours become invested with nobility for the reason that the forces that attend them are used to forge those divine weapons which are to be used in the cause of human brotherhood and the elevation of the race. Without this preliminary sacrifice of the self for the Self, no act of redemption is possible. The first act of "martyrdom" which the neophyte undertakes is ridicule and calumny and torture which he consciously invites when he tries to disentangle himself from his dark garments of illusion and writhes in the struggle to stifle the voice of the flesh.

When after great effort and untold suffering the man attains an equilibrium that no personal equation can shake, then is he fit to breathe the new atmosphere and view the world and himself from a higher eminence. He has climbed a plateau of thought and the view and perspective of once familiar sights assume new and significant dimensions. Friends and enemies, elders and erstwhile teachers, the favoured and the oppressed, are seen from a radically new angle and for the first time given appropriate values. The norms by which the higher mind judges are different.

It is only when the state of selflessness is attained (the higher mind can function and come into its own in such a state only) that the aspirant can invest his work with a new and hitherto unaccustomed force. To help one's neighbour on to the right path is laudable. But it is often painful to realize that help given in moments when unknowingly the lower mind is in control produces results which neither bless the one nor redound to the credit of the other.

Since for long years the neophyte has to continue to struggle against his own lower nature, it is but natural that he tries to seek avenues of Theosophical endeavours suited to his efforts as a beginner. If he has benefited aught from the philosophy, it becomes his act of gratitude to

pass on the knowledge to those who are in need of it. If this duty is faithfully performed, then the conjoint efforts of the whole body of students will be effective enough to check the progress of materialism, the increase of dangerous self-indulgence and the tendency of the many toward spiritual suicide. A concerted unselfish effort does not merely add up to a sum of the effort of each individual unit. Altruism is a tremendous force and once aroused in the consciousness of the masses is strong enough to shake continents. Such impersonal forces for good are powerless unless suitable channels in human material are made available for their expression. He who would be of the band of self-sacrificing volunteers has to take extra care that neither by word, act, thought or feeling he pushes a fellow-worker out of the charmed circle, or plants in his mind a seedling of doubt and despair. "Learn that you may teach, acquire spiritual knowledge and strength that the weak may lean upon you, and the sorrowing victims of ignorance learn from you the cause and remedy of their pain," was the advice given by a Master to a devoted pupil.

Finally, for the one in whose heart aspiration marks the beat, the following words of the Master will be found useful:

The degree of success or failure are the landmarks the Masters have to follow, as they will constitute the barriers placed with your own hands between yourselves and those whom you have asked to be your teachers. The nearer your approach to the goal contemplated — the shorter the distance between the student and the Master.

MISERY, sorrow and suffering have a mission. It is usually only the misery we bring upon ourselves that makes us stop doing wrong, to look around and ask and see what is right. It is by our mistakes we learn to see the difference between right and wrong, and in seeing that difference is the whole story of progress. *We have to be able to tell the difference.* It is only through "the opposites" — the perception of them and the employment of them — that any being can grow at all. There has always to be duality in nature.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

RANDOM NOTES FROM "THE THEOSOPHIST"

KARMA AND REINCARNATION

[In a letter to the Editor of *The Theosophist*, Gyanendra N. Chakravarty of Cawnpore wrote: "It is generally supposed that animals are not under the operation of the law of Karma, as applied to human beings. If so, how can we explain the difference between the position of an animal exposed to all the torments that can afflict sentient beings, whipped almost to death, starved out of existence, and that of another, enjoying all the luxuries of the material world, fed with the best of food and treated with extreme kindness? How again can the cases of animals born blind be explained? We do not actually mean to invest them with as much responsibility as human beings, but can they not be supposed to possess it in a far less degree? A solution from you on this point will go much towards elucidating our ideas on the subject." The editorial note appended to the letter states:]

The error often committed, is to mistake the general law of cause and effect for the law of merit and demerit. If we ask, why has one animal an easy life to lead and another a hard one, we might ask also, why is one tree cut down before it is grown up, while another tree is allowed to die of old age? Why is one pair of shoes made to adorn the feet of a lady in a ball-room, and another pair to be dragged through the mud by a boor? No one will maintain that minerals and plants have any moral responsibility. Neither have animals, children, idiots or the insane any such moral responsibility. This is a fact recognized by human legislation, and it was reserved for the ignorance of the 14th century to judicially try and punish animals according to a Jewish law laid down in *Exodus*, xxi. 28, which says: "If an ox gore a man or a woman that they die, the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten, but the owner of the ox shall be quit." According to that law, in 1386 the judge of Falaise condemned a sow to be mutilated in the leg and head, and afterwards to be hung, for having torn the face and arm of a child and then killing it. This was a Draconian infliction of punishment. This sow was executed in the public square, clothed in a man's dress.

The law of Karma is a moral law, and where no moral responsibility exists, there can be no application of the law of Karma, but the law of cause and effect applies to all departments of nature.

A celebrated writer says: "Suffering is heaven's divine medicine."

The law of *compensation* is also active in the animal world. A dog, that has to exercise its own sagacity to find food, will sooner develop psychological powers in that direction, than one that does nothing but eat and sleep, and the individual or differentiated monad of the former will sooner reach the condition necessary to enter the human kingdom. The rudiments of hope, patience, faith, fidelity, confidence, etc., are found in the animal kingdom. By putting them into exercise, they will become stronger, and as no effort in nature is ever lost, they will find their uses. If we understand the laws of the universe, we shall have no occasion to find fault with them, and become convinced of the uselessness to attempt to improve or correct Supreme Wisdom, or "God."

(June 1884)

[The following is extracted from an Editor's Note appended to an inquirer's query regarding the views of the Occultists on such works as those of Allan Kardec, and "what credit may be attached to the positive statements therein contained on such points as the existence of 'guardian angels,' the power of disembodied spirits to choose their own trials and mode of life on reincarnation."]

The Occultists do not accept the doctrine of "guardian angels," for reasons heretofore fully explained in these pages. They do, however, believe most firmly in the personal, *divine* spirit in man, the source of his inspiration and his all-sufficient "angel" and "guardian." Only adepts can choose their reincarnations, and even they are strictly limited in their choice by their responsibility to the inexorable law of Karma. According to his *Karma-phala*, or the aggregate consequences of his actions, is every man's rebirth and final escape, or emancipation, from the necessity for rebirth determined.

(August 1883)

[In his review of William Oxley's *Philosophy of Spirit*, T. Subba Row remarked: "The second proposition (there is no rebirth in the material human form, there is no retrogression at any time) is opposed to all the ancient traditions of Eastern nations and the teaching of all the Eastern adepts." An inquirer, who wrote to the Editor of *The Theosophist* taking exception to this, stated: "Unless I am mistaken, you have all along strenuously maintained it as one of the truths of occult philosophy that rebirth in a *lower* state is impossible, that there is no *going back* in the scale of existence, that 'nature invariably shuts the door behind her'; in other words,

that there is no retrogression. Exactly the proposition advanced by Mr. O. and objected to by Mr. S.R.! Will you or the learned reviewer kindly explain this?" To this H.P.B. appended the following note:]

We have "strenuously maintained" and still maintain that there is "no retrogression" in the dead-letter sense as taught by exoteric Hinduism — *i.e.*, that the rebirth of a man in the *physical* form of an animal was impossible on this earth. But, we never affirmed that there was no *moral* retrogression — especially in the interplanetary spheres; and that is what is combated by Mr. T. Subba Row, for Mr. Oxley means "retrogression" in that very sense, we believe.

(April 1883)

[B. R. NAIDU: "The Vedantists and some others are of this contradictions among philosophers as to the causes of suffering and misery. He expressed his opinion that this is a mystery to the most wise." Referring to the doctrine of Karma, as given in the *Puranas*, he said: "We are also taught that we are reborn in the forms of irrational beings and sometimes even of inanimate objects. If so, we will have to trace the causes for all these variations from the very beginning of the so-called creation... it is an absurdity to say that there were human or any other beings before the world's creation." H.P.B. commented:]

What is the religion which teaches such an absurdity as rebirth in an "inanimate form"? We do not believe in creation, or that the universe had ever a beginning. All changes form in it — itself was ever and will never pass. Those who understand what they read *will* find an explanation even in the Hindu Scriptures. Nor is there any absurdity to say that there were "beings" before the world's *creation*, since *our* world is certainly not the only one of its kind in the vast universe.

[B. R. NAIDU: "The Vedantists and some others are of this opinion, that the so-called Deity is diffused in and out of the universe; or, in other words, the universe itself is God, and God is the universe."]

Less learned than our correspondent — who strongly insisted to have the above questions published — we confess again our ignorance. None of the Vedantin sects, as far as we are acquainted with them, have ever taught that God was diffused "in and out of the universe," or that he pervaded it beyond its limits. First of all, the Vedantists cannot believe

in an *extra-cosmic* deity, since they teach that the universe is limitless and Parabrahm — infinite. We invite Vedantin Pandits to answer these assertions.

[B. R. NAIDU: "If such is the case, what other thing is there which can be regarded as quite distinct from that which is all in all in things animate and inanimate that can do *good or bad*, so as to create according to its deeds a *Karma*?"]

Nothing, of course. The universe is not only the outward garment, the *Maya*, or illusionary clothing of the deity — which, nevertheless, is present, as we understand it, in every atom of it — but the deity itself: Parabrahm *plus* Maya or Iswar.

[B. R. NAIDU: "The doctrine of Karma is quite current among most of the Pandits; and this is another puzzle for many."]

It is not the *absolute* that creates *Karma*, but the finite and sentient being evolved out of it, or the visible projection of a finite portion of this absolute. In other words, it is man, or matter in its highest state of perfection on earth — *matter plus* Brahm or the *absolute*. If we are wrong, we hope some learned Pandit will kindly correct us. *Half-learned* are not required.

[In connection with Karma, the writer asked to be enlightened as to the mystery of the differences of treatment meted out to the animals and even to inanimate objects, and said: "Abandoned deserts and hilly places are for a time turned into populous cities with splendid palaces and temples, and then again abandoned and left to re-become deserts, forests and dunghills. What kind of good or bad actions these pieces of stones, etc., could have committed to be treated so differently by men...?"]

With our best wishes and desire to help our esteemed correspondent in his dire perplexity, we are utterly unable to understand what he is driving at. What have the "deserts" and "dunghills," "palaces" and "forests" to do with *Karma*, or the destiny of man except as necessary *accessories*? It is the eternal fitness or unfitness of things, we should say, that turns the desert into a city, and *vice versa*. If he objects to the idea that the deity is everywhere, *i.e.*, omnipresent, and that, notwithstanding such a presence, men and things are not all alike honoured, happy, and miserable; then surely he cannot hope to receive an answer to such exhaustive a subject — the most abstruse and incomprehensible of puzzles for the philosophers of all and every age, namely, the *origin*

of good and evil — in a few editorial lines. Let him study occult philosophy, and, perhaps, he may be then satisfied. It is not the *Puranas* alone, when read in their dead-letter sense, that will yield nonsense. In the Bible we find the same incongruities. Jehovah curses the ground for the sake (*sin*) of Adam (*Genesis*, iii, 17), and the earth since then — suffers! And yet the Mosaic Bible yields out of its secret meaning the Kabala, the Occult Science of the Western Philosophers.

[B. R. NAIDU: “Moreover we are taught to regard the so-called God as all-good, all-wise, omnipresent, etc. If so, why should some men be poor; others sickly . . . etc.?”]

The Western Kabalists call Devil “the God reversed,” *Demon est Deus inversus*. The Eastern occultists do better: they reject such a god altogether.

(September 1882)

LIFE is a train of moods like a string of beads, and, as we pass through them, they prove to be many-coloured lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus.

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.

Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another, you have only an extemporaneous, half possession.

Love, which is the essence of God, is not for levity, but for the total worth of man.

The only reward of virtue is virtue; the only way to have a friend is to be one.

Life is a festival only to the wise. Seen from the nook and chimney-side of prudence, it wears a ragged and dangerous front.

Life itself is a bubble and a scepticism, and a sleep within a sleep.

Discontent is the want of self-reliance; it is infirmity of will.

—EMERSON

PATANJALA YOGA : MEDITATION

YOGA is one of the six systems of Indian Philosophy. Derived from the root “*Yuj*,” it means, literally, “to yoke,” *i.e.*, to achieve integration. “Blend thy Mind and Soul” is an instruction from the preceptor to the disciple.

The popular idea associated with Yoga is that of the practice of *Asanas* or postures, *Pranayama* or exercise of the breath, and such other physical practices. This is not by any means the complete content of the system. A broad distinction may be made between *Raja Yoga* and *Hatha Yoga*. Psycho-spiritual powers accrue by the mastery of *Raja Yoga*, whereas mere psycho-physical powers are developed by *Hatha Yoga*. In the former system, powers arise naturally, while in the latter, powers are derived at the expense of spiritual development.

Yoga is essentially mind-culture. Its aim is communion. Patanjali has at the outset stated that Yoga is *Chitta-Vritti-Nirodha*, *i.e.*, the hindering of the modifications of the thinking principle. (Book I, Aphorism 2)

Mind-culture is a highly refined process. It is not suppression or forcible control of the thought processes. It is regulation, direction. *Nirodha* is not a violent move to curb, stop, or check, but is rather a positive method of withdrawal. Whenever the mind turns, say, towards violence, the wise course would be to withdraw it so as to give it an altogether different direction. Hence Yoga is the practice of meditation as a means to spiritual liberation.

This meditation is called *Dhyana*, which is the sixth among the seven Paramitas of Perfection of *The Voice of the Silence*, and which “leads the Narjol toward the realm of Sat eternal and its ceaseless contemplation.” This is “a state of abstraction which carries the ascetic practising it far above this plane of sensuous perception and out of the world of matter.” In one of the Sanskrit *stotras* it is said that Yogis are able to perceive the divine in the *Dhyana* state where the contemplative mind is intent on divinity alone.

In Patanjali’s system, *Dhyana* is the penultimate step of the eight-fold method. A succinct analysis of the tendencies and proclivities, the ways and by-ways of mental energies is set forth in terse maxims. He speaks of *Smriti-Pravaha* (literally, a flood of memories), which is one of the modifications of the mind and is described as “the not letting go of an object that one has been aware of.” In his vast and varied ex-

periences, a human being has become aware of objects too numerous to be put into order. Unless he controls his thoughts, they "become an army, and bear him off a captive slave."

"Feel thyself ALL-THOUGHT, and yet exile all thoughts from out thy Soul," says *The Voice of the Silence*. The prescription to achieve one-pointedness (*Ekagrata*) is "*Abhyasa*" (constant practice) and "*Vairagya*" (dispassion). (Book I, Aphorism 12)

Thoughts are like a perennial stream. They are self-productive as also self-reproductive. Their normal tendency is to dwell on an object of desire or an inclination of the senses. If this tendency is not kept under check, it tightens the noose of bondage. The *Gita* speaks of the hundred cords of desire.

Ishwara (the Spirit in the body) has to be made the single object of meditation. "His name is OM" (Book I, Aphorism 27). By the constant practice of one-pointed meditation on such a universal truth, transformation becomes possible; the distinct cognition of the object selected for meditation is lost, and "meditation without a seed" is attained.

Ishwara is a spirit, untouched by troubles, works, fruits of works, or desires.

In *Ishwara* becomes infinite that omniscience which in man exists but as a germ. (Book I, Aphorisms 24 and 25)

"Mental deposits" are carried from life to life because of the force of desire which produced them. That mind alone which is well-disciplined by meditation "is destitute of the basis of mental deposits from works."

The *Bhagavad-Gita* may be termed a treatise on *Yoga-shastra* Superior to the man of austerities, superior to the man of learning, superior to the man of action is the Yogi who practises meditation. (Ch. vi, V. 46)

Identification of oneself with the joys and sorrows of others, treating pain and pleasure with equal-mindedness, is the hallmark of a *Yogi* (Ch. vi, V. 32). Yoga becomes the destroyer of pain for one who is moderate in eating and in recreation, temperate in action, and regulated in sleep and wakefulness. (Ch. vi, V. 17)

Deep within the consciousness of man surges a soul-force which opens up the splendour of omniscience. "Such is the Dhyana Path, the haven of the Yogi." From this state one evolves to the "Aryahata Path," which is the highest Path.

The Dhyana gate is like an alabaster vase, white and transparent; within there burns a steady golden fire, the flame of Prajna that radiates from Atma. (*The Voice of the Silence*)

Through meditation, the Yogi thus wins "superhuman knowledge and Deva-Wisdom."

THE SOUL is a composite thing (or entity), and therefore not necessarily permanent. Hence it may be destroyed. It is that which has in it the potentiality of immortality. To put it another way: There are body, soul, spirit. Of these three, spirit alone is immortal. Body we know is quickly proved to be impermanent and destructible. Soul is that which lying between body and spirit is the connecting bond. If the course of our many lives be persistently wicked, then at last the soul no longer can remain as such but is resolved into its original elements, becomes a part of unconscious nature, to coin a phrase, and no longer acts as the connecting bond. Now the very question raised implies that it is really spirit which causes it to be asked, for it cannot be body that loses soul nor soul that loses itself. This is approaching a great mystery which I am not capable of dealing with. All one can say is that the Monad — spirit — for its own purposes selects this connecting bond called soul, giving it thereby the chance to become consciously joined with spirit. If soul refuses to so join, there occurs what is called "loss of soul."

This soul so selected by spirit — I omit the article "the," since Spirit is one and not multiple — has a so-called immortality, so considered because its term of life as such is said to last through a whole manvantara, which is a period so inconceivably long that for our minds it is eternal. But it has an end in fact, and if by the close of that immense period the soul has not effected union with spirit, then the loss or destruction of soul as such takes place. Meanwhile during the manvantara the soul migrates from body to body and world to world in the eternal struggle to reach reunion with the divine. But such union may be attained long ages before the end of the manvantara by dispassion, discipline, and effort unremittingly continued.

—W. Q. JUDGE

“ISIS UNVEILED” PHENOMENA

The Tetraktys was not only principally honoured because all symphonies are found to exist within it, but also because it appears to contain the nature of all things.

—THEOS. OF SAMYRNA

BEFORE entering upon a recital of some of the phenomena mentioned in *Isis Unveiled* it would be appropriate to preface that recital with a warning. Any phenomenon, however astonishing, bizarre or inexplicable, is nevertheless produced under Law — never outside of it. There never were at any time, nor are there today, any miracles. They may be inexplicable because the laws under which they have been produced may not be known to the general run of men of our age. It would be wrong to assume that these laws were not known in the past (the Ancients were more learned in such matters than we are), or that they will continue to remain unknown in the future. The tendency of some scientists to say, “Science does not know of this, therefore it does not exist,” is a flagrant negation of the fundamental principles of scientific research.

Culled below are a few of the numerous phenomena that H.P.B. records:

I. Salverte gives a case in his *Philosophy of Occult Sciences*: “In 1568, the Prince of Orange condemned a Spanish prisoner to be shot at Juliers; the soldiers tied him to a tree and fired, but he was invulnerable. They at last stripped him to see what armour he wore, but found only an *amulet*. When this was taken from him, *he fell dead at the first shot.*” H.P.B. says in the preceding paragraph: “The astral fluid can be compressed about a person so as to form an elastic shell, absolutely non-penetrable by any physical object, however great the velocity with which it travels.” (I. 378-79)

II. “A few years ago [this was written in 1877] there lived in an African village an Abyssinian who passed for a sorcerer. Upon one occasion a party of Europeans, going to Soudan, amused themselves for an hour or two in firing at him with their own pistols and muskets, a privilege which he gave them for a trifling fee. As many as five shots were fired simultaneously, by a Frenchman named Langlois, and the muzzles of the pieces were not above two yards distant from the sorcerer’s breast. In each case, simultaneously with the flash, the bullet

would appear just beyond the muzzle, quivering in the air, and then, after describing a short parabola, fall harmlessly to the ground. A German of the party, who was going in search of ostrich feathers, offered the magician a five-franc piece if he would allow him to fire his gun with the muzzle touching his body. The man at first refused; but, finally, after appearing to hold conversation with somebody inside the ground, consented. The experimenter carefully loaded, and pressing the muzzle of the weapon against the sorcerer's body, after a moment's hesitation, fired . . . the barrel burst into fragments as far down as the stock, and the man walked off unhurt." (I. 379)

III. "There is in existence an official report, among others, which was sent to Rome by the ferocious Abbé Chayla, the prior of Laval, in which he complains that the *Evil One* is so powerful, that no torture, no amount of inquisitory exorcism, is able to dislodge him from the Cevennois. He adds that he closed their hands upon burning coals, and they were not even singed; that he had wrapped their whole persons in *cotton soaked with oil, and had set them on fire*, and in many cases did not find one blister on their skins; that balls were shot at them, and found flattened between the skin and clothes, without injuring them." (I. 370)

IV. In Figuiet's *Histoire du Merveilleux dans Temps Modernes*, the following occurs: "Toward the close of the 17th century, an old maid imports into Cevennes the spirit of prophecy. She communicates it to young boys and girls, who transpire it in their turn, and spread it in the surrounding atmosphere. . . . Men, women, and *babies* speak under inspiration, not in ordinary *patois*, but in the purest French — a language at that time utterly unknown in the country. Children of twelve months, and even less . . . who previously could hardly utter a few short syllables, spoke fluently, and prophesied. Eight thousand prophets were scattered over the country; doctors and eminent physicians were sent for. . . . Many of the prophets forcibly communicated their spirit to those who tried to break the spell. A great number of them were *between three and twelve years* of age; still others *were at the breast*, and spoke French distinctly and correctly." (I. 370-71)

V. "Abbé Paris was a Jansenist, who died in 1727. Immediately after his decease the most surprising phenomena of healing began to occur at his tomb. The churchyard was crowded from morning till night. . . . The wonders lasted for over twenty years. . . . Hume, in his *Philosophical Essays*, says: 'There surely never was so great a number of miracles ascribed to one person as those which were lately said to have been

wrought in France upon the tomb of the Abbé Paris. The curing of the sick, giving hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind, were everywhere talked of as the effects of the holy sepulchre. But, what is more extraordinary, many of the miracles were immediately proved *upon the spot*, before judges of unquestioned credit and distinction, in a learned age, and on the most eminent theatre that is now in the world.' ” (I. 372-73)

VI. Dr. Figuier quoting from the *procès verbaux* says: “A Convulsionaly bends back into an arc, her loins supported by the sharp point of a peg. The pleasure that she begs for is to be pounded by a stone weighing fifty pounds, and suspended by a rope passing over a pulley fixed to the ceiling. The stone, being hoisted to its extreme height, falls with all its weight upon the patient’s stomach, her back resting all the while on the sharp point of the peg. Montgeron and numerous other witnesses testified to the fact that neither the flesh nor the skin of the back were ever marked in the least, and that the girl, to show she suffered no pain whatever, kept crying out, ‘Strike harder — harder!’ ” (I. 373)

VII. “At the middle of the 19th century one of the most famous epidemics of possession broke out in Germany: that of the *Nonnains*, who performed all the miracles most admired since the days of St. Medard, and even some greater ones; who turned summersaults, who CLIMBED DEAD WALLS, and spoke FOREIGN LANGUAGES.” (I. 374)

VIII. “In addition to other travellers, the Abbé Huc gives us an account of that wonderful tree of Thibet called the *Kounboum*; that is to say, the tree of the 10,000 images and characters. It will grow in no other latitude and it cannot even be multiplied from cuttings. Says Abbé Huc: ‘Each of its leaves, in opening, bears either a letter or a religious sentence, written in sacred characters, and these letters are, of their kind, of such a perfection that the type-foundries of Didot contain nothing to excel them. Open the leaves, which vegetation is about to unroll, and you will there discover, on the point of appearing, the letters or the distinct words which are the marvel of this unique tree! Turn your attention from the leaves of the plant to the bark of its branches, and new characters will meet your eyes! Do not allow your interest to flag; raise the layers of this bark, and still OTHER CHARACTERS will show themselves below those whose beauty had surprised you. For, do not fancy that these superposed layers repeat the same *printing*. No, quite the contrary; for each lamina you lift presents to view its distinct type.’ ” (I. 440)

IX. In a certain Lamasery in Thibet there is a picture which the Abbé Huc describes. “It is a simple canvas without the slightest mechanical apparatus attached. . . . It represents a moon-lit landscape, but the

moon is not at all motionless and dead; quite the reverse, for, according to the Abbé, one would say that our moon herself, or at least her living double, lighted the picture. Each phase, each aspect, each movement of our satellite, is repeated in her *facsimile*, in the movement and progress of the moon in the sacred picture. 'You see this planet in the painting ride as a crescent, or full, shine brightly, pass behind the clouds, peep out or set, in a manner corresponding in the most extraordinary way with the real luminary.' " (I. 441)

X. "Sanang Setzen," says Colonel Yule (*Book of Ser Marco Polo*, Vol. I, pp. 306, 307) "enumerates a variety of the wonderful acts which could be performed through the *Dharani* (mystic Hindu charms). Such were sticking a peg into solid rock; restoring the dead to life; turning a dead body into gold; penetrating everywhere *as air does* (in astral form); flying; catching wild beasts with the hand; reading thoughts; making water flow backward; eating tiles; sitting in the air with the legs doubled under, etc." Old legends ascribe to Simon Magus precisely the same powers. "He made statues to walk; leaped into the fire without being burned; flew in the air; made bread of stones; changed his shape; assumed two faces at once; converted himself into a pillar; caused closed doors to fly open spontaneously; made the vessels in a house move of themselves, etc." (I. 471)

XI. Here is a phenomenon witnessed by H.P.B. She says: "We were taken to visit the pilgrims by a Buddhist friend, a mystical gentleman born at Kashmir, of Katchi parents, but a Buddha-Lamaist by conversion, and who generally resides at Lha-Ssa. 'Why carry about this bunch of dead plants?' inquired one of the Bhikshuni, an emaciated, tall and elderly woman, pointing to a large nosegay of beautiful, fresh and fragrant flowers in the writer's hands. 'Dead?' we asked inquiringly. 'Why, they just have been gathered in the garden!' 'And yet, they are dead,' she gravely answered. 'To be born in this world, is this not death? See, how these herbs look when alive in the world of eternal light, in the gardens of our blessed Foh!' Without moving from the place where she was sitting on the ground, the Ani took a flower from the bunch, laid it in her lap, and began to draw together, by large handfuls as it were, invisible material from the surrounding atmosphere. Presently, a very, very faint nodule of vapour was seen, and this slowly took shape and colour, until, poised in mid-air, appeared a copy of the bloom we had given her. Faithful to the last tint and the last petal it was, and lying on its side like the original, but a thousandfold more gorgeous in hue

and exquisite in beauty, as the glorified human spirit is more beautiful than its physical capsule. Flower after flower to the minutest herb was thus reproduced and made to vanish, reappearing at our desire, nay, at our simple thought." (II. 609-10)

XII. "At Buddha-lla, or rather Foht-lla (Buddha's Mount), in the most important of the many thousand lamaseries of that country, the sceptre of the Boddhisgat is seen floating, unsupported, in the air, and its motions regulate the actions of the community. Whenever a lama is called to account in the presence of the Superior of the monastery, he knows beforehand it is useless for him to tell an untruth; the 'regulator of justice' (the sceptre) is there, and its waving motion, either approbatory or otherwise, decides instantaneously and unerringly the question of his guilt." (II. 616-17)

XIII. H.P.B. relates a phenomenon that took place in a Buddhist Vihara and was personally witnessed by her along with other members of a small party journeying from Kashmir to Leh. "On the appointed afternoon, a baby being brought to the Vihara, was placed on a bit of carpet in the middle of the floor. . . . Then all the lamas seated themselves on the floor, so that each was separated from the child by a space, at least, of ten feet. The chief seated himself at the farthest corner. . . . The only condition exacted of us was that we should preserve a strict silence, and patiently await further developments. . . . Gradually the 'Superior' fell into what seemed a state of profound meditation, while the others, after a *sotto voce* short invocation, became suddenly silent, and looked as if they had been completely petrified. It was oppressively still, and the crowing of the child was the only sound to be heard. After we had sat there a few moments, the movements of the infant's limbs suddenly ceased, and his body appeared to become rigid. The Superior, with his gaze fixed upon the ground, did not even look at the infant; but, pale and motionless, he seemed rather like a bronze statue of a Talapoin in meditation than a living being. Suddenly, to our great consternation, we saw the child, not raise itself, but, as it were, violently jerked into a sitting posture! A few more jerks, and then, like an automaton set in motion by concealed wires, the four months' baby stood upon his feet! . . . Not a hand had been outstretched, not a motion made, nor a word spoken; and yet, here was a baby-in-arms standing erect and firm as a man!"

H.P.B. gives the rest of the story from the notes written down by one member of the travelling party: "After a minute or two of hesitation,

the baby turned his head and looked at me with an expression of intelligence that was simply awful! It sent a chill through me. I pinched my hands and bit my lips till the blood almost came, to make sure that I did not dream. But this was only the beginning. The miraculous creature, making, *as I fancied*, two steps toward me, resumed his sitting posture, and, without removing his eyes from mine, repeated, sentence by sentence, in what I supposed to be Thibetan language, the very words, which I had been told in advance, are commonly spoken at the incarnations of Buddha, beginning with 'I am Buddha; I am the old Lama; I am his spirit in a new body,' etc. I felt a real terror; my hair rose upon my head, and my blood ran cold. For my life I could not have spoken a word. There was no trickery here, no ventriloquism. The infant lips moved, and the eyes seemed to search my very soul with an expression that *made me think it was the face of the Superior himself*, his eyes, his very look that I was gazing upon. It was *as if his spirit had entered the little body, and was looking at me through the transparent mask of the baby's face*. I felt my brain growing dizzy. The infant reached toward me, and laid his little hand upon mine. I started as if I had been touched by a hot coal; and, unable to bear the scene any longer, covered my face with my hands. It was but for an instant, but when I removed them, the little actor had become a crowing baby again, and a moment after, lying upon his back, set up a fretful cry. The superior had resumed his normal condition, and conversation ensued." (II. 601-2)

THERE ARE, indeed, great artists who express only themselves.
But the greatest of all are those whose hearts beat for all men.

—ROMAIN ROLLAND

LONELY MUSINGS

III

[Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, April 1886.—EDS.]

TRULY the path is as a razor's edge, hard to tread; for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life. The world is ever attacking us on one side, seducing us on another, and who can always keep his thoughts in the celestial region? Even while we are yet enduring the torture that has taught us to look beyond these things of the senses for our final peace, the deep despair that levels all things to its own hideous deformity may enter our souls, and make us cry vainly to death to free us from our pains; or the demon of rage may seize us — rage at the continuance of our apparently unmerited suffering — and tear us, till we curse all the powers of heaven and earth in our madness with a concentrated bitterness of soul that only those who have experienced it can realize. And though we know by absolute conviction that there can be no immediate liberation from our past Karma, and that it must be worked out to the sweet or the bitter end through innumerable incarnations, the doubtings of Lucretius still come back to our memory with almost a wish that his suggested solution might be practicable — doubtings whether man's best hope might not be to quench in annihilation his insatiable longings and his deep despair.

Or again we are relieved from our pains, and again the sun shines in a clear sky. Then do the smiles of our friends carry to our souls a still more subtle poison; for we are led to fancy that the life we so lately scorned and hated is still worth living, and the infinite possibilities of the future gleam in radiating colours as love again begins to lift her gauzy veil. So do our imaginations run on weaving the old unreal dreams. What help is there for natures so crossed and traversed by passion? They have slept and dreamed in the arms of lust, and though, when awakened, they have seen and fled from her deformity, it seems as though she were again able to assume for them the mask of beauty; they have gazed into the abysses of hate, and have indeed recoiled from their awful depths, but a power again urges them to the brink. After having gone over the whole gamut of the sense-passions and forsworn them, again the passions show their mastery, drawing as with a magnet.

What hope for one who lives in so fluctuating a state of mind, and is unable to keep his soul in equilibrium? How can he expect to attain to

passionless tranquillity — the very antithesis of his present state?

Krishna answers Arjuna, "Let him regain his kingdom." Let him turn the very passion of his nature to the contest and he will conquer. Let him oftener and oftener lift his mind to the celestial regions and he will be reinvigorated by some reflex from the great souls who dwell there. Let him conquer tranquillity by fervency of spirit.

One who realizes this difficulty of controlling the heart and who desires to rid himself of these constant fluctuations of feeling should pursue his search in a systematic manner and the following rules may be taken as guides:

1st. Read the holy books — read them though the heart may be cold and torpid, and if indeed the slothful and despairing quality of *Tamas* be at the moment paramount, there is all the greater necessity to end its reign, for all the three qualities alternately dominate us, and the slow steady progress towards perfection is only made permanent by arousing the nature when invaded by the sloth of *Tamas*, and refusing to allow it to sink into the stagnation of lethargy; by restraining it when dominated by the passion of *Rajas*, until the duration of control by these evil forces is gradually lessened, and the nature tends more and more to permanence in the tranquillity of *Satwam*.

And out of that tranquillity shall rise
 The end and healing of his earthly pains,
 Since the will governed sets the soul at peace.
 The soul of the ungoverned is not his,
 Nor hath he knowledge of himself; which lacked,
 How grows serenity? and, wanting that,
 Whence shall he hope for happiness?

Read the holy books of all ages and all peoples. The Vedas, the Dhammapada, the Bible, the Zend Avesta and the Koran, whichever is found by practical experience to have most effect on the life, for we are all governed by our emotions and require different influences. But above and before all read the Song Celestial of the heavenly Krishna.

2nd. Attend to any conversation about spiritual things you may have the opportunity of hearing — attend to it whether you understand it fully or not, whether it is to you a mere statement of truisms, or whether, as is more likely, its metaphysical philosophy seems to soar above your head. Store in your memory whatever you can grasp, for a time will come when you will understand more fully, and your future progress will be facilitated by what you may now learn.

3rd. Realize as fully as possible the current opinions about duty in the society and nation in which you have been born and brought up. However much you may have — or think you have — transcended the ordinary current notions of morality, the study and comparison of the opinions of others is a necessary part of your education. The reader may here remark that this is as it were the prelude or commencement of that “intelligent looking into the hearts of men,” which is one of the rules laid down for those who desire to ascend the ladder of Jacob, though its complete attainment it need scarcely be said is impossible, till many of the rungs have been passed. This purely intellectual comparison of opinions from one’s own standpoint might seem at first sight unnecessary compared with personal advance in holiness, but the student cannot too soon grasp the idea that for the attainment of perfection the whole nature must be cultivated equally, and the fewer readjustments of equilibrium that may subsequently be required, the swifter and steadier will be his progress.

4th. Act so as to give yourself only satisfaction. This, the fourth rule in the descending scale, deals more especially with the physical nature. Act so as never to incur the upbraidings of conscience. Should experience have taught that any act is followed by inward shame — avoid that act in future. And as the whole nature develops, conscience develops also. What might previously have been done without a qualm, will now evoke the stings of shame, for as the standard becomes more exalted, so will the inward pressure become more severe till we make the outer accord with the inner. So the traveller along the narrow way pursues its course after untold failures in the innumerable diverging paths which have been tried and found misleading. Yes, conscience is indeed the ever sharpened goad, that will never let us rest — it is turned into an instrument of torture when in our waverings we are led to embrace a lower life, but it is the surest guarantee of our Godhead, and contains in itself the potency of all progress.

—PILGRIM

HOLINESS is an infinite compassion for others... greatness is to take the common things of life and walk truly among them... happiness is a great love and much serving.

—OLIVE SCHREINER

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

In her very first monumental work, *Isis Unveiled*, H.P.B. furnished vast evidence to show that psychic phenomena have been well attested for long ages, in all parts of the world, and she gives us an understanding of the laws that pertain to the invisible world and that underlie its visible manifestations. Further, in Theosophical literature we are told that in this century an interest in psychism would again manifest, as it did in the last century. It is interesting to note how the once derided psychic phenomena are now becoming subjects of scientific investigation. According to Stanley Krippner, a distinguished Psi professional, for many years psychic researchers "have been the outcasts of science. Fortunately, this is changing because of recent improvements in experimentation."

In the December *Reader's Digest* (Indian ed.), Dr. Laile Bartlett, a sociologist who has taught at the University of Washington and at the University of California at Berkeley, gives a résumé of how much present-day investigators know about psychic phenomena:

The world of Psi (psychic phenomena) — or ESP (extra-sensory perception), as it is often popularly known... has been blocked off from us by our conditioning. For decades we've been taught that what is "real" is only what our five senses perceive. Today some scientists tell us that Psi is our new frontier. They see a future world where we can be in instant touch with others around the globe, hurdle time and space with a leap of the mind, know the future and past as well as the present, and cure our own ills through the power of the mind....

Because the whole field is on trial, serious Psi researchers are superstrict in their methods, and conservative in their professional reporting. None the less, from their experiments here's what we do know:

People can and do communicate by means other than the five senses: telepathy.... People can and do pick up information on remote or hidden objects, persons or events: clairvoyance.... People can and do sense what is going to happen before it takes place: precognition.... People can and do move or affect objects, even distant ones, without touching them: psychokinesis....

With so much evidence now established concerning these four Psi or ESP phenomena, what about the scientific search for conditions under which they operate? Some discoveries so far:

1. Distance doesn't seem to matter. ESP has been recorded in the same room, and from outer space.

2. People who believe in ESP, or want it to work, usually do better at it.

3. People who feel close to each other appear to communicate better.

4. Shock events, such as accidents and disasters, come through — or at least are reported — much more often than neutral or happy ones.

5. ESP is more effective in altered states of consciousness such as deep relaxation, hypnosis and sleep. Most of the reported cases of precognition occur in dreams.

In some areas, there is less scientific consensus: Do psychic healers really heal? What about reincarnation? Is there such a thing as an "out-of-body" experience? . . .

On one thing numerous authorities agree: everyone has some degree of Psi. In not too many people, however, has the power begun to surface, and experts caution against trying to force it. California clinical psychologist Allan Cohen points out, "There are at least 2,000 documented cases of individuals needing psychological help, because of symptoms caused by prematurely and forcibly trying to develop psychic powers." Ernest Pecci, whose psychiatric speciality is "salvaging psychic casualties," warns against pushing into the unknown Psi jungle without guides and help. We must avoid phoney gurus, drug-induced "trips," and take our cues from serious scientists.

We may not know exactly *what* Psi is, or exactly *how* it works, but we do know *that* it works. And as pragmatists we are already employing it: in detective work . . . in locating resources . . . in health work. Psychic healings may become commonplace someday. . . .

Beyond all this, Psi presents us with hints of a universal unity. Individual consciousness, it would appear, is part of a consciousness we all share. Each of us is part of everyone and everything in the universe. "Thou canst not stir a flower without troubling of a star," as visionary-poet Francis Thompson put it.

The deeper the psychic scientist probes, the closer he comes to the mystical religious vision. The Unity, the One, is the central concept and experience of all mysticism.

And the more the physicist, traditional defender of materialist science, dissects physical reality, the closer he edges towards that

same view. Quantum physicist Max Planck noted that it is impossible to obtain an adequate version of the laws we are seeking unless the physical system is regarded as a whole. . . .

People were aghast when Copernicus proclaimed that the earth circles the sun. But the new view won out. We may be at another such turning point today. In the words of Willis Harman of Stanford Research Institute: "Psychic research in the next few decades may be destined to have an impact comparable to the impact a few centuries ago of Galileo and Copernicus. I call it the Second Copernican Revolution."

Although there is no dearth of well-authenticated cases of spontaneous ESP, investigators have little to offer by way of explanation. There are, for instance, people who learn in a dream, or, when wide awake, "just know" that a close relative or friend is in danger, or is having trouble, or has just died; or that an event, pleasant or unpleasant, is going to happen in the future, either near or far. Some have the faculty of knowing what a person is going to say before he says it, or knowing if someone is coming to their home before he comes. Such faculties are possessed by many apparently ordinary persons, though some seem to have them innately developed to a greater extent than others.

Just how does a person get information that has not been obtained *via* the senses or by such mental processes as memory, reasoning, inference, or guessing? Psychic phenomena are inexplicable without the understanding of the Astral Light as a medium, and of the corresponding astral senses in man capable of functioning independently of the physical ones. If researchers would take as a working hypothesis this ancient concept, they would advance by leaps and bounds in the understanding of these phenomena instead of at a snail's pace. As Madame Blavatsky has said,

... the whole issue of the quarrel between the profane and the esoteric sciences depends upon the belief in, and demonstration of, the existence of an astral body within the physical, the former independent of the latter. (The Secret Doctrine, II. 149)

Thought transference, clairvoyance, clairaudience, communications from a recently deceased person, dreams of premonition and warning for oneself or others who are unable to be impressed themselves, "providential escapes" — all defy explanation on materialistic lines, but the philosophy and psychology of the ancient scientists, as restated in *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, offer clues to the understanding of

their rationale. In the progress of psychical research we seem to see the beginning of the fulfilment of H.P.B.'s prophecy, made in April 1881:

If we but wait with patience we shall see . . . occult phenomena . . . duly taken inside the domain of exact science and men will be wiser.

Cases involving a child's apparent use of extra-sensory perception are numerous, and these youngsters who "know" and "see" things that their elders cannot readily explain are often ridiculed or punished for what they say. Perhaps because they are naturally open-minded about it, because they have not learned yet from adults to be skeptical about such things, many children seem able to demonstrate ESP consistently. Investigators in the growing field of parapsychology, as psychic research has come to be known, suggest that we look at everyday family situations for evidence. Some of them even cite examples from their own homes.

In an article in *McCall's* for April 1977, adapted from the book, *Psychic Children*, the author, Samuel H. Young, cites documented cases of spontaneous ESP involving children who seem to know what their parents are thinking. While these are day-to-day occurrences in many families, there are children whose psychic powers are far from "ordinary."

A young teenager, Angela McGahren, if told a person's name, age and place of residence, is often able to get accurate impressions about that person, regardless of how far away he or she is. Another striking instance is that of an eight-year-old girl who can see colours around people — "a kind of fluid, multi-hued field" — and from this can tell a person's mood. Another girl, Linda, during an elementary-school tour, stunned a museum guide by explaining in accurate detail the contents of a re-created 16th-century French room — from what she felt were memories of having lived in that time. And there was Ray Stanford who, during an extraordinary childhood in south Texas, had true dreams of the future, could find lost objects around his home, and sometimes had accurate impressions about other people's illnesses before any external symptoms appeared. Yet another psychic child, Jenny, could foretell future events, send telepathic communications to family members in various emergencies, and get correct answers to complex math questions for which she could not do the computation.

Significantly, few of these are isolated cases. There are other children around the world whose abilities or experiences in these and

other aspects of psychic perception are remarkably similar. The book *Psychic Children*, as the author explains, is meant precisely to make available for elders some necessary information and guidance on the subject, for in some families youngsters having psychic perception have been looked upon as freaks and have had to suffer anguish because of lack of understanding on the part of their parents and elders. In the 1960s parapsychologists were at long last given professional recognition by the scientific establishment, but they still must battle to gain credibility in some minds. However, there seems to be a greater acceptance and understanding of Psi phenomena each year.

Psi finds its best expression [the author observes] when it is but a tool, not an end in itself. From what I have observed, when being psychic or raising a psychic child becomes a person's primary goal, the ability to produce Psi may actually decline: The ego swells, and the spontaneity of psychic functioning is inhibited by self-consciousness or apprehension. "Growing up psychic," after all, does not mean the development of just one aspect of the child, but growth of the child's total being.

ESP, or Psi, is a total response of the organism without a localized sense-organ of reception. The fact, however, that no physical sense-organ is involved does not rule out the use of the astral, which are the real, senses. Official scientific recognition of the possibility of acquiring knowledge by other than physical means will open up the recognition of the subtler worlds which Theosophy teaches are interblended with our own. Telepathy and reading in the Astral Light things past or present or to come, are among the powers once patent and still latent in all men. But between such fleeting snatches of untrustworthy vision and the true, unfailing clairvoyance of the spiritual Sage the gulf is wide indeed. It can never be fully bridged in the psychological laboratory.

An unusual international conference on "Human Priorities" took place at Palma de Mallorca, Spain. Its aim was to see to what extent, and in which possible directions, humankind could benefit from the progress of science, philosophy, medicine, psychology and parapsychology, in order to face and to overcome its present critical situation. (*Parapsychology Review*, September-October 1977)

An interesting feature of the conference was the absence of programme or prepared papers. There was not even any chairman or

moderator. The participants sat around a table for five days, freely exchanging ideas. They came from different areas of knowledge, including physics, psychiatry and allied fields, medicine, biochemistry, and healing. All the participants felt that in the face of many convergent aspects of modern scientific research, a "materialistic" philosophy can no longer be defended. It was particularly significant to hear this decisive statement from the foremost representative of pure science at the conference, physicist Henry Margenau.

Great attention, particularly in the second part of the conference, was devoted to the relationship between doctors (or psychotherapists) and their patients. Experiments have shown that the healing "power" has an influence even if the therapist is perceptually unaware of it. In one experiment, a pharmaceutical firm gave two boxes of identical-looking pills to a doctor, and he was told that while one set of pills contained a certain medicine, the others were placebos. The results confirmed the expectations: they were very good when the pills the doctor had been told contained the specific medicine were used, mediocre although not absent with the placebos. But the doctor was most astonished when at the end of the experiment, after the submission of his report, he was informed that *both* boxes had contained nothing but placebos!

Here is proof that in many conditions the most potent therapeutic agent is the doctor himself, and he can often get good results with whatever he prescribes — more so if he shares the patient's belief that the treatment is effective. If there is a good relationship between doctor and patient, the substance prescribed is infused with a virtue not naturally its own, and the wise doctor knows this.
