

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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## WILLIAM QUAN JUDGE A PERFORMER OF GOOD WORKS

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—EDS.]

THE SPRING EQUINOX seems related in some way to the death of W. Q. Judge. His passing away on the 21st of March, 1896, appears significant to the student of the Esoteric Wisdom. Next to his teacher and colleague P.B., William Quan Judge emerged in H.P.B.'s Movement as the greatest of the Esotericists of his age in the public world — a profound scholar of the Secret and Sacred Science who fired many noble hearts to serve the Theosophical Movement inaugurated in 1875 in the city of New York. There have been expounders of Theosophy whose style of speaking was more polished, whose lips were more eloquent, whose deeds were more indefatigable. But he was a reader of men's hearts and knew their depths. This he did in his own very peculiar way: from his loving heart streamed forth the radiance of his Soul's light. It reached all who came in contact with him, but most make-ups were such that only the shallow surface was affected. Many among them were touched in their psychic goodness and such became his affectionate admirers. Among these were some whose minds also were penetrated by Judge's radiance and they admired and praised his knowledge and spoke reverently of his noble character in which gentleness and patience dominated. But Mr. Judge's light penetrated the real hearts of the people who became as those newly born.

In his own personal life W. Q. Judge worked with his Soul's strength, and those who knew him intimately were amazed at his power to turn poverty into richness, darkness into light. His love saw, understood and helped many, and most of them did not even know how he served them.

W. Q. Judge was a performer of Good Works — a true *Karmayogi*. His deeds hid his knowledge as well as his devotion. His patience hid his strength. His gentleness hid the Divinity of Being. His mental charity was so profound that his visible charities looked small. Only in casting off his mortal body did he reveal the meaning of the Spring Equinox.

The Spring Equinox symbolizes Resurrection. The gods, who are beings of Light, express their radiance in the renovation of Nature. But we often forget that the aspect of death is hidden in the joy of resurrection. Without death there can be no birth and rebirth. Human beings are not always able to perceive the brightness and colourful balm of Spring as the work of the renovating gods, who die somewhere to offer in sacrifice to mortals this joy of birth.

Can it be that W. Q. Judge performed his last bodily act in the spirit of a Silent Teacher, demonstrating to those who have eyes to see that Sacrifice in Death — Death that implies Resurrection?

Such a line of meditation makes one seek for an appropriate message from Judge's teachings. This man of action, who performed deeds inspired by Wisdom and energized by the *Prana* of *Bhakti*, the Energy of Devotion, what did he say about Karma — the Law which compensates by Death all whom It brings to birth, which renovates what It destroys, resurrects what It crucifies? How can one work with that Law? Mr. Judge's teachings on that subject seem most appropriate to quote on this occasion:

To the worldly man Karma is a stern Nemesis, to the spiritual man Karma unfolds itself in harmony with his highest aspirations. He will look with tranquillity alike on past and future, neither dwelling with remorse on past sin nor living in expectation of reward for present action.

But how is one to achieve this?

The *manas* (mind) is the knot of the heart; when that is untied from any object, in other words when the mind loses its interest in any object, there will no longer be a link between the Karma connected with that object and the individual.

But how can this Gordian knot be cut? Only a man, a *Nara*, can do it successfully. To achieve this we must become Listeners. Says W. Q. Judge:

... Arjuna, called Nara, represents not only Man as a race, but also any individual who resolves upon the task of developing

his better nature. What is described as happening in the poem [the *Gita*] to him will come to every such individual. Opposition from friends and from all the habits he has acquired, and also that which naturally arises from hereditary tendencies, will confront him, and then it will depend upon how he listens to Krishna, who is the Logos shining within and speaking within, whether he will succeed or fail.

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EVERY IMPULSE from above, every prompting of the Divine within, should meet at once with a hearty welcome and response. If you feel as if something urged you to visit some sick or afflicted neighbour or friend, obey the suggestion without delay. If the wish to turn over a new leaf comes into the lower consciousness, don't wait till next New Year's before actually turning it over; turn it now. If some pathetic story of suffering has moved you, act on the emotion while your cheeks are still wet with tears. In short, put yourself at once in line with the Divine ways, in harmony with the Divine laws. More light, more wisdom, more spirituality must necessarily come to one thus prepared, thus expectant. How can a bar of iron be permeated with the earth's magnetism if it is placed across instead of in line with the magnetic meridian? How can a man expect spiritual gifts or powers if he persists in ignoring spiritual conditions, in violating spiritual laws? To obtain the good, we must think good thoughts; we must be filled with good desires; in short we must *be* good.

And this practical suggestion is to fulfil faithfully and conscientiously every known duty. It is in and through the incidents of daily life, in work well done, in duties thoroughly performed, that we today can most readily make progress in the higher life — slow progress, it may be, but at any rate sure. These are stepping stones to better things. We advance most rapidly when we stop to help other wayfarers. We receive most when we sacrifice most. We attain to the largest measure of Divine love when we most unselfishly love the brethren. We become one with the Supreme most surely when we lose ourselves in work for Humanity.

—W. Q. JUDGE

## THE APPROACH TO KARMA

The good is one thing; the pleasant is another. These two differing in their ends, prompt to action.

—*Kathopanishad*

IN her *Key to Theosophy*, Madame Blavatsky affirms that humanity can be bound into one family, one Universal Brotherhood. This, she says, can be made possible, and social amelioration brought about, by an understanding, among other principles, of the Law of Karma. Therefore, in all forums where Theosophy is taught and promulgated, the subject of Karma is given its due importance. That Karma is an unerring law which is inviolate and which therefore carries its own nemesis is readily accepted and understood. But what is often passed over and not given its due importance is that Karma is *intelligent*. This attribute is not to be taken in a poetical or a rhetorical sense. The intelligence aspect is a fact which has to be proved to oneself and then adopted as a vital factor which shapes life and life's destiny.

If a wrong is done, Karma will devise the most appropriate means to restore the broken harmony and right the wrong. In so doing, it will choose the right moment for precipitation and will make adjustments for the motives, the ignorance, the venom or the innocence that lay behind the act and motivated it. The hidden motive, the covert sacrifice, the veiled malice, the secret generosity and the calculated deceit are recognized and evaluated by the open eye of Karma. This much, sincere students of the oriental philosophy are expected to know. And yet, when nemesis lays its heavy hand on them, they often find themselves unprepared. They have neglected to build up a stamina that will make them accept willingly the bitter lessons that Karma may administer to them. Faced with unpleasantness, ruin, injustice and humiliation, they react to the hurt, and thus fail to see in each such circumstance the majestic and awesome sweep of Karma. Blinded by their suffering, incapacitated by their ignorance, they try to break away from the grasp of Karma, or worse still, try to defy its decrees.

By so doing, they refuse to be co-workers with nature and thus become doubly accountable. Not knowing Karma's awesome majesty and its remedial bias, men mistake its salve for poison and resort to propitiations and confessions. They frequent the halls of the charlatans of astrology and the practitioners of necromancy to escape the just reward of their actions. In trying to avoid the bitter medicine that would cure

their ills, men often gamble with their souls and stake them to purchase a temporary relief. The Fausts of this world are not a rarity in this enlightened century that delights in toying with engines of evil.

The student of Karma has to be alert enough to distil out of its precipitations the essence that at the same time teaches as it adjusts. Study of the ancient Wisdom can lay the groundwork for discovering the corrective actions that Karma takes for the restoration of broken harmony. Obedience and devotion are the two great qualities that will lead the student towards an appreciation of the lessons that Karma holds out for his edification. Life so viewed becomes holy. It becomes reverential because it brings to mortal man an opportunity to view the action of the immortal and the impersonal. In the preliminary stages, and these may extend over several years, the student may dimly grasp the meaning of the lesson and repeat it parrotlike in his role of pupil-teacher. It is good for him if he does even this much. But it is by far not enough. Does the thought of Karma arouse in him a spontaneous feeling of reverence? Does he feel in the sharp pain of the surgeon's knife the benediction that is there behind the pain and agony? If he does not, then has he yet a long way to go. He has to know and realize that the highest aspect of Karma is Atma.

We are prone to forget that all our "Egos" are thinking and rational entities (*Manasaputras*) who had lived in the previous life-cycle (*Manvantara*), and whose Karma it was to incarnate in the man of this one. Millions of years have rolled on since that event; and yet, men of our day (the same old *Manasaputras*, or their rays) have still to learn the axiomatic truths that Karma offers and which in its blindness it passes by or ignorantly rejects. All this in spite of the fact that at each life's closing, when death comes to fulfil its great duty, the Ego has invariably reviewed the then closing life, remaining as a spectator looking down into the arena he is quitting. At that solemn moment he has always felt and known the justice of all that has overtaken him. When after his stay in the subjective worlds he returns to earth, the reaper of the things he sowed, he succumbs to the temptation of exclaiming that the ignominy and the sorrow that visit him are undeserved, and he tries to fix the cause of his pain and frustration on God or Devil, Fates or Furies, or his fellowmen. He tries to preserve his pride in the thought that the causes of his grief are all external to himself. He forgets that the storm has been built up with his own trespasses, which form the centre and core of the turmoil.

The student of Theosophy is but the product of his age and several years must intervene between the study of an axiom and its ultimate absorption into his character. Love, reverence and awe are outward stages of inner realizations, and until even these merge and lose themselves in a single one-pointed devotion, no light can come to dispel his darkness. In the early years of the Theosophical Movement the question was put to H.P.B.: "Where does a Theosophist look to for power to subdue his passions and selfishness?" The answer, suggestive in its several implications, was: "To his Higher Self, the divine spirit, or the God in him, and to his *Karma*."

To understand to some little extent the sway and intelligence of Karma, it has to be looked at from yet another angle. The student has to realize that it is Karma that takes his Ego to a particular family, fixes or changes the environment of the man, leads him towards knowledge or shuts him out of it altogether and withal makes him willy-nilly pass through all circumstances, foul and clean alike. For the man who desires to serve the Highest, for him who yearns to promote Universal Brotherhood, it is Karma that adjusts his training schedule, tests his ability to stand upright through all strains, gives him guidance or buffets him (all in furtherance of his soul-awakening), and observes his reactions to mystic experiences. It elevates him and it submerges him, so that through the strain and the stress he builds the strength that his Soul needs. In rare moments, it turns the mirror on the disciple and forces him to look at his ugliness, his weakness and his strength. In all of this, there underlies a beneficence, a blessing and a benediction. Does the disciple see all this, sense all this? If he does not, then has he to orient his learning to the occasion and the goal.

If the student desires to be a co-worker with Nature in this or in some other life, then has he to follow Karma into fields beyond the ordinary. The ultimate end of any human life is the collecting from every terrestrial personality, into which Karma may have forced it to incarnate, of the nectar of its spiritual qualities and self-consciousness. These it has to unite into one whole and at the end emerge from its chrysalis as the glorified Dhyān Chohan. This task can be expedited, the end brought nearer by the willingness of the disciple to work with and not against Karma. The hand of Karma guides the wheel here also as it does in the formation of worlds and systems of worlds.

When any human being aspires to be something more than man, Karma begins to test him in numerous ways. For, unless every chink in

the man's armour is discovered and plugged, he will remain vulnerable to the forces of darkness. Prone to succumb to evil, he needs protection. He cannot be entrusted with the task of protecting others. Therefore, when a soul volunteers for service, he has to be tried under all circumstances. Glamour, temptation, the intolerable dazzle of vice, the intoxication of pleasure, the heady fumes of success and the torture of mental and physical suffering have to be visited on him; his tensile strength in each circumstance evaluated. There is no other agency on earth that can do all this. Karma alone is the great sifter that will separate the chaff from the grain. Karma can do all this and much more beside, because it has the quality of ubiquity — an all-pervasiveness as vast as space.

It therefore follows that the outposts of Karma are within and around the man himself. He cannot escape its reach; nor can he hide his doings from the Scribes who do their duty by Karma. His thoughts and motives, wishes and longings, lusts and aspirations stand duly entered in the records of Karma. They cannot be erased. When a student realizes this, he finds himself in the position of a probationer. From here onwards, he finds that he is not alone in the throes of Karmic scrutiny. He sees himself as one infinitesimal speck in one vast conglomerate whole that embraces not only men but the elements and stars, the genii and the Gods, the Devas and the Sons of the Manvantaric Dawn. It is only when this vision dawns on him that a very important lesson in the Karmic curriculum is read and studied and taken up for amalgamation into the disciple's soul-thought.

The jurisdiction of Karma extends far beyond the material confines of man and reaches out to bring nemesis to him who would trifle with the spiritual. Says Master K.H.:

Self-personality, vanity and conceit harboured in the *higher* principles are enormously more dangerous than the same defects inherent only in the lower physical nature of man. They are the breakers against which the cause of chelaship, in its probationary stage, is sure to be dashed to pieces unless the would-be disciple carries with him the white shield of perfect confidence and trust in those he would seek out through mount and vale to guide him safely toward the light of Knowledge. . . . The mass of human sin and frailty is distributed throughout the life of man who is content to remain an average mortal. It is gathered in and centred, so to say, within one period of the life of a chela — the period of probation. That which is generally accumulating to find its legiti-

mate issue only in the next rebirth of an ordinary man, is quickened and fanned into existence in the chela — especially in the presumptuous and selfish candidate who rushes in without having calculated his forces.

And further:

There are persons who, without ever showing any external sign of selfishness, are intensely selfish in their inner spiritual aspirations. . . . They are so intensely absorbed in the contemplation of their own supposed "righteousness" that nothing can ever appear right to them outside the focus of their own vision distorted by their self-complacent contemplation, and their judgment of the right and wrong.

Karma searches out and adjusts the disharmony caused by vanity, conceit and the other subjective frailties that may lurk in the higher principles. The *Gita* warns that lust may surround even the discriminating faculty.

Let us learn to reverence Karma.

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WHERE outward circumstances are not definitely unfortunate, a man should be able to achieve happiness, provided that his passions and interests are directed outward, not inward. It should be our endeavour, therefore, both in education and in attempts to adjust ourselves to the world, to aim at avoiding self-centred passions and at acquiring those affections and those interests which will prevent our thoughts from dwelling perpetually upon ourselves. It is not the nature of most men to be happy in prison, and the passions which shut us up in ourselves constitute one of the worst kinds of prisons. Among such passions some of the commonest are fear, envy, the sense of sin, self-pity and self-admiration. In all these our desires are centred upon ourselves: there is no genuine interest in the outer world, but only a concern lest it should in some way injure us or fail to feed our ego. . . .

To be the recipient of affection is a potent cause of happiness, but the man who demands affection is not the man upon whom it is bestowed. The man who receives affection is, speaking broadly, the man who gives it. But it is useless to attempt to give it as a calculation, in the way in which one might lend money at interest, for a calculated affection is not genuine and is not felt to be so by the recipient.

—BERTRAND RUSSELL

# AN OUTLINE OF THE "SECRET DOCTRINE"

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[In these papers an attempt will be made to give a clear account of the theory of life and development contained in Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*, based on stanzas from the Book of Dzyan. As it is impossible within the limits to which we are restricted to bring forward all the arguments in support of these theories, and as no partial statement would be adequate, no attempt at argument will be made. Readers who may be inclined to accuse us of too dogmatic assertion of unproven facts, of "handling worlds and pebbles too freely," will kindly remember that this is simply the outline of a doctrine the proofs of which they must seek for in the doctrine itself.]

## I

### SUMMARY

UNIVERSAL Night. The absorption of the Universe into latency, in its scientific, philosophical, and religious aspects; the Trinity in Unity. The Absolute.

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The *Secret Doctrine* begins by contemplating the Universe as withdrawn from its condition of manifestation into the latent state in which it sleeps during the recurring periods of Universal Night, when time is absorbed in eternal duration.

For us, time is registered by the motions of the sun and stars; by the earth's rotation, marking out the day from sunrise to sunrise; by the waxing and waning of the moon; by the earth's yearly journey round the sun; and by that greater year that the pole traces out among the constellations in the slow precession of the Equinoxes.

But when, at the evening of each universal day, the earth and the moon have faded to pale shadows, and with the sun and planets, one by one have melted back into the common source from which they sprang; when all the stars, the clocks of the universe, have become invisible, when time, as we know it, ceases, and vanishes into the bosom of eternal duration.

Even in the world of manifestation, Time has an uncertain, erratic life. In the waking world, minute drags after minute, with the stiff rigid-

ity of dense matter; solid forms remain unchanged, or imperceptibly unchanged, for hours or ages.

In the world of dreams — as real to itself as the world of day — minutes and hours have more fluidity; image succeeds image, melting, coalescing, transforming, with a rapidity that would be startling in waking life, but seems quite natural in the dream-world, where an hour of day may be an age of dream.

In those clearer worlds to which spiritual vision penetrates, long vistas of being are concentrated into a moment; past and future draw nearer each other, and a "thousand years are as one day." In the highest world of all, where vision becomes divine, all the lives of all beings are perpetually visible; for the transformations of time have no existence there, and the infinite past and the infinite future have become blended in the Eternal Now.

When the Universe from manifestation in objective life has sunk back gradually through all the planes of being into this highest divine world, then the time that we know is at an end, vanished and absorbed into eternal duration.

When the worlds have thus faded away in each evening of the universe, and the boundless realms of space, from the lowest material plane, through the planes of dream and vision and spiritual sight, to the threshold of the highest divine world, are left without visible inhabitant, either man, angel or demigod; then, in the decrepitude of time, space too becomes transformed; there is no longer height, nor breadth, nor depth, for there is no longer anything to measure by these attributes; then Space is transformed into Being, independent of the dimensions of space.

Where are all the inhabitants of Space, from the lowest world to the highest, from the human and sub-human to the angel and demigod? Where are the manifold worlds in which they lived and moved and had their being?

To answer this we must ask, What are these worlds, and in what consists the life lived in them by man, and angel, and demigod?

Looked at from one point of view, this life, whether of man, angel, or demigod, and these worlds in which they live, consist of an endless series of pictures and images, whether appearing outwardly through the senses, or inwardly in the mind; passing unceasingly before the Consciousness, which takes note of image after image, and picture after picture, observing all as a "disinterested spectator."

Between these two, Consciousness, the disinterested spectator, and the incessant world of sensations, of images and imaginings that pass before it, a great gulf is fixed; Consciousness remains unchanged on the one side, and the infinite picture-world unfolds itself unceasingly on the other. In this panoramic world of images, space adheres as an attribute, and time adheres as an attribute; space refers to the extent of the image, and the portion of the whole panoramic world it fills; and time refers to the durability of each image or impression, as compared with other images more fleeting or more sustained. Time and Space therefore, as being but a part of the panorama, the unceasing picture-world that passes before Consciousness the disinterested spectator, cannot logically be attributed to the Consciousness which observes them as external to, and different from, itself.

This is expressed by saying that Consciousness is eternal, that is, quite independent of and outside time; and also independent of and outside the dimensions of space; or in the words of the *Upanishad*, Consciousness is the Ancient "smaller than small and greater than great."

Thus, from this point of view, we are led to divide the Universe into two entirely different though related powers; on the one side Consciousness, eternal and free from the bonds of time and space, and on the other the endless panorama of pictures, images and perceptions, appearing either outwardly through the senses or inwardly through the mind; between these two, Consciousness, and the objects of Consciousness, a great gulf is fixed, which is bridged over by the magician Perception.

Before the disinterested spectator, Consciousness, stretches a veil or film of images and sensations more permanent and more closely adhering to Consciousness, than the vast mass of pictures and images that pass by, in the endless panorama of the worlds; through this veil or film the other images and pictures are seen, and from it they receive a more or less permanent colouring and temper. This veil that adheres to Consciousness is the personality: the bundle of feelings, thoughts and desires that make up the personal life.

And though Consciousness is a disinterested spectator, this adherent film of personality is, on the contrary, intensely interested in the panorama of pictures that pass before it, and receives from them, or attributes to them, alternate sensations of pleasure and pain, heat and cold, bitter and sweet, longing and satiety, love and hate — the "pairs of opposites" which make up the sum of the feelings and sensations that fill the life of the personality.

This condition of things, the Consciousness as disinterested spectator of the ceaseless panorama of pictures, with the personality as a veil between, is repeated on all the planes. But as life rises from the lower and more material to the higher and spiritual planes, changes appear. The veil of personality becomes gradually more luminous and lucent, till at last it stretches as a hardly visible transparent film between consciousness and image, and — no longer subject to the “pairs of opposites,” pleasure and pain, love and hate, longing and satiety, but rather receptive of the single essences of which love and hate, pleasure and pain, heat and cold, are but the positive and negative poles — the purified and cleansed personality begins to partake of spiritual and divine nature.

Along with this ennobling of the personality, a change passes over the panorama of life on the higher planes or ranges of being. What had seemed on the lowest ranges to be a mere chaotic hurtling of images, an erratic lawless passage of sensations, with no order or relation to the Consciousness to which they were presented, is seen on the higher ranges of life to be an orderly procession, a steady progress full of disciplinary, educational value.

And on the divine plane, it becomes apparent that the power that marshals and compels these images, these elements of discipline and development, is not foreign or isolated from Consciousness, but is rather the eternal Will wedded to Consciousness, the expression of that Self of which Will and Consciousness are the eternal twin powers. These will-directed elements of discipline which on the lower planes are apparently chaotic and at random, on the higher planes draw closer and closer to the Consciousness, and on the highest divine plane they are seen as not foreign to Consciousness, but partaking of its nature, and subject and object become united in one divinity which is neither of them, and is yet both of them.

When throughout all the worlds the “pairs of opposites,” pleasure and pain, love and hate, longing and satiety, have, after the interval of ages of manifested life, become gradually drawn together, and have coalesced into those single essences of which they are but the negative and positive poles; when throughout all the worlds the images and pictures, the elements of discipline — in which the spiritual Will, the twin-brother of pure Consciousness, expresses itself — have gradually drawn closer and closer to Consciousness, the film between them growing ever purer and more pellucid; and when at last throughout all the worlds the twin-brothers Consciousness and Spiritual Will (in which all manifesta

tion has been absorbed) become once more one, then begins that true life which is veiled under the name of Universal Night.

This reunion of the "pairs of opposites," their slow reabsorption into spiritual Will, the divine parent of all manifestation, and the reunion of Will and Consciousness, with the disappearance of all life as we know it—in reality the beginning of true life—this is the second element (or the second, metaphysical aspect) of the mystery that is called the Nights of the Universe.

There is yet a third side to this subject. Linked with Consciousness on every plane and range of being is a sense of moral life, an aspiration to, and dim perception of, higher and diviner life above, and a sense of relation with, and obligation to, the cognate lives around us.

On the lower range of being these two moral perceptions are dim and clouded.

As life rises higher and higher, entering deeper and deeper into the divine power that was first only dimly felt above, side by side with this upward growth is an outward growth by which the boundaries, which had at first seemed hard and impassable, between us and the cognate souls around us, begin to soften and melt away; and at last on the great day, when we become one with the divine soul above us, we have also by the same growth become one with the cognate souls beside us; and, though still knowing our own existence in the divine, we are no longer conscious of any distance between our own souls and the souls of our fellow-men—then no longer men, but divine beings, at one with us, and at one with the divine.

This great at-one-ment, or atonement, that brings about the union of all humanities into one divine life, forms the last and highest aspect of the mystery of the consummation of life which ushers in that true being, that real life, which only human blindness calls Universal Night. This gradual growth to perfect fulfilment of our obligation and relation to the human around us, in morals, and to the divine above us, in religion, forms the third aspect of the mystery of the ever-recurring Nights of the Universe.

In reality these three aspects, these three categories of being, or the even aspects into which they may be divided, are not separate, isolated natures, and their gradual unfolding does not constitute three different and distinct processes; all three are but phases, aspects or facets of the one Being, in the evolution and involution of which consists the life of the universe.

When this trinity in unity is unfolded, expressed and manifested, the universe passes to Universal Day.

When the trinity in unity coalesces, unites and is reabsorbed, universal day gives place to universal night. In this universal night, there are no separate existences, no separate lives, no separate attributes; time, space, subjectivity, objectivity are no longer; from the standpoint of our thought there is nothing, because nothing is separate from the eternal, infinite All.

But behind this Universal Being which alternately expresses itself in manifestation, and reabsorbs itself into latency, there is another deeper mystery, so profound that human reason almost refuses to grasp it at all. This is the mystery of the Absolute.

As underneath the lump of metal, that in the jeweller's hands takes many shapes, now melted to liquid, now hardened to solid, the mind conceives a certain quantity of gold, a quantity which remains unchanged, and which the mind regards abstractly as unchanging and unchangeable, even though the lump be separated into many pieces, or alloyed with other metals, or even powdered to dust and scattered on the face of the earth; so behind this evolving and involving universal life, which alternately expands and contracts in universal day and night, thought perceives the necessity of another universal being, the sum of the powers and forces of this (as the gold is the sum of the substance in the jeweller's hands) and partaking neither in the evolution nor involution of this, but remaining eternally changeless, motionless, attributeless, in the everlasting mystery of absolute Being.

The Abstract Unity, which contains within itself the potency of all life, but which has no life because it is all life; which contains within itself the potency of all consciousness, but has no consciousness because it is the totality of consciousness; which contains within itself the potency of all good and beauty and truth, but which is neither good nor beautiful nor true because it is absolute goodness, beauty and truth; which contains within itself the potency of all motion, all sound or colour and sensation, but is without motion, sound, colour or sensation; which contains within itself the potency of all attributes, but is without attributes because it is the totality of all attributes, this is the Absolute: the unknown and ever unknowable God.

—C. J.

*(To be continued)*

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## BHAKTI-DEVOTION

THE SUBJECT of devotion is one of deep and penetrating significance — one that deals with our holiest feeling, one that touches our profoundest thought. Proceeding as it does from the Highest, true *bhakti* or devotion is inherent in the heart of every one of us.

Yet, how many mistaken notions prevail about it! It is often thought that it is easy enough to cultivate devotion and that even men of little knowledge, by soft-heartedness, telling their beads and the like, can tread *bhakti-marga*, the path of devotion. The folly of this will be evident to the so-called devotees of Krishna, who may be knowing the *Bhagavad-Gita* by rote, if they reflect that Arjuna, as long as he was ignorant of the majesty of the real Krishna, treated him slightly and without respect. It is only after Krishna has acquainted him with the chief of his divine manifestations in Chapter X and has shown him his universal, divine form in all its power and might in Chapter XI, that Arjuna's eyes are opened, as it were, and, his ignorance being dispelled, he is filled with devotion. Then and only then we have the wonderful description of a true devotee in Chapter XII. Thus true devotion is based on knowledge, is rooted in wisdom and gains illumination from philosophical and metaphysical principles.

Another misunderstanding, equally false, which prevails is that *bhakti-marga* and *karma-marga*, the path of devotion and of action, are altogether separate paths. To such as hold this view and disdain to do acts of gentle service, we would once again point to the teaching of the *Gita*: "Devotion is success in actions." And, again, "... the devotee who is engaged in the right practice of his duties approacheth the Supreme spirit in no long time" (V. 6). When devotion is not accompanied by right action, it begets not only sentimentality but also laziness. On the path of devotion constant application is required.

Thus, true *bhakti* has for its parents the aspiration to know and earnest effort to apply. What ordinarily passes as devotion — like frothy, uncontrolled emotionalism, sentimentality and idle dreaming — is not true devotion, for it lacks the basis of study and service.

The path of real devotion, therefore, is the most difficult to tread, for on it are required constancy, steadfastness and compassion of an extraordinary kind, of a supernormal degree. Moreover, it demands willingness to surrender unconditionally all the treasures that the personality cherishes, and it involves a mental abnegation not agreeable to our modern

mind. Yet to devotion we all must aspire if real progress in spiritual life be our aim. Says Mr. Judge:

The essence of the instruction given by Krishna is *to become devoted*, as he says, "Therefore give thyself up to devotion." (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 64)

This exhortation to devotion is at once the most simple and the most difficult. Some deride it because they want powers and "development"; others because they think it is too simple; but the wise student, even when he cannot at first grasp its meaning, will revolve it in his mind, strive after it, and make it a thing to be attained by him. (*Ibid.*, p. 69)

The ancient Wisdom, *Gupta Vidya*, sheds light on the genesis of the deep, the truly spiritual, feeling of devotion. *The Secret Doctrine* teaches that it was the primeval, first response which self-conscious man made in gratefulness to his spiritual progenitors, the Lords of Wisdom, the *Agnishwatha Pitris*, who, moved by the law of Evolution, infused into primitive man the Spark of Wisdom and kindled the Fire of Intelligence, lighting the self-conscious Soul, Manas, hitherto latent and dormant. The first feeling this act of benevolence awakened in man was "a sense of solidarity, of one-ness with his spiritual creators."

As the child's first feeling is for its mother and nurse, so the first aspirations of the awakening consciousness in primitive man were for those whose element he felt within himself, and who yet were outside, and independent of him. DEVOTION arose out of that feeling, and became the first and foremost motor in his nature; for it is the only one which is natural in our heart, which is innate in us, and which we find alike in human babe and the young of the animal. This feeling of irrepressible, instinctive aspiration in primitive man is beautifully, and one may say intuitionally, described by Carlyle. "The great antique heart," he exclaims, "how like a child's in its simplicity, like a man's in its earnest solemnity and depth! heaven lies over him wheresoever he goes or stands on the earth; making all the earth a mystic temple to him, the earth's business all a kind of worship. Glimpses of bright creatures flash in the common sunlight; angels yet hover, doing God's messages among men. . . . Wonder, miracle, encompass the man; he lives in an element of miracle. . . . A great law of duty, high as these two infinitudes (heaven and hell), dwarfing all else, annihilating all else — it was a reality, and it is one: the garment only of it is dead; the essence of it lives through all times and all eternity!" (*The Secret Doctrine*, I. 210-11)

That, then, is the true origin of that universal feeling of longing, of yearning for the nearness and company, nay, for the very oneness with our Spiritual Benefactors, Guides and Gurus.

In the course of time, with evolutionary progress, the concept of devotion, like many other sacred concepts, came to be misinterpreted and degraded, and many untrue and even objectionable meanings have been attributed to it. In the world today, on a very large scale, false *bhakti*, false devotion, prevails. One God or many gods are held up as objects of devotion, and, in the absence of the basis of right philosophical knowledge, universal principles and forces are materialized, then anthropomorphized and even carnalized. False devotion is the energy on which the temples and mosques, churches and synagogues thrive. The greatest curse inflicted upon humanity by orthodox creeds arises from the exploitation of this holiest and most sacred feeling of the human heart. False devotion separates man from man; true devotion, through wisdom and love, brings together all men in knowledge and in service. True *bhakti* begins only when the mind has freed itself from the fetters of religious creeds, for then alone is a sense of oneness with the whole of humanity possible.

Therefore, knowledge that frees the mind from its fetters is the necessary prerequisite to devotion. True devotion is the higher feeling born of intelligence, illumination, enlightenment.

But there is a lower form of devotion which it is possible to manifest though knowledge may be absent, and the force of love which exists everywhere in the human kingdom is indicative of this species of devotion. All sincere though as yet personal attachments of a truly affectionate nature, be they blood-ties or friendships, are but types of the great archetypal attachment which is twofold — the attachment of the human soul to the Universal Spirit, of the Atman to Paramatman; and that of the human heart to its spiritual guide, of the chela to the Guru. Higher than these two relationships there is none. And it is to this higher form of devotion that all others must eventually give way as the aspirant strives for perfection.

Unswerving devotion to the self-chosen path and to the Masters and Their Cause, which is the Cause of Humanity, has to be cultivated if success in the Higher Life is desired. It puts the disciple in a condition in which help can be given to him, though perhaps unconsciously to himself. H.P.B. attributes all her success to this quality of devotion.

She, too, had her trials and tribulations, but, she says, she could accept them cheerfully.

Why? Because I know that I have, all my faults notwithstanding, Master's protection extended over me. And if I have it, the reason for it is simply this: for thirty-five years and more, ever since 1851 that I saw any Master *bodily* and personally for the first time, *I have never once denied or even doubted Him*, not even in thought. Never a reproach or murmur against Him has escaped my lips, or entered even my brain for one instant under the heaviest trials. . . . He who believes in what he professes and in his Master, will stand it [the heavy weight of Karma] and come out of the trial victorious; he *who doubts*, the coward who fears to receive his just dues and tries to avoid justice being done — FAILS. . . . Unswerving devotion to Him who embodies the duty traced for me, and belief in the Wisdom — collectively, of that grand, mysterious, yet actual Brotherhood of holy men — is my only merit, and the cause of my success in Occult philosophy. ("The Theosophical Mahatmas": *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

These words of hers are reminiscent of the assurance that Krishna has given us in the *Gita*:

With thy heart place all thy works on me, prefer me to all else, exercise mental devotion continually, and think constantly of me. By so doing thou shalt by my divine favour surmount every difficulty which surroundeth thee; but if from pride thou wilt not listen to my words, thou shalt undoubtedly be lost. (XVIII. 57-58)

The practical question that naturally arises is: How can we unfold true devotion and avoid the pitfalls of its false and lower species? On the negative side, beware of creedal religious orders and the fetters of dogmatism and sectarianism. They arouse a feeling that looks like devotion but it *not* devotion; nay, more, that religious feeling is the enemy of genuine devotion. Secondly, do not indulge in selfishness and pride, but make of them bond-maidens to devotion, for *bhakti* is rendered inactive through these evils. Another pitfall to be avoided is the tendency to bring devotion to birth by force. Furnish the necessary conditions for it to spring up spontaneously in the process of time by earnestly endeavouring to obtain right knowledge and to make use of that knowledge through daily application.

On the positive side, the starting point for one longing to develop the higher Devotion is the desire for emancipation from pain and sorrow

and from the entanglements of *samsara*. This release is to be obtained, not away from the world, but in the world, for the path of devotion is laid in the world of men. The home, the family and the bonds of true friendship are the channels through which devotion unfolds naturally and spontaneously.

What the real path of devotion is may be seen from a study of the Twelfth Discourse of the *Gita*. The characteristics of a true *bhakta* enumerated therein must be built by the would-be devotee into his character and called to his aid in moments of trial.

The *Gita* is a Book of Devotion *par excellence*. Each of its chapters — except the first one — treats of devotion from one or another angle. This little book contains guidance enough for those aspiring to learn the Science of Devotion.

Devotion comes to birth when we recognize the existence of living embodiments of love and service. It is through the study of Their philosophy and the service of Their humanity that we can aspire to unfold devotion towards those Great Spiritual Servants of the human race. As we study, apply and serve, emulating in our humble capacities Their Graciousness, Their Compassion, Their Sacrifice, slowly but surely from within us will spring that fiery *Bhakti*, that true Devotion, which will lead us to abiding Happiness and to the Peace that passeth all understanding.

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THEOSOPHY advocates the development and the resources of Man's own nature as the grandest ideal we can strive for.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

## WHO IS OUR ENEMY? AND WHO OUR FRIEND?

THE STRAIN OF LIFE is becoming unbearable for a growing number of people. Not only is there economic pressure — unemployment, fierce struggle to earn one's livelihood, to run a business or a profession, etc. — but also there are mental distress and confusion. For example, there are millions who are undernourished and hungry, while foodstuffs are being actually destroyed. Again, governments, north, south, east, west, somehow find the resources to manufacture guns, yet plead poverty when wholesome constructive programmes for Peace are offered for consideration. But, while these two strains, economic and mental, are generally talked about and discussed, the weakening of the moral fibre of large masses of people is not equally seriously studied or considered.

There is a third kind of strain — the psychic. People seeking some escape from the anxieties and worries caused by economic pressure and mental confusion run to remedies which are ruinous to their moral well-being. Moral proprieties are thrown to the winds, ethical principles are set aside. While a thousand organizations endeavour to serve society and to make it more wholesome, and huge amounts of money are poured out to educate and to uplift the people, there is a visible increase in lust and greed, in petty meannesses and small selfishnesses.

If universal education were the solution, these problems of economic unbalance and mental topsy-turvydom and moral laxity would not have arisen in the developed countries, nor would they persist there perhaps to an even greater extent than in countries where education is neither universal nor compulsory.

If a so-called higher standard of living were the solution, then wealthy countries would be free from these death-dealing problems.

If the power of the vote and universal franchise were the solution, then the world's leading democracies ought to have solved these problems long ago.

If knowledge of modern applied science were the cure, our world of 1977 would not be experiencing poverty, mental chaos and weakened moral fibre.

If social service could redeem humanity from the grip of physical, mental and moral poverty, then highly organized associations would have already transformed hells on earth into gardens of Eden.

If synagogues, churches, mosques and *mandirs* were able to harness divine power, then the demon of disease and the devils of hatred,

gnorance and of war would have been destroyed long ago.

If gold and silver and paper bullion could bring peace to the distressed heart and comfort to the confused mind, our wealthy folk would be happy. But they are not.

In none of these can men and women of today find relief from a harassed life of poverty or a bewildering life of money-spending.

All recognize and repeat these self-evident facts and quote that the Kingdom of Peace and Happiness is within. But they also state that they do not know how to get at this inner peace, how to secure this heart happiness.

It must, however, be admitted that in spite of failures and sufferings, only a very few really desire to undertake the self-reform which alone secures that inner peace and that heart happiness.

While the above-named agencies — education, the vote, science, social service, religion, etc. — have failed to bring solace and contentment, there is ample and reliable evidence which proves that the Great Mystics down the centuries have gathered the knowledge which has enabled them to dispense their ignorance, to evaluate correctly all head-learning, to establish peace in their own hearts, to cause grace and rhythm to circulate in their own blood. Every Theosophist of every age has proclaimed this truth for the guidance of his fellow men: "The Kingdom of God is within you"; "Look inward: thou art Buddha"; "Thou art That"; and so on. Not only this, but in every age and in every clime have the great Mystic-Occultists who are the true Theosophists also taught by what process a man can obtain for himself that inner peace and happiness which everyone is seeking.

There are certain definite ideas which the Sages have always put forward in reference to human happiness and misery. They have not failed in solving the basic problem of Good and Evil — the ancient pair. They are the few, who speak as having authority. There are, on the other hand, men and women whose authority is confined to partial and one-sided knowledge. Thus, some scientists point to their own findings and state that the root of human misery and human wickedness is thus and so, and that nothing more can be known — that no one ever knew any more. Though scientists, they are in the same boat with dogmatic theologians who assert the origin of evil to be this and that and the method of eradicating it to be thus and so! The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the fact is that the scientist suffers from his ills as much as does the theologian who curses the Devil and prays to God!

The Great Theosophists, such as the Seers of the Vedas, the Upanishadic Sages, the Sufis, the Gnostics and the Fire-Philosophers, have uniformly taught that none can fully comprehend the recorded teaching on the subject unless he is prepared to experiment with the Truth, the Virtue and the Beauty which are lying dormant in him. Such a document as the *Book of Job*, for instance, will not be understood unless a man looks within himself for the force of evil and error, and burrowing deeper seeks for the True, the Good and the Beautiful enshrined in the Holy of Holies, in the real Heart.

Our whole education and upbringing tend to make us dependent on outer agents all the time — from small gadgets to living servants. We are other-dependent. And so we extend the sphere of other-dependence to mind and to Soul. There is no more nefarious doctrine than this which the popes and the priests of every creed have advocated — vicarious atonement in some form or other. Its opposite is the truth: Buddhas can but point the Way, mortals have to tread it. Christ did not die on the Cross so that sinners might go to Heaven. That is blasphemy; Christ died as a man of flesh so that the Spirit might shine forth, and within each one of us is that Christ or Christos. But there is also in each one of us the Devil, the Ahriman, the Mara, and that force of evil is at present more active than the force of Good. The two spirits labour in us: in each one there are the Self of Matter and the Self of Spirit and a mighty struggle is going on.

Each one of us is being crucified on the Cross and the agony of that crucifixion is great. People suffer in silence and fancy that there is no remedy, but the Buddhas and the Christs have taught and demonstrated that a remedy exists. The first step is the recognition of the fact that the power of evil is within us, and that it is that power which is producing the agony and the pain of poverty, of ignorance, of moral incompetence. We fear the evil and try to fight it — all the time believing that it comes from the capitalist or the communist, from some other nation or race, from some enemy or competitor. The fact is that each carries his evil within himself, and that evil is the real enemy.

Presented from outside in cold print, such a fact becomes easily acceptable. The difficulty looks insurmountable when a sincere and earnest soul begins to make application of the truth. Long indeed is the Way and arduous the labour of fighting the devil of flesh and blood. Knowledge is needed and many delude themselves with the fancy that such knowledge does not exist. But as we have pointed out above, such know

ledge is available and the Great Theosophists of all lands and times have shown the Way. The whole philosophy, which is not speculative, but practical, is epitomized by H. P. Blavatsky thus:

1. Everything existing, exists from natural causes.
2. Virtue brings its own reward, and vice and sin their own punishment.
3. The state of man in this world is probationary.

*(Isis Unveiled, II. 124)*

These propositions are self-evident truths and their application to our own life becomes less difficult when we clearly perceive the fact that underlies all of them, *viz.*, that within us is the power to think True Ideas, to manifest Noble Virtues and to do Beautiful Deeds. Behind the Devil in us is the God; it is by the power of the Good Spirit dwelling in our hearts that we see Ahriman acting in us. Beyond the sphere of Mara which is in our blood is the Serene Buddha who ever smiles in blessing, sitting in the cave of the mind. Not only do we carry in us our own worst enemy; we also carry in our heart the Friend, the Guide, the Philosopher. The Instructor and the Inspirer has to be awakened and activated, and that can be done by enabling Him to subdue the evil. Salvation does not come from without, but we are given the necessary guidance to work it out for ourselves. All of us are reaping what we have sown; but here and now we are sowing the seeds of future harvests.

Let us recognize the enemy within, but let us also seek the Friend. Let us give nourishment to the Friend, educate him to eradicate the enemy, and thus render the greatest service any man can render to humanity at large. It is written:

Shun ignorance, and likewise shun illusion. Avert thy face from world deceptions; mistrust thy senses, they are false. But within thy body — the shrine of thy sensations — seek in the Impersonal for the "Eternal Man"; and having sought him out, look inward: thou art Buddha. (*The Voice of the Silence*, pp. 28-29)

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# RANDOM NOTES FROM "THE THEOSOPHIST"

## ON CREMATION AND FUNERAL CEREMONIES

[The following appeared under the title "Paragraph Flashes from the Four Quarters."]

Nothing promises to prove more dangerous to the Bible and to the Bible Christians — not even the new Revision of the sacred volume by the combined ecclesiastical talent of England, than that eminently Hindu funeral rite — cremation. The more this mode of disposing of the bodies of the dead comes into general practice, the more it is calculated to strike terror into the hearts of the pious and God-fearing folk who look forward to death, because of the resurrection at the last joyful summons from the Angel's trumpet. But with cremation resurrection has become impossible. But since matters cannot be mended, and science has entered into a league with the heathens, even such a bigoted country as Italy, priest-ridden and Jesuit-ridden as it is, has taken the lead in cremation. Germany, according to a correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, has also its own Cremation Hall at Gotha, a handsome and spacious building, and artistically inferior to only that of Milan. It has been in existence about two years and a half, and was built by an association of *Verein* of some of the most thoughtful and learned men in Germany. The correspondent adds: "Fifty-two persons, five of whom were women have in this space of time chosen *such a form of burial* [does not that sound like a *bull?*], one body being sent from New York. The cost of the mere process of cremation is about five pounds sterling, and the religious ceremony can be first read over the body. It is unnecessary to say that the Catholic priest refuses church burial to anyone electing to be cremated. Protestant pastors, on the contrary, willingly accord it. The cinerary urns bear the name of one or two Jews." It would be worth while determining as to who are the most consistent — the Catholic priests, the Protestant pastors, or the Jews? The correspondent then concludes: "I think few visitors will visit this cremation hall without being duly impressed in favour of a system so advantageous to the living and, it must be admitted — at least, of France and Germany — also advantageous to the dead. Here, as in France, the law compels such prompt interment that in many cases it has been known to take place before the breath has left the body. In Algeria I have known personally a victim of this misapprehension; and my German friends all speak

me in warm terms of the new system as, irrespective of other advantages, preventing premature burial."

(October 1881)

[In December 1876, the Theosophical Society was instrumental in cremating in America the body of one of its Councillors, Baron de Palm, who had requested that his remains should be so disposed of. This was the first case of a public cremation in America and caused a sensation there at the time. Commenting on the incident, it was stated:]

Naturally, such a change as that from burying to burning must be a very gradual one. The public's reason is first to be convinced, then its unreasoning prejudice removed. The first bold step finds its imitators here and there, and then, when the people find that nothing bad has happened to either themselves or the reformers, the change, if a good one, is adopted. This process is going on in the United States with respect to cremation. The first flush of Christian indignation at the "barbarity" and "heathenism" of the Theosophical Society passed away, the echoes of the journalistic gibes are gone, and our name, as promoters of one of the most beneficial social reforms possible, has fixed for itself a place on the page of American history.

(April 1880)

[A correspondent from Simla, who signed himself "A Hindu," wrote:

"It is generally believed that after death the souls of some men, owing either to their own misdeeds or the influence of evil stars, cling to this earth and wander on it, assuming at times various shapes and remaining in a state of continued unrest; and that the only way by which they can be delivered from this unhappy condition, is through the offering by someone related to them of what is commonly called *Pindam* laid at the feet of *Gadadhara*, the presiding Deity of Gaya. People, whose veracity can hardly be doubted, say that the ghosts very often narrate through the persons obsessed by them the tale of their sufferings, and express the desire that their friends and relatives should offer the *Pindam* with a view to their speedy deliverance.

"If there is any truth in these stories, what is there in the shrine at Gaya that emancipates the ghosts when their previous *karmas* require that they should still hover over the earth? Why should the *reliquie* of the departed which, under ordinary cir-

cumstances, naturally long to prolong their artificial existence, covet their final dissolution? Is it the strong *will* of the person that offers the *Pindam*, or is there about the place itself any latent magnetic power that destroys the *reliquiae*? . . . It is further believed by many, that if by some accident the shrine at Gaya were suffered to remain without any offerings being made to it, even for one single day, the presiding *Asura* of the place would rise from his resting place and shake the very world to its foundation. . . .”

The Editor's Note appended to the letter states: ]

The answer would be more satisfactory, we think, were it to come from some initiated Brahmin or Yogi. If we believe in *bhoots* or “shells” who have to wait in the earth's atmosphere for the slow dissolution of their *reliquiae*, we cannot say the same of Gadadhara. We believe the latter — as we believe all the other minor Hindu gods and goddesses — no more than the generic name assumed by a host of elementaries who play their tricks upon Eastern credulity as some spooks play theirs upon Western imagination. But this is our personal belief, for which we claim no degree of infallibility. While disbelieving the omnipotence of Gadadhara and her threats, there seems no reason why we should doubt, at the same time, the word of honest and truthful pilgrims when they tell us that they saw “the shadows of their departed relatives.” The air is thronged with *shells* — the pale reflections of men and women who lived and whose *reliquiae* are magnetically drawn to those whom they had loved on earth.

As to the efficacy of *Pindam* or *Shraddha*, we deny it most emphatically. The custom of such *post-mortem* offerings having been in existence for long centuries and forming part and parcel of the Hindu religion they produce effects, only owing to the strong belief in them of the offerers, or the *pujarees*. It is the latter who cause unconsciously the production of such phenomena. Let there only be a strong medium in the midst of pilgrims (something that happens invariably in a country so full of sensitives as India is), and the intensity and sameness of the thoughts bent constantly and simultaneously upon the object of the pilgrimage, will affect the throng of the elementaries around them. They will repeat that which they find in their friends' brains and clamour for *Pindam*. After which, following the same idea which develops in the pilgrim's thought, *i.e.*, that the offering will bring on deliverance — the “the ghosts,” will promise a sign of it, and perform the promise mechanically and unconsciously as a parrot would repeat a word, or any trained

animal perform an act, led on the superior intelligence of the master mind that had trained it to this.

What is it that puts an end to the unrestfulness of the "Ghost"? Nothing particular, most probably: neither the magnetism of the place devoted to the *Pindam*, nor the strong will of the person who offers it; but simply the absence of any idea connected with the reappearance of the "ghost," the firm assurance, the implicit confidence of the medium that the "ghost" having been comforted by the offering of the *Pindam* can no longer return, or feel unrestful. That's all. It is the medium's brain, his own creative power of imagination that calls forth out of the normal subjectivity into *abnormal objectivity* the ghosts that appear, except in the cases of the apparitions of *real spirits* at the moments immediately following their death. No living being, no god or goddess has the power of impeding the immutable law of nature called *karma*, especially after the death of the person that evolved it.

We would be pleased to see an infuriated *asura* shaking in its wrath the world to its foundation." Many a day, during the invasions of and attacks upon cities by the armies of an enemy, have the shrines remained without any offering as they have often been destroyed, and yet the world moveth not. It is the presiding and hungry, when not simply *greedy*, geniuses of the shrines, the Brahmins, who need the *Pindam*, we should say, more than the Gadadharas and the *omnia gatherum* of such. The masses claimed for the quieting of the souls of Christian ghosts paid in hard cash instead of being rewarded mostly in nature are of the same kind and efficacy. And if we are asked to give our honest opinion upon both the modes adopted by the priests of every religion to make the living spend their money in useless ceremonies upon their dead, we say, that both means are in our sight no better than a legal and authorized extortion, the tribute paid by credulity to cunning. Change the name and the story is told of civilized Christians as it is of half-civilized Hindus. But — *Mundus vult decipi* — and who can prevent a willing man from hanging himself!

(October 1883)

[In his article, "The Pisacha-Dancers," S. Ramaswamier referred to the Hindu custom of offering sacrifice, by a deceased person's relatives, "in the shape of *pinda* (rice-balls), calling upon the name of the departed spirit. But it is no less true," he added, "that it is an article of faith based upon quite a different reason than the one assigned." H.P.B. remarked in a footnote:]

In Christian Russia the same custom of offering rice to the dead prevails throughout the Empire. For six weeks after the death of a person, dishes full of rice with a wax taper stuck in the middle of it are sent at regular periods to the parish church or laid on the tomb of the defunct. There, with the rice placed near, a mass is said for the *rest* of the departed soul in order that it should not become a *bhut*, a restless wandering soul in the earth region — the latter being considered the greatest misfortune. In Roman Catholic countries it is the same thought of fear of the soul's torments at being earth-bound that underlies the ceremony of the Feast of the Dead held throughout Christendom on the 2nd of November.

(February 1882)

[A correspondent's letter, published under the title "Funeral Rites Among Savage Races," stated in part: "In your note to the letter on 'The Efficacy of Funeral Ceremonies' (see *The Theosophist*, June 1883, p. 221),<sup>1</sup> you remark that 'very few among the so-called savage primitive races had or have any funeral rites or ceremonies.' Allow me to point out that the aborigines of the Chota Nagpur plateau have a very ancient custom of erecting large blocks of unhewn stone in memory of their 'departed dead.' These pillars vary in height from 5 to 15 feet. . . ." H.P.B. commented on this in an editorial note.]

. . . We would observe to our amiable correspondent, that in saying that "very few among the savage primitive races had or have any funeral ceremonies," we were not thinking of the monoliths and memorial stones placed on their tombs. The latter cannot be classed with either "rites or "ceremonies," but belong to the various modes of disposing of the dead and preserving the memory of the seat where they were buried. They entail none of that extravagant expenditure lavished by the Hindus and Parsees as well as by the Roman Catholics and Greeks upon obsequial ceremonies in which human variety forces them to outvie each other in the eyes of their indifferent neighbours, and to satisfy the lust of their Brahmins and priests, under the alleged penalty of offending their dead — a superstition worthy of, and pardonable in, savages, but wholly unworthy and as unpardonable in the nineteenth century, and among civilized nations.

(August 1882)

[The writer of "Efficacy of Funeral Ceremonies" discussed the subject of *Devachan* and the dissolution of the personality in the *kama-loka*, and wondered whether any ceremony or rite could protect the personality during its period of disintegration, and make it impenetrable to mediumistic and other evil influences, until it had time to dissolve. The question was asked as to the maximum number of years during which such ceremony should be performed. To this H.P.B. appended the following note.]

A ceremony to furnish the shell "with an armour" against terrestrial attraction need not be repeated "a number of years" to become efficacious, could it but be performed by a person versed in the knowledge of the Magi of old. One such ceremony on the night of death would suffice. But where is the *Mobed* or priest capable of performing it *now*? It requires a true occultist — and these are not found at every street corner. Hence — it becomes useless to add ruin to the *living*, since the *dead* cannot be helped.

(August 1883)

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It is granted only to the heart that abounds with integrity, trust, generosity and love to realize true prosperity. The heart that is not possessed of these qualities cannot know prosperity, for prosperity, like happiness, is not an outward possession, but an inward realization. The greedy man may become a millionaire, but he will always be wretched, and mean, poor, and will even consider himself outwardly poor so long as there is a man in the world who is richer than himself, whilst the upright, the open-handed and loving will realize a full and rich prosperity, even though their outward possessions may be small. "He is poor who is dissatisfied; he is rich who is contented with what he has," and he is richer who is generous with what he has.

When we contemplate the fact that the universe is abounding in all good things, material as well as spiritual, and compare it with man's blind eagerness to secure a few gold coins, or a few acres of dirt, it is then that we realize how dark and ignorant selfishness is; it is then that we know that self-seeking is self-destruction.

Nature gives all, without reservation, and loses nothing; man, grasping all, loses everything.

—JAMES ALLEN

## THE HIGHER LIVING

THE WORLD has been prone to measure the stature of man by varying yardsticks. Its norms shift and alter in proportion to the limitations that matter imposes on both sight and insight. Thus, the orthodox and the fanatic, the materialist and he of the superstitious mind, as also the poet, the peasant, the scientist and the philosopher have each a differing standard by which to evaluate the performance of others. Each imprisons himself in narrow grooves and thinks the other to be misguided and on the dangerous path of error.

Excellence in human living cannot be confined to one department of life. Viewing one's progress in one field of endeavour while turning a blind eye to one's lapses in other directions is a dangerous practice. Being tripped up is not encouraging to the great reform effort. Lop-sided development produces its lop-sided result. No one aspect can be permitted to outrun another lest the general progress be made to halt till a measure of equilibrium is restored. This is one of the early lessons that life has to teach. It is therefore incumbent on the man that he organize himself and formulate a plan whereby he can distribute his effort over all aspects of his being. He is a poor general who plans his strategy on one front, leaving himself vulnerable to the enemy on the others. It is a truism this that a chain is as strong as its weakest link. The only invincible are those that are the truly synthesized.

To the very many, it must be a self-evident fact that divinity is all-pervasive. It cannot be added to or diminished, although, because of the tarnished minds of men, its reflection in those minds may appear distorted, diminished, or even totally eclipsed. The divine part of man is eternal, is in fact eternity itself. It does not need to be worked upon to make the man divine. Divinity and the temple in which it is to be enthroned are distinct and separate. Invocation to the Deity to come alive and reside in the temple is possible of results only if the temple on its own plane and in its own right is made fit to reflect divinity. No illumination, however intense the light, can break through dense opacity.

Man in the mass still continues to be prone to animalistic tendencies because of the evolutionary processes that have built an animal body around his humanity. The starry light of that humanity may get crowded out or be shut off altogether by the gross opacity of its envelope which may deny it penetration. It is because of the clogging nature of matter that in most cases it is not his humanity which emits from the man.

It is the material aspects of the man that bend the power of his intellect to their own uses. The brute energy that is available to the human brain is not made to go through the refining processes, but is used on the instant to achieve results on the plane where this unrefined energy can be easily employed. Many a man lives and dies in no way wiser to universality than when he was born. He could not ascend because for him there was not even a glimpse of a possibility to ascend. It never entered his mind nor bothered his self-assessment. The mission of Theosophy is to remedy this and each mission needs a volunteer missionary who is prepared to go forth, out of cloistered seclusion, out of modern-day monasteries, to heal and to minister. The man who thinks that after fifty years or so of effort he can sit back and relax — mistakes. The mission can end only at death.

That there is a purpose to evolution cannot be denied. That man has an important part to play in it is evident. It is not so evident to most that this destined part has been delineated for him in the archetype of which men are but types. Civilizations high in development have flourished and died, for it is axiomatic that night follows upon the end of day. It is a failing of humanity that, living in darkness and becoming familiar with its shadows, it calls the night the day. Too often, it persists in fostering this illusion, canvassing votaries for it, and ultimately inviting a fall that accompanies all deceit. If man believes himself full of light, it but follows that he will not exert himself to go in its search, and thus we have the singular phenomenon of long processions of the blind led by one who exults in his own blindness. The teachings of the Wise are brushed aside as not appropriate to the age, and so the orthodoxy of science and the superstitious fanaticism of religion sit enthroned in the seats of power. Only the very few have the courage to break away and to declare that this is not day but night, dark and still and starless, where each shadow comes to mock our cowardice.

For those who can no longer endure the stifling atmosphere of ignorance and illusion, there is always a way that can lead them from darkness to light. The martyrs of even the darkest centuries have held aloft the torch of truth long enough for discerning eyes to discriminate dawn from dusk. What have these human torches revealed? Shall men allow the martyrdom to go waste, the sacrifice to be ridiculed and swallowed up in the Stygian gloom? Never. Yet, there have been in all ages, as there are now, those who would see the pure white light through coloured glasses and call it progress. There are others who, under the pressures

of personal desires, encircle the light in soiled reflectors and justify their actions by propounding bizarre theories and mischievous codes of conduct. There are still others for whom the light becomes embarrassing as it reveals their rottenness, and they with their followers sulk in caves and hollows where the light follows them not. Owls and bats are not infrequent in humankind. Those who would go in search of the true have to be wary of traps that are set for them by the unenlightened, for these, too, are ever on the lookout for new recruits to their fold. The aspirant has to fashion his armour from such material as will not buckle under the blows of falsehood. The fabricating of this armour and the building up of an inner immunity is an important step towards the knowledge that shall help in living the higher life.

Since each human being has the one true light shining within himself — not extinguished, not to be lighted — ready on the instant to shine forth the moment the encasing envelope is made transparent, the effort centres itself exclusively on the cleansing of the enveloping media. Each medium through which the light has to pass is sensitive and alive and constantly reacts to the ennobling or the degrading ideations of the man. It is thus in his power to shift his future up or down, high or low. It is significant that it is only from the ranks of the pure and the noble that the seers and sages of the world have arisen. Matter and materiality have a density that clogs the tissues and coarsens the make-up of each succeeding finer vesture of the soul. A leaning towards the material aspect of things has been known always to quench spirituality. The refined matter of these sheaths when clogged by materiality can be cleared of all coarser elements — in time. The undesirable has its own energy and its own adhesive strength, and loosening that force is not easy.

Any idea, any goal that is not in conformity with the laws of Brotherhood, any selfish motive harboured in the subjective thinking of the man makes him head towards a fall, and that fall is greater for those who take delight in riding the high horse. Vanity, hatred, fear, anger, covetousness are the great corrodors of spirituality, as are hypocrisy, doubt and love for one's household, possessions and positions. As the aspirant succumbs to each, his light is to that extent diminished. Yet, his effort and struggles towards that light do not go unrecognized. So long as he wends his laboured way to the goal, he is the future hope of mankind.

It is an occult law that when a man rises superior to his individual failings, he lifts, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part.

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## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The one-crore-rupee Gayatri Yagna held last month on the bed of the Sabarmati in Ahmedabad has justifiably aroused a good deal of criticism and been characterized as an affront to our semi-starved and suffering masses, especially the cyclone victims in the South. The aims of this colossal nine-day ritual — involving the burning of 32,000 kilograms of ghee, 50,000 litres of milk, 250 quintals of rice, sesame seeds and other ingredients — were, as alleged by its organizers, to uphold *Bharatiya sanskriti* (Indian culture) and to usher in *vishwa shanti* (world peace). Far from accomplishing anything worth while, such traditions of making burnt offerings to the gods go to show the degradation which the ideal of true Yagna has suffered at the hands of the priest class.

An editorial in *The Sunday Standard* for February 19 states, under the title “The Nine-Day Wonder”:

Nobody need object to the chanting of mantras, Vedic or otherwise, or even to the holding of yagnas, provided the offerings are symbolic and do not involve such criminal waste of precious food. Whether the government should have intervened is not an easy question to answer. But, perhaps, it is as well that it was left to private individuals, most of them good Hindus, too, to mobilize public opinion against precious food going up in smoke.

The Pakhand Virodhi Samiti, representing 13 youth and social welfare organizations, has done well to hold a parallel yagna in the same city at which symbols of “corruption, untouchability, black-marketing and other evils” were burnt and programmes launched to educate the people against the “huge wastage and the futility of such functions.” Political parties were shy of jumping into the fray either on behalf of the organizers of the Gayatri Yagna or those registering their protest against it, thus preventing the controversy from acquiring a partisan twist....

Deep-seated superstitions cannot be removed in a day. Though logic rarely has an upper hand in matters of faith, it would be just as well to remind everyone that worship, in not so distant a future, often used to involve human sacrifice. If that could have been banned, so can the custom of burning ghee, milk and rice. The gods will not take it amiss if they are offered incense and the food is distributed in their name to the thousands who go hungry each day.

In previous yugas, the rites of yagna-sacrifice were elaborate; at the

dawn of Kali Yuga, Krishna inaugurated a mighty change and introduced simplicity: "a leaf, a flower, or fruit, or water." Two thousand five hundred years later and also two thousand five hundred years ago Gautama, the Buddha, took men's minds a step further; in confirming the *Gita* teaching, he emphasized the inner ritual as real, outer sacrifices to God and Gods as dangerous and futile. And in our own time H.P.B. carried on the mission of making men reliant on the Self within and transforming all life-actions into sacrifices, because all deeds are to be infused with the pure thoughts of the indwelling Ego.

The effect of true sacrifice is real and magical, but it is our sinful intentions that are the proper sacrificial victims. The true Yagna is that performed by each man in his own nature upon the altar of his own heart.

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Belief in the evil eye has persisted through the ages. It posits that someone can harm another person, an animal, or a material object with a glance or by staring. This belief, though little studied, is spread over all continents and persists in many cultures to this day.

Anthropologist Brian Spooner, in the book *The Evil Eye* (edited by Clarence Maloney), feels that the phenomenon is widespread for psychological reasons: "Staring is an act with connotations that vary from inauspiciousness to downright rudeness, according to culture."

John Roberts of the University of Pittsburgh examined several cultures throughout the world, and found that 67 of them had some belief in the evil eye. He found that certain characteristics were strongly associated with the belief. A person believed to have the evil eye is often thought to be hostile, envious, and not conforming to the cultural codes. Envy is particularly associated with the evil eye. In many cultures, giving someone a compliment can be a threat, since it may be an expression of envy for another person's good fortune. Children are thought to be especially susceptible and may become ill or die if someone admires them.

Afflictions incurred by evil-eye victims range from headaches and exhaustion to a serious accident, illness, or even sudden death. In most cultures, the wielder of the evil eye does not necessarily know that he possesses the power, and may not be able to control it if he does.

Like witchcraft and magic, the evil eye provides a reason for random events that are otherwise inexplicable. As anthropologists Leonard Mo

and Stephen Cappannari put it, "The evil eye offers a ready explanation for the causation of mental illness, disease, disaster, crisis, famine and death."

The power of the eye — which H.P.B. describes as the most occult of all our outer organs — is a fact, however many superstitions may have gathered round it. The subject merits deeper consideration, related as it is to that of magnetism. The ancients taught that the astral light is projected from the eyes, the thumbs and the palms of the hands. The pure life-giving Light, or magnetic fluid, is called in *The Secret Doctrine* (I. 76 fn.) "Od," while "Ob" is the name given to "the messenger of death used by the sorcerers, the nefarious evil fluid." The evil eye is nothing but the direction of this invisible fluid, charged with malicious will and hatred, from one person to another, and sent out with the intention of harming him. In *Isis Unveiled* H.P.B. wrote:

The same power which enables one to compress the astral fluid so as to form an impenetrable shell around one, can be used to direct, so to speak, a bolt of the fluid against a given object, with fatal force. Many a dark revenge has been taken in that way; and in such cases the coroner's inquest will never disclose anything but sudden death, apparently resulting from heart-disease, an apoplectic fit, or some other natural, but still not veritable cause. Many persons firmly believe that certain individuals possess the power of the evil eye. The *mal'occhio*, or *jettatura* is a belief which is prevalent throughout Italy and Southern Europe. . . . There are persons who can kill toads by merely looking at them, and can even slay individuals. The malignance of their desire brings evil forces to a focus, and the death-dealing bolt is projected, as though it were a bullet from a rifle. (I. 380)

Not all evil-wishers, however, are sorcerers, or high adepts in black magic. In many cases, having the evil eye simply means possessing the enormous plastic power of imagination which works involuntarily, and is thus turned unconsciously to bad uses. "For what is the power of the evil eye?" H.P.B. asks; and answers:

Simply a great plastic power of thought, so great as to produce a current impregnated with the potentiality of every kind of misfortune and accident, which inoculates, or attaches itself to any person who comes within it. A *jettatore* (one with the evil eye) need not be even imaginative, or have evil intentions or wishes. He may be simply a person who is naturally fond of witnessing or reading about sensational scenes, such as murder, ex-

ecutions, accidents, etc., etc. He may be not even thinking of any of these at the moment his eye meets his future victim. But the currents have been produced and exist in his visual ray ready to spring into activity the instant they find suitable soil, like a seed fallen by the way and ready to sprout at the first opportunity. ("Dialogues Between the Two Editors": *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

How great, then, is our responsibility to control our thoughts, lest we unwittingly harm others and invite upon ourselves the evil Karma of thinkers who brood mischief!

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Under the title "The Mysterious Placebo: How Mind Helps Medicine Work" (*Saturday Review*, October 1, 1977), Norman Cousins writes of "dummy drugs" and the will to live — a much-discussed topic today. The word "placebo" is derived from the Latin root meaning "to please." A placebo, therefore, is generally a milk-sugar tablet dressed up like an authentic pill, given more for the purpose of placating a patient than for meeting a clearly diagnosed organic need. After being for a long time in general disrepute with a large section of the medical profession, the placebo is now receiving serious attention. Mr. Cousins writes of the vistas in mind-body relationship that this innocuous pill is opening up:

The doctor knows that it is the prescription slip itself, even more than what is written on it, that is often the vital ingredient for enabling a patient to get rid of whatever is ailing him. Drugs are not always necessary. Belief in recovery always is. And so the doctor may prescribe a placebo in cases where reassurance for the patient is far more useful than a famous-name pill three times a day.

This strange-sounding word *placebo* is pointing medical science straight in the direction of something akin to a revolution in the theory and practice of medicine. The study of the placebo is opening up vast areas of knowledge about the way the human body heals itself and about the mysterious ability of the brain to order biochemical changes that are essential for combating disease....

Medical investigators... have found substantial evidence showing that the placebo not only can be made to look like a powerful medication but can actually act like a medication. They regard it not just as a physician's psychological prop in the treatment of certain patients but as an authentic therapeutic agent for alter-

ing body chemistry and for helping to mobilize the body's defenses in combating disorder or disease.

While the way the placebo works inside the body is still not completely understood, some placebo researchers theorize that it activates the cerebral cortex, which in turn switches on the endocrine system in general and the adrenal glands in particular. Whatever the precise pathways through the mind and body, enough evidence already exists to indicate that placebos can be as potent as — and sometimes more potent than — the active drugs they replace. . . .

Studies show that up to 90 per cent of patients who reach out for medical help are suffering from self-limiting disorders well within the range of the body's own healing powers. . . . The placebo is not so much a pill as a process. The process begins with the patient's confidence in the doctor and extends through to the full functioning of his own immunological and healing system. The process works not because of any magic in the tablet but because the human body is its own best apothecary and because the most successful prescriptions are those filled by the body itself. . . .

Placebo scholars believe that the placebo is powerful not because it "fools" the body but because it translates the will to live into a physical reality. And they have been able to document the fact that the placebo triggers specific biochemical changes in the body. The fact that a placebo will have no physiological effect if the patient knows it is a placebo only confirms something about the capacity of the human body to transform hope into tangible and essential biochemical change.

The placebo is proof that there is no real separation between mind and body. Illness is always an interaction between both. It can begin in the mind and affect the body, or it can begin in the body and affect the mind. . . . Attempts to treat most mental diseases as though they were completely free of physical causes and attempts to treat most bodily diseases as though the mind were in no way involved must be considered archaic in the light of new evidence about the way the human body functions. . . .

It would be reasonable to conclude from the foregoing that the placebo effect applies to all drugs in varying degrees. Indeed, many medical scholars have believed that the history of medicine is actually the history of the placebo effect. . . .

The placebo, then, is an emissary between the will to live and the body. But the emissary is expendable. If we can liberate ourselves from tangibles, we can connect hope and the will to live

directly to the ability of the body to meet great threats and challenges. The mind can carry out its ultimate functions and powers over the body without the illusion of material intervention. "The mind," said John Milton, "is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, and a hell of heaven."

Mr. Cousins ends his article with these words of Dr. Schweitzer: "Each patient carries his own doctor inside him. They come to us not knowing that truth. We are at our best when we give the doctor who resides within each patient a chance to go to work." Mr. Cousins adds: "The placebo is the doctor who resides within."

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Shakuntala Devi, the Indian mathematical wizard, created a sensation recently by outsmarting one of the world's most advanced computers — the U.S. National Bureau of Standards' prized Univac 1108 — by figuring out the 23rd root of a 201-digit number in less than 50 seconds, thus winning a place in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. Not only was she quicker than the computer; she needed no "programming." The computer, on the other hand, had to be fed some 13,466 instructions and 4,883 data locations. The odds against her figuring the result correctly, as calculated by the same computer, were 598 million to one.

In *The Times of India* for February 4, Patricia Sethi writes of her interview with Shankutala Devi. After extremely successful tours of Germany, Japan, England and South-East Asia, when she introduced herself to the American masses, there were writeups about her extraordinary talents in every major daily and in many magazines.

Shakuntala Devi's talents were first discovered when she was three years old. Her parents, puzzled by her uncanny knack for numbers, took her to local academics for an explanation; and after she convinced Bangalore University professors that she could work out logarithms, complicated roots and sums in a matter of minutes, she was launched on the route to fame. She herself has no real explanation for her unusual abilities. She has had little education, but, she says, "I've always loved numbers; they fascinate me. Everything in life — art, science and philosophy — is based on numbers." Asked how she could manage to work out a given problem, her answer was: "Sheer concentration. Blocking out everything else. It could be ESP, but as soon as I hear a problem I see the answer in my mind and call the numbers out."

As is to be expected in such cases, most neurosurgeons and scientists

are at a loss to explain how Shakuntala Devi's brain actually functions. "There's very little we know about the thought processes in the brain," says Dr. Avtar Singh Josen, an eminent Indian surgeon now settled in New York, adding: "It's all in her genes." But that is hardly an explanation when one considers that no one else in her family is similarly gifted.

In pursuance of the Third Object of the Theosophical Movement — "the investigation of the unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers latent in man" — prodigies become valuable material for study in the light of Theosophy. H.P.B. has given hints of explanation in various places. One such is to be found in her article "Our Cycle and the Next": "Talent, moreover, and especially genius, are no development of anyone's present life, of which one ought to feel personally proud, but the fruition of a previous existence, and its illusions are dangerous" (THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, January 1961). Attention is invited to her article, "Genius," reprinted in *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 13*.

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A birthday celebration was held recently in California, U.S.A., for Will Durant, 92, historian of civilization and celebrant of the human mind. Also honoured at the function was his wife, Ariel Durant, who for almost two decades has been his collaborator in the series *The Story of Civilization*. The event coincided with the publication of their latest book, *Will and Ariel Durant: A Dual Autobiography* — their joint memoirs drawn from 64 years together.

Will Durant, in responding to the tributes he received at the function, told of some of the things he had learned in a lifetime of thinking and writing. The following paragraphs abstracted from his talk were published in *Saturday Review* for January 7:

To this day I believe there is as much love as hostility in the world, animal as well as human. . . . I have quite lost my faith in the wickedness of mankind. . . .

Relieved from moral limitations, popular literature became a school for scandal and a textbook of sexual anatomy and skill. "Liberated" artists scorned to convey beauty or meaning and repudiated the disciplined art that gives lasting form to transient significance. An odour of more than physical decay rose from our city streets.

In 1963 I made myself an angry Amos or Jeremiah and wrote, and now say to you:

"We have been silent too long; and part of our tardy righteousness may well be due to the lessened flow of sap in our flesh. No matter; let us speak out. Let us say humbly, but publicly, that we resent corruption in politics, dishonesty in business, faithlessness in marriage, pornography in literature and the theatre, coarseness in language, chaos in music, meaninglessness in art.

"It is time for all good men to come to the aid of their party, whose name is civilization."

...I believe that there is a creative spirit in the universe — in every atom, in every plant and animal, in every man and woman — a spirit evident in history, despite every setback and disaster. I believe that the human heritage, in technology, government, education, literature, science, and art, is greater than ever before, is better protected, and more widely spread, than ever.

Let us admit half of the terrible picture that Jonathan Swift drew of humanity; let us agree that in every generation of man's history, and almost everywhere, we find superstition, hypocrisy, corruption, cruelty, crime, and war; in the balance against them we place the long roster of poets, composers, artists, scientists, philosophers, and saints. That same species upon which poor Swift revenged the frustration of his flesh wrote the plays of Shakespeare, the music of Bach and Handel, the odes of Keats, the *Republic* of Plato, the *Principia* of Newton, and the *Ethics* of Spinoza; it built the Parthenon and painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel; it conceived and cherished, even if it crucified, Christ. Man did all this; let him never despair.

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