

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THE BIRTH OF THE DEVOTEE

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THEOSOPHY is the quickener of human perceptions. The study of its metaphysical principles helps one to get out of one's puny self and circumscribed world. For a few moments the student is able to forget himself while he contemplates impersonal realities. That is well, but all is not yet accomplished. Real and lasting benefit accrues only when the student learns to see the connection between abstract metaphysics and his own concrete duties. Many a student is like the “civilized” man who, seeing a glorious landscape, exclaims, “How wonderful! How sublime!” —and then returns to gossip or small talk with his friend. Natural beauty, however, does make substantial impress on some people, producing inner conversion. Similarly, the beauty of the metaphysical world of ideas makes a substantial impress on the mind and heart of the earnest aspirant, and conversion results — the devotee is born. And it is the devotee who one day blossoms forth as the devoted disciple.

This is written for the would-be aspirant. All men and women have the germ of devotion within themselves; but not in all does it stir with the urge of manifestation. The quickening of this germ forms the link between the living and the dead. In the spiritually dead the germ of devotion slumbers, overpowered by sense-life — which is not necessarily evil life. When Theosophy stirs this germ to activity, man steps out of the kingdom of the dead into the kingdom of the living. But, alas, many in whom the germ had quickened fall back into sense-life once again, increasing the number of spiritual deaths in our human kingdom. Death of the new-born soul occurs like death of the new-born body. A large number are stirred by the ideals and concepts of Theosophy, but fail

to protect and nourish the seed of devotion thus vivified. So the very first step to take is the resolve to persevere.

When enquirers are aroused to a sense of the beauty and truth inherent in Theosophy, they become enthusiastic, but many fail to translate their enthusiasm into a resolution to stand fast. They look for some miracle to take place within themselves, and all too often when disappointed in that, sense-life pulls them back to soul-death. But he who continues steadfastly finds himself rewarded by the view of a new universe—

... like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific — and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Thus the devotee is born.

Aspiration to know, and earnest effort to apply — these are the parents of devotion. But the new-born devotee perforce must pass through the trials of babyhood, two of which correspond with the infant's teething and learning to walk. To be able to take in and to digest the solid nourishment of knowledge, the devotee has to cut his teeth by hard study; and to obtain sure soul-footing in his attempts to promulgate what he learns, he must patiently suffer a few falls. These falls will not injure him beyond repair, provided he is all attentive to what Theosophy and the Masters of Theosophy — his spiritual parents — have to say. He must give due regard also to the older brothers and sisters in his soul-family.

One of the most serious conflicts in the early life of the devotee results from his immediate past: consciously or unintentionally his family, or the friends he had made when he was centred in sense-life, for one reason or another, make difficulties, and thus create pitfalls for him. Sometimes in trying to please or placate them, the young devotee falls. If his devotion survives that trial, he may swing to the other extreme, and try to run away from the sphere of duty, only to find himself entering the jungle of failures.

The devotee must memorize and live up to the aphorisms:

"Come out from among them and be ye separate."

"Do your duty by every duty."

The ways of the world not being his ways, he cannot adopt them; neither can he expect the world to accept or even appreciate his own

hopes and ideals, his words and methods. A quiet reflection on the first of the two aphorisms will help him to that realization and will strengthen him.

The second aphorism will teach him to live *in* the world but not be *of* the world. It will show him that he has to perform his *Dharma*, not towards persons as such, but towards his own Karmic obligations. The devotee has to discharge his duty by every *duty*. The method of performing action and discharging duty must be in accordance with his philosophy, and at every turn he must learn to search the Scriptures, the Holy Writ. Before acting he must consult his books; after an action, he must review it in the light of Theosophy. The mental grasp of lofty ideas is not alone sufficient; such ideas must be utilized to strengthen his moral stamina.

Thus the devotee approaches the Path of Discipleship.

THOU hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel
thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales,
and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart losses its
limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of
mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE

THE MEANS AND THE WAY

Unless the flesh is passive, head cool, the Soul as firm and pure as flaming diamond, the radiance will not reach the *chamber*, its sunlight will not warm the heart, nor will the mystic sounds of the Akasic heights reach the ear, however eager, at the initial stage.

—*The Voice of the Silence*

THE AUTHOR of *Light on the Path* says that the teachings given in that book are written in an astral cipher and can therefore be deciphered only by the one who has acquired the faculty to read astrally. It is further said that the teachings so set out are chiefly directed towards the cultivation and development of the astral life. An earlier paragraph explains that the word "astral" means "starry"; and that though that is not a very happy term to use, it refers to that light which inheres in all material shapes and forms, lighting and animating them from within. Until this inner world of light is discovered, the swift knowledge which is intuition is impossible to man.

For the discovery of this inner world of light, the study of metaphysics becomes essential. Perfection and prescience are not the fruits of half-truths, fancies and sophistries. The basic teachings of metaphysics which deal with the history of knowledge and with its tenets on universal unity and causation, the constitution and pedigree of man and the laws of karma and reincarnation have to be understood. The forces and powers latent in man have to be studied and their origins traced; and until the tyro in occultism acknowledges that such powers are attainable by him, he will invariably fail. In the mind and the brain thus made ready by study have to be planted the saplings of ethics. Metaphysical truths have now to be given life and force and movement by making them stir and come alive in the daily actions of the probationer. It is the practice of the higher ethics which opens the eyes of the Soul to the inner world of light. As long as the man remains in the iron grip of ignorance and illusion, so long will he incapacitate himself from perceiving his immortality. Says *The Voice of the Silence*: "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." For some constitutions, the shunning of ignorance is perhaps the most difficult exercise at the early stages of endeavour.

It will be readily perceptible that both ignorance and illusion set up vibrations which must inevitably be antagonistic to or repellent of the truth. Since in his inner nature man is immortal and therefore of the nature of truth, the incarnated man by his moorings in untruth alienates himself from the inner light which is himself. He thus sets up an inner conflict which renders him incapable of progress. This alienation from the inner light spread over long incarnations makes him prone all too often to deny its presence and ridicule its force. Grown to manhood's prime, he finds himself still enamoured of the toys of his infancy, and continues to hug them to his breast. He fails through ignorance to realize that he cannot force himself back into the state of moral irresponsibility of the animal and the babe. His persistence in ignorance and illusion and his consequent imbalance in ethical behaviour must produce karmic results which are unpleasant and sometimes catastrophic.

In her *Key to Theosophy*, Madame Blavatsky emphasizes that the first thing to learn is a true conception of the relation of the body or the physical sheath to the inner, the true man. Once the mutual interaction between these two aspects of human nature is grasped, the student will become imbued with the supreme importance of the inner man over the outer case or body. A study consistently undertaken along these lines will show that the practices undertaken by some Indian fakirs and jungle ascetics, such as those of cutting, burning and lacerating their bodies, are simply tortures which are self-inflicted for a selfish end, namely, the development of will power. The motive being selfish, the exercise becomes perfectly useless for the purpose of assisting spiritual development.

Once that a grounding in the philosophy has been attained, the difficult task which brings the student to the threshold of the occult world is to be undertaken. The first step in this endeavour is the obtaining of the astral (spiritual) sense of sight. The inner vision, which enables the man to see with the spiritual eye only, comes when the sights which the physical eyes present lose their power to arouse any passion, desire or emotion in the man. And it is not only the physical sight which has to be made subservient to the man. As *Light on the Path* puts it, the eyes must be incapable of tears. Any message, be it that of pleasure or pain, that the eyes may bring to the man has to be rendered innocuous and powerless to shake the man from his fixed purpose. So, too, for internal images cast up before the mind's eye by memory, association of ideas or the influences which emanations of men and places bring to bear up-

on the man as yet unaware of their presence or power or pull. "Thy strength is in thy Soul, and thy Soul's strength is in the calm and not in the storm revealed," said a man versed in Wisdom. For the Soul to awake and act, the man must provide within himself a spot where equilibrium is maintained throughout. This condition has to be maintained through all circumstances. The pleasurable or the painful event — intense or otherwise — may be encountered in all serenity and evaluated as dispassionately as any other residuum in the crucible of life. This exercise forces upon the mind the fact that life with all its flowers and thorns and weeds is a serious business which has to be approached in all sobriety. Levity and laxness have no place here, nor are there periods when the student can relax his vigilance. The inner man of light is always awake and the Soul which leads a captive existence during earth-life has to copy *in actu* the example of its Father whom yet it does not see but whose presence he can feel and sometimes assimilate.

Grief, sorrow, surprise, shame, fear and anger are some of the emotions which with those of glee, mirth, satisfaction and excitement produce commotions and vibrations that have the power to drown knowledge in sensation. It is through emotion that the hold of the Soul on the Spirit is loosened. When that happens, perception is darkened and though the light of Spirit continues to shine, the Soul cannot benefit by it because of the fact that it has put on a sheath which is impermeable to the light from above. When darkness descends upon the nether Soul it brings with it loss of all memory of the highest. In such condition, the Soul yearns for any experience — even that of pain — and finding it, it escapes, howsoever temporarily, from its imagined horror of an empty void — a dark nothingness which, according to his beclouded understanding, must envelop him if he is to abjure for ever all human emotions.

The novice is under the disability of not being able to see farther than such portions of the physical universe to which he may be accustomed. He understands that beyond the dimensions of his earthly consciousness there exists a plane where desires do not enter, where calmness reigns supreme and where consciousness opens on to the universal. He knows this, but has not experienced it. If emotions are to be given up, if personal desires have to be surrendered, then the aspirant finds that he is left to face a negation of all that he has erstwhile possessed or cherished. In such condition, he becomes as vulnerable to outside onslaughts as a little child, for by the rules of his discipline is he denied all weapons of offence or defence. It is in such isolation that the

student is asked to find his Soul's strength and use it.

Yet, this is only the beginning. The sensitiveness of the ears has to be overcome. The onrush of waves upon waves of emotion that are produced by the noises that pour in through the ears have to be made powerless to disturb the Soul. Criticism that wounds and lacerates personal vanity, the biting taunt, the foul slander that dirties and soils, the loud abuse and the unjust accusation as also the derisive laughter, must all be met and firmly denied entrance into that inner place of peace which the disciple has established through pain and the destruction of pain. The attaining of mastery over outer sights and outer sounds has to be followed up by conquest over the reactions produced by internal images and sounds—the thought-produced progeny which are but the internal and subtle aspects of their outer stimuli.

Along with this training which is directed towards a control of the man's reactions to outside influences, there must now be undertaken the control of speech. The tongue must have lost its power to wound. The excuse of righteous anger has no place here. The quick repartee and the ironic banter so beloved of the man of the world has to be given up, its memory effaced. The presence of any of these in however latent a form would be unworthy of discipleship. Their expression in any form renders meaningless the disciple's protestations of a brotherhood *in actu*.

Says *The Voice of the Silence*:

Thou hast to reach that fixity of mind in which no breeze, however strong, can waft an earthly thought within. Thus purified, the shrine must of all action, sound, or earthly light be void; e'en as the butterfly, o'ertaken by the frost, falls lifeless at the threshold—so must all earthly thoughts fall dead before the fane.

WE cannot hope to build a better world without improving the individual. Toward this end, each of us must work toward his own highest development, accepting at the same time his share of responsibility in the general life of humanity—our particular duty being to help those to whom we feel we can be most useful.

—MARIE CURIE

A DANGER SIGNAL

[This article by H. P. Blavatsky appeared originally in French in *La Revue Théosophique* (Paris) for April 21, 1889. We are indebted for the translation to *H. P. Blavatsky: Collected Writings*.—EDS.]

The Initiates are sure to come in company with the gods.

—Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo* (60 C)

IN THE FIRST ISSUE of *La Revue Théosophique*, at the beginning of the fine lecture of our Brother and colleague, the learned corresponding secretary of the *Hermes* Theosophical Society, we read in a note (note 2, p. 23):

We term *Initiate* every seeker in possession of the elementary data of occult science. It is necessary to be careful not to confuse this term with the term *Adept*, which stands for the highest degree to which an Initiate can attain. We have in Europe many Initiates, but I do not think there are any Adepts, like those of the Orient.

Unfamiliar with the fine points of the French language, and not having at my elbow even an etymological dictionary, it is impossible for me to say whether this double definition is authorized in French, except in the terminology of Free-Masons. But in English, and according to the meaning sanctioned by usage among the Theosophists and the Occultists of India, these two terms have a meaning absolutely different from the one given to them by the author; I may say that the definition given by Monsieur Papus of the word *Adept* is one that applies to the word *Initiate*, and *vice versa*.

I would never have thought of pointing out this error — in the eyes of Theosophists, at least — if it did not threaten, as far as I can see, to produce a most deplorable future confusion in the minds of the subscribers to our *Journal*.

Using — as I am doing myself — these two qualifying terms in a sense entirely opposite to the one given to them by the Masons and Monsieur Papus, *quid pro quos* which should be avoided at all costs are bound to arise. Let us understand each other first, if we want to be understood by our readers.

Let us agree upon a fixed and invariable definition of the terms which we use in Theosophy, for otherwise, instead of orderliness and clarity,

we would bring into the chaos of ideas held by the world of the profane nothing but greater confusion.

Without knowing the reasons which have made our learned co-worker use the above-mentioned terms as he has, I will limit myself by confronting the "Widow's Sons" who are using them in a sense diametrically opposite to their real meaning.

Everybody knows that the word "Adept" comes from the Latin *Adeptus*. This term is derived from two words: *ad*, "of," and *apisci*, "to pursue" (*âp* in Sanskrit).

An Adept is therefore an individual who is versed in some art or science, having acquired it in one or another manner. It follows that this term can be applied just as well to an adept in astronomy, as to one in the art of making *pâtés de foies gras*. A shoemaker as well as a perfume-maker, the one versed in the art of making shoes, and the other in the art of chemistry, are both "adepts."

In the case of the term *Initiate*, it is different. Every *Initiate* must be an adept in occultism; he must become one before being initiated in the Greater Mysteries. But not every adept is always an *Initiate*. It is true that the *Illuminati* used the term *Adeptus* in speaking of themselves, but they did so in a general sense, as in the seventh degree of the Order of the Rite of Zinnendorf. Thus again, one used the terms *Adoptatus*, *Adeptus Coronatus* in the seventh degree of the Swedish Rite; and *Adeptus Exemptus* in the seventh degree of the Rosy Cross. This was an innovation of the Middle Ages. None of the real *Initiates* of the Greater (or even the Lesser) Mysteries is called *Adeptus* in classical works, but rather *Initiatus*, in Latin, and *Epoptes*, in Greek. The *Illuminati* themselves gave the title of *Initiates* only to those among their brethren who were more learned than all the others in the mysteries of their Society. Only the less learned ones were *Mystes* and *Adepts*, seeing that they had yet been admitted but to the lower degrees.

Let us now turn to the term "initiate."

It should be stated at the very outset that there is a great difference between the verbal and the substantive form of the word. A professor *initiates* his student into the first elements of some science, a science in which that student can become an adept, in other words, versed in his specialty. On the contrary, an adept in occultism is at first *instructed* in religious mysteries, after which, if he does not fail during the terrible initiatory trials, he becomes an INITIATE. The best translators of the classics invariably render the Greek word *Epoptes* as "initiated into the

Greater Mysteries"; as this term is synonymous with *Hierophant*, "he who explains the sacred mysteries." *Initiatus* with the Romans was equivalent to the term *Mystagogos* and both were exclusively reserved for the one who, in the *Temple*, initiated into the highest mysteries. It represented then, figuratively, the universal Creator. No one dared to pronounce this word before the profane. The place of the "Initiatus" was in the East, where he was seated, a golden globe hanging from his neck. Freemasons have tried to imitate the Hierophant-*Initiatus* in the person of their "Venerables" and the Grand-Masters of their Lodges.

But does the cloak make the monk?

It is to be regretted that they did not limit themselves to this one and sole profanation.

The French (and English) substantive "initiation," being derived from the Latin word *initium*, beginning, the Masons, with more respect for the dead letter *which kills*, than for the spirit which quickens, have applied the term "initiate" to all their neophytes or candidates — to the beginners — in all the degrees of Masonry, the highest as well as the lowest.

And yet, they knew better than anyone else that the term *Initiatus* belonged to the fifth and highest degree of the Order of the Templars; that the title of *Initiate in the mysteries* was the 21st degree of the Metropolitan chapter in France; and that the one of *Initiate in the profound mysteries* indicated the 62nd degree of the same chapter. Knowing all this, they nevertheless applied this sacred title, sanctified by its antiquity, to their mere candidates, youngsters among the "Widow's Sons." But just because the passion for innovations and modifications of various kinds made the Masons do things which an occultist of the Orient would consider a veritable sacrilege, is that a reason why Theosophists should accept their terminology?

As far as we are concerned, disciples of the Masters of the Orient as we are, we have nothing to do with modern Masonry. The real secrets of symbolic Masonry are lost, as Ragon, by the way, proves very well. The keystone, the central stone of the arch built by the first royal dynasties of Initiates — ten times prehistoric — has been shaken loose since the closing of the latest mysteries. The task of destruction, or rather of strangulation and suffocation begun by the Caesars, has finally been completed, in Europe, by the Fathers of the Church. Imported again, since those days, from the sanctuaries of the Far East, the sacred stone was cracked and finally broken into a thousand pieces.

Upon whom shall we lay the blame for this crime?

Is it upon the Freemasons, especially the Templars, persecuted, assassinated, violently despoiled of their annals and their written statutes? Is it upon the Church which, after appropriating to itself the dogma and rituals of primitive Masonry, was bent upon making its travestied rites pass for the only TRUTH, and decided to stifle the latter?

Whichever it may be, it is no longer the Masons who have the *whole* truth, whether we cast the blame on Rome or the insect *Shermah*¹ of Solomon's famous temple, which modern Masonry claims as the basis and origin of the Order.

For tens of thousands of years, the genealogical tree of the sacred Science which all races had in common, remained identical, as the temple of this science is ONE and is built on the unshakable rock of primeval truth. But the Masons of the last two centuries have preferred to detach themselves from it. Once more, and this time in practice, rather than in theory, they shattered the *cube*, which then broke into twelve parts. They rejected the real stone for the false, and whatever they did with the former one — their *corner-stone* — it was not according to the spirit which quickens, but *according to the dead letter which kills*.

Is it again the Worm Samis (*alias* "insect *Shermah*") — whose traces on the rejected stone led the "builders of the Temple" into error — which gnawed at the same structure? What was done then, was done knowingly. The builders surely knew the sum total² by heart, *i.e.*, the thirteen lines of *five* faces.

What does it matter? As for ourselves — faithful disciples of the Orient — we prefer, instead of all these stones, one that has nothing to do with any of the other mummeries of masonic degrees.

We will keep to the *eben Shetiyyah* (which has a different name in Sanskrit), the perfect cube which, while containing the *delta* or triangle,

¹ According to a Jewish tradition, the stones which were used to build Solomon's temple (an allegorical symbol taken literally and made into an actual edifice) were not chiselled or polished by human hands, but by a worm called *Samis*, created by God for this express purpose. These stones were miraculously transported to the location where the temple was to be erected, and cemented afterwards by the angels who built Solomon's temple. The Masons introduced the *Worm Samis* into their legendary history and call it the "insect *Shermah*."

² This sum total is made up of a *bisected isosceles* triangle—three lines—the edge of the cube being the base; two squares diagonally *bisected*, each one having a perpendicular line towards the centre—six lines; two straight lines at right angle to each other; and a square diagonally *bisected*—two lines; sum total—13 lines or 5 faces of the cube.

replaces the name of the Kabbalistic Tetragrammaton by the symbol of the *incommunicable name*.

We willingly leave to the Masons their "insect," hoping meanwhile for their sake that modern symbology, which advances with such rapid strides, does not discover the identity of the Worm *Shermah-Samis* with Hiram-Abif — which would be rather embarrassing.

However, on second thought, this discovery would not be without its useful side, nor would it be without great charm. The idea of a worm being at the head of Masonic genealogy, and the Architect of the first Masonic temple, would also make of this worm the "father Adam" of the Masons, and would endear the "Widow's Sons" even more to Darwinists. This would bring them closer to modern Science which seeks natural proofs to strengthen the theory of Haekelian evolution. What would it matter to them, once that they have lost the secret of their true origin? Let no one object to this assertion which is a well-established fact. I take the opportunity of reminding the Masonic Gentlemen that, as far as *esoteric* Masonry is concerned, nearly all its secrets have disappeared since Elias Ashmole and his immediate successors.

Our greatest secrets used to be taught in the Masonic lodges the world over. But their Grand Masters and *Gurus* perished one after the other, and what remained written in secret manuscripts was reduced to ashes between the end of the xviiith and the beginning of the xviiiith century in England, as well as on the continent. Why such destruction?

Certain brethren in England have said from mouth to ear that the destruction was the result of a shameful pact between certain Masons and the Church. An aged "brother," a great Kabbalist, has just died here, whose grandfather, a renowned Mason, was an intimate friend of Count de Saint-Germain, when the latter was sent, it is said, by Louis XV, to England, in 1760, to negotiate peace between the two countries. The Count de Saint-Germain left in the hands of this Mason certain documents relating to the history of Masonry, and containing the key to more than one misunderstood mystery. He did so on the condition that these documents would become the secret heritage of all those descendants of the Kabbalists who became Masons. These papers, however, were of value to but two Masons: the father and the son who has just died, and they will be of no use to anyone else in Europe. Before his death, the precious documents were left with an Oriental (a Hindu) who was commissioned to transmit them to a certain person who would come to Amritsar, City of Immortality, to claim them. It is also told, con-

fidentially, that the famous founder of the Lodge of Trinosophists, J. M. Ragon, was also initiated into many secrets by an Oriental, in Belgium, and some say that he knew Saint-Germain in his youth. This might perhaps explain why the author of the *Tuileur général de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, or *Manuel de l'Initié*, affirmed that Elias Ashmole was the real founder of modern Masonry. No one knew better than Ragon the extent of the loss of Masonic secrets, as he himself says.

“It is of the very essence and nature of the Mason to seek light wherever he thinks he can find it,” proclaims the *circular* of the Grand Orient of France. “In the meanwhile,” he adds, “they give the Masons the glorious title of children of light, and they leave them enveloped in darkness!” (*Cours Philosophique*, etc., pp. 59-60)

Thus, if Monsieur Papus copied the Masons, as we think, in his definition of the terms *Adept* and *Initiate*, he was wrong, for one does not turn towards darkness when one is already standing in the light. Theosophy has invented nothing, has said nothing new, but simply faithfully repeats the lessons of the remotest antiquity. The terminology established some fifteen years ago in the Theosophical Society is the correct one, because in every case these terms are a faithful translation of their Sanskrit equivalents, almost as old as the latest human race. This terminology could not be modified at present, without running the risk of introducing into the theosophical teachings a chaos which would be deplorable and dangerous to their clarity.

Let us remind ourselves of these truthful words of Ragon:

Initiation had its cradle in India. It has preceded the civilizations of Asia and Greece, and in refining the mind and the customs of the people, it has furnished the basis for all civil, political, and religious laws.

The word *initiate* is the same as *dvija*, the “twice-born” Brâhmana. It means that initiation was considered a birth into a new life, or, as Apuleius has it, it is a “resurrection to a new life,” *novam vitam inibat* . . .

Except for what has been pointed out above, the lecture of Monsieur Papus on the seal of the Society is admirable, and the erudition which he displays therein is most remarkable. The Fellows of our Fraternity owe him sincere thanks for explanations which are as clear and just as they are interesting.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

THE MYSTERY OF SHELLEY

A DEGREE OF MYSTERY, it might be said, attaches to the lives of all poets, not necessarily in events, which are often extremely simple, but in origin, meaning, and source of inspiration. In the case of Shelley, however, it goes deeper, Shelley who died tragically at the early age of twenty-nine, but who, constantly, throughout his work, seems to draw from the wells of immemorial Truth. Yet Shelley was born the son of a mediocre, if wealthy, English country landowner and given a conventional education at Eton and at Oxford University. The scale of values normal to his family he rejected practically from his childhood, and as heir to a baronetcy he was a disappointment and perplexity to his father, relations between them worsening steadily as Shelley's strange personality developed.

What, we may ask [quoting from an unrecorded source], is the exact nature of the mystery behind the life of Shelley? In the 130-odd years since his death, hundreds of books have been written, interpreting his poetry, seeking to understand his life. The plain fact is that Shelley's life can only be "understood" if he is accepted as one of the "new race," who spoke the language and knew the ways of the Immortals and attempted to live on earth the life he knew in "heaven." In heaven love is the only law, and by that law Shelley sought on earth to live. His was a singularly harsh term of imprisonment in the body, and he could never properly adjust himself to the prison régime.

In this brief article let us try to get at least a moiety of understanding as to how he learnt that "language," which poured forth in glowing poetry and which seems to express so much of the wisdom of the ages. Much of what it inculcates would appear to have been known to him — boundless charity, Universal Brotherhood, compassion for every living creature, deep reverence for the One Absolute Principle, while steadily opposing Its misrepresentation in man-made religions, and a sense of unity that leads him to pen these lines in "Epipsychidion":

The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
In love and worship, blends itself with God.

We gather that, at an early stage of life, Shelley sought to comprehend "the tale of what we are," asking himself the fundamental questions:

Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? . . .

He is doubtless referring to this when he says in his long poem, "The Revolt of Islam":

... 'Twas many years ago,
Since first my thirsting soul aspired to know
The secrets of this wondrous world...

But just how early this aspiration arose is indicated by Shelley's fellow-poet and biographer, John Addington Symonds, who refers to an earlier passage as descriptive of Shelley's sufferings "among the unsympathetic inmates of a school." Shelley, he says, was only ten when he was sent to "an academy kept by a Dr. Greenlaw and frequented by the sons of London tradesmen, who proved but uncongenial companions to his gentle spirit." Here the boy must have uttered the vow he describes in the poem (written, incidentally, at the age of twenty-five):

... I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power...

Still more definite is his own reference in his dedication of the poem to his wife Mary:

I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep; a fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why...

And he goes on to relate how

... from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn, but from that secret store
Wrought linkèd armour for my soul...

It is tempting to speculate what those "forbidden mines of lore" might be, but the point to fix on is that at this stage Shelley was developing by the assimilation of recorded wisdom, before coming at a later period to the wisdom latent in his own depths. What he says of his idealized Prince Athanase we may take as applying to himself:

With soul-sustaining songs, and sweet debates
Of ancient lore [he] fed his lonely being,

until

His soul had wedded Wisdom, and her dower
Is love and justice...

— qualities which were indeed Shelley's own from his unhappy school-days onward. Neither the cruelty of his headmaster nor the torments inflicted on him by his classmates could affect those principles by which he shaped his life. "I hate," he wrote, in maturity, to a critic,

I hate thy want of truth and love,
How should I then hate thee?

A truly Theosophical distinction between the sinner and the sin!

"What," asks Shelley, in his drama "Hellas," "has thought to do with time or place or circumstance?" — a question he may have put to himself even as a child in the midst of his misery at Sion House. There, as we have seen, he early found the answer — reliance upon

The good and mighty of departed ages . . .
. . . such perish, but they leave
All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty,
Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive,
To be a rule of law to ages that survive.

Does not this recall the opening lines of Book IV of the *Gita*, as given in Sir Edwin Arnold's verse translation, where Sri Krishna tells Arjuna of the transmission of the "deathless Yoga, this deep union . . . down the line of all my royal Rishis"? Shelley, too, uses the word "deathless." "With deathless minds," he says, "my soul communion knew," and that very conjuncture of "mind" and "soul" makes one feel how deep his affinity would have been with the *Gita*. In her preface to his prose works his widow tells us that "had not Shelley deserted metaphysics for poetry in his youth . . . he would have presented the world with a complete theory of mind," adding that "he considered these philosophical views of mind and nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry."

With Patanjali, too, he might well have had "communion," Patanjali who states in Aphorism 21 of his second Book (Mr. Judge's rendering), that "For the sake of the soul alone, the Universe exists." Shelley would have agreed, for there is always, to him, an unreality, an unsubstantiality, about the phenomenal world.

. . . This Whole . . . is but a vision . . .
Thought is its cradle and its grave; nor less
The Future and the Past are idle shadows
Of thought's eternal flight . . .

On this let H.P.B. comment. "The future lies in the present," she

says, "and both include the Past. . . . For the Occultist and the average Theosophist the Future and the Past are both included in each moment of their lives, hence in the eternal PRESENT."

Existence, too, for our poet, has its unreal quality — "the dream of life," "the painted veil which those who live call life" — a veil, or screen, on which he sees

Multitudinous shadows shifting from a scene —
 What but mockery can they mean,
 Where I am — where thou hast been?

This transitoriness, this unreality, seems to have been ever present in his mind. In fact, one of his earliest poems, like one of his later ones, is called "Mutability," and ends with the line, "Nought may endure but Mutability."

It may have been the need to escape from this sense of flux that urged him on beyond mere metaphysics, as though an inner voice bade him

. . . commune with
 That portion of thyself which was ere thou
 Didst start for this brief race,

so that his soul-powers, strengthened by wisdom inbibed from without, might unfold and mature through wisdom springing up from within him, bringing the realization that there is a greater power than even Mutability, namely,

. . . the secret Strength of things
 Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
 Of Heaven is as a law . . .

With those implications of "secret strength," government, and law, and still more with another phrase, "my sphere of being," does not there come a sense of stability, of *dharma*? Brief may be the race, but the course is sure. Both the starting-point and the point of return are within our "sphere."

But not from books alone, apparently, did Shelley achieve this development. Did he perhaps begin to practise some form of *yoga*, self-taught, as he seems to hint?—

Such impulses within my mortal frame
 Arose, and they were dear to memory,
 Like tokens of the dead . . .

Are not these last eight words significant? Is Shelley thinking of

past selves and the knowledge gained by them? Much might lie too deep for recovery, but still he can avow that

Enough from incommunicable dream
And twilight phantasms and deep noonday thought
Has shone within me,

to enable him to triumph over the illusion of the painted veil and the sad realism of mutability. He is assured now that

... the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same.

Here we catch a truly Theosophical note. Says Mr. Judge: "Each spirit is a manifestation of the One Spirit, and thus a part of all. It passes through a series of experiences in incarnation" — (Mutability) — "and is destined to ultimate reunion with the Divine" (*Epitome of Theosophy*, p. 22). Shelley, Theosophist unawares, never seeks to define that One Spirit. In what is perhaps his most famous stanza in "Adonais," an elegy on the death of his brother-poet, the young Keats, he says simply, "The One remains, the many change and pass." Yet between the One and the many he perceives relationship, taking himself as a single unit of the many.

I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate fantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around.

Once again he has drawn nigh to Patanjali. Let us remind ourselves of Aphorism 23 in the second Book:

The conjuncture of the soul with the organ of thought, and thus with nature, is the cause of its apprehension of the actual condition of the nature of the Universe and of the soul itself.

In the next Aphorism, however, the Sage continues:

The cause of this conjuncture is what is to be quitted, and that cause is ignorance.

Almost in response comes Shelley's cry, to no specific god but to Liberty, that Liberty which, for good or ill, is the attendant daemon of

every pilgrim-ego:

Come thou, but lead out of the inmost cave
Of man's deep spirit . . .

Wisdom.

In conclusion — what? Will the mystery of Shelley ever be finally unravelled? Was his a life divided between two planes? Was he what is sometimes called an “obscured adept” or a “resting adept”? Theosophy indicates that there are such beings as obscured adepts — souls returned to earth with partial memory of knowledge and experience gained in more spiritual lives and conditions. Perhaps this is to test and develop their ability to manifest, in spite of the obscurations incident to any human birth, the deeper understanding they have gained in former births. Even if Shelley had written nothing but his “Prometheus Unbound” we might justly suspect that he was of this company.

Without a basis in metaphysics, without knowing aught of the source of Shelley's inspiration, biographers, critics and devotees, all are baffled, but perhaps the late Dr. Joad (now too easily forgotten) came near to understanding this most inspired of English poets when he wrote as follows:

The genius is the repository of a special potentiality of Life expressly created for the specific purpose of carrying life to higher levels by giving man a new insight into Truth.

Such a one, inevitably, in such a world as this incurs misapprehension, enmity and suffering. Shelley experienced these in full measure. But “Truth's deathless voice” rings out triumphantly from his poetry.

BEAUTY is the elimination of superfluties.

—MICHELANGELO

THE HEART'S MIND

As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.

—*Proverbs*, XXIII. 7

THEOSOPHY is the message of the heart and is sometimes called the Heart Doctrine; but it also satisfies the intellect, advocating as it does study and search. We are told in the First Item of *The Secret Doctrine* that the facts constituting the system of thought we know today as Theosophy were collected and collated by countless generations of Sages and Seers, and no one's experience or vision was accepted until it was checked, tested and verified by the visions and experiences of other great Seers and Adepts, so that this body of wisdom is the result of collective evidence and is not based on anyone's independent experience or authority.

And so Theosophy is the balanced combination of the heart and the head. Sometimes, however, the heart message is sadly neglected, and as a result, particularly today, we find civilization oscillating between two great fires, the fire of the heart and the fire of the lower pas-sional nature. The fire of the heart was originally lit by the great Sages, Saviours and Teachers of humanity, and time and again there have been attempts to rekindle that fire. But, because of man's ignorance and evil ways, his passions and tyrannies, the dying embers of that fire emit today but a fitful glow.

Both the heart and the head play important roles in the constitution of man. Modern psychology gives us a wealth of details pertaining to the interaction between the two, but it is yet far from any real explanation, or even recognition, of the ability of the heart to think. Mind and heart constitute the fundamental motivating powers of man, his two principal organs for functioning as a self-conscious human being. So naturally the understanding of man's mental and heart power is of paramount importance.

What is the mind? It is that by which a man thinks and reasons, but it is much more than that. Reasoning from premises to conclusions is the intellectual aspect of the mind and a very necessary aspect. But the power to reason is just one small aspect of the mind. It has another vaster function, and little is known in reference to this. It is the ability of the mind to reflect. Reflect what? Whence originate our ideas? Could ideas exist apart from the thinking mind? That is something that needs to be pondered upon.

From an evolutionary viewpoint, life has never had any beginning and therefore can have no end; and so we cannot say when ideas first

originated. But we can say that we as thinking beings on this earth originated about 18,000,000 years ago. And so for us there was a beginning in the human thinking process, but the ideas had been thought by millions of beings millions and billions of years before. Where were those ideas when the beings disappeared? They were impressed, implanted, photographed, if you like, on a substance which Theosophy calls astral for want of a better word. Nothing is ever lost and every impression, thought, feeling is indelibly implanted. Therefore, the mind of every human being has the power to reflect on many of its impressions under many conditions.

The mind of man has five faculties — thought, will, feeling, imagination and memory. When the mind, which is in itself something of a sensitive plate or mirror, reflects ideas, there come to the assistance of that mind some of these faculties. To see a reflection requires a form — imagination; seeing is imagining, imagining is seeing. Also, as the result of that reflection, a feeling can be stimulated, a certain kind of feeling.

There are many kinds of feeling, because man is both animal and godlike; there is animal feeling and there is divine feeling, lower and higher feeling, impure and pure feeling. The senses contribute to partial knowledge of life, but limited as they are by matter, they generally bring us feelings which are physical sensations. The animal world also experiences these.

Then another step can be taken by the mind — the use of the faculty to reason about those feelings. We have human emotions, feelings such as love, courage, fearlessness, feelings of loyalty, of honour, of patriotism. They are feelings which are superior to the animal feelings, for they have been thought about, reasoned about. When we approach this particular area of the mind, that of human feelings and emotions, we have come into a realm which may be classified under the general head "psychic." This is where the intellect and the feelings, the mind and the heart, begin to merge. The term "psychic" is used to express the whole gamut of man's powers of mind, from the highest spiritual to the lowest physical.

To turn from the mind to the heart. The illumination of the heart, the power of the heart to think, would be useless except for the fact that there is something to illumine. Of what use would light be if there was no life, no world, nothing to be lit up? The heart is the centre of the spiritual man, the Real Man. It is sometimes spoken of as the king of the body. There is a spot in the heart which is the first to live in

the foetus and the last to die. The Deity, the only Deity man can know anything about, lives in the heart, the spiritual heart.

Now, we shall find that in the higher realms of being heart and mind are one entity. In the psychic realm, desire and intellect are the two ruling principles; but on the plane of the spiritual man, these merge and become one. Many a problem, such as that of good and evil, has arisen because of the separation of heart and mind. On the animal or even the purely human plane of existence, heart and mind do not act as one, but as two separate and generally antagonistic forces, and this is where the trouble begins. This is the source of all selfishness and separateness.

The ability of man to receive and give off impressions is generally attributed to material or sensuous causes. But the actual causal processes originate in Spirit, which is the Real Man and of whom little or nothing is known. Therefore, there has been no real basis for ethics other than sentiment, religious dogmas and beliefs, and that which cannot be explained by these means is termed "miraculous." Theosophy postulates that law prevails everywhere in the universe, and that true knowledge cannot be acquired except on the basis of effort and by the use not only of the mind but of faculties that in most people are practically dormant for lack of use.

To return to our mental faculties, we can take an illustration to understand how they function. Supposing a person enters a wood with a little child. The child strays and a rattlesnake is not far off. The first intimation of this to the adult is the sound of the rattle, which is impressed upon him through the sense of hearing. As a result of that sensation, and through association of ideas, a fear arises, and that is memory, for that person in the past has passed through a similar experience. We have, therefore, the interaction of sensation and feeling. Another faculty of the mind is quickly brought to bear upon the situation, namely, reason; and because of reason, memory and sensation, the whole picture is focused in the mind of the adult. In spite of that, and to save the life of the child, the adult attacks the rattlesnake, risks his own life, and out of that experience arises a feeling—we call it courage. We know that an animal would have reacted in the same manner up to a certain point, would have recoiled with fear and aversion, would have shown courage to save its young; but in that experience what other faculties would be absent? Reason and a certain type of imagination, because animals have a lower form of imagination and thought. There

is also the faculty of will. When that quick effort was made which resulted in the saving of the child's life, there was the employment of the faculty of will. That will is a heart thought, because until will is free of lower desire it is not the spiritual will. The heart is the seat of all potential life, energy, thought and will. Let us remember that.

We could give example after example to show how feelings arise. We could see how the feeling of hate would arise in a person, the reverse of the higher feeling of courage; but let us just say briefly that all negative feelings are an admixture, an alloy, of animal sensations. It is only in the realm of the lower man, through his sense nature and animal proclivities, that there arise the opposites — such as light and darkness, like and dislike, heat and cold, hate and love — and this is due to the fact that we are so preoccupied with our mind processes that we have fallen away from the source of the heart, we have lost the ability to reason, to imagine, to will and to remember in conjunction with qualities which are entirely of the heart. Recognition of this and the ability to sort out, from among the heap of rubbish which constitutes our lower feelings, the nuggets of gold which lie in the heart, has an important bearing upon the subject of ethics.

How could we eradicate the lower, bad feelings? By educating the mind and purifying desire. The mind is magnetic, is electrical, and in that sense is electrically and magnetically connected with all life and becomes a focus, by attraction or repulsion, for all the correlates which we have just mentioned. When they begin to engulf that aspect of man which we speak of as the desire nature, tides of sensation sweep over and around us, but in the very midst of those sensations, a feeling or emotion can arise like the intoning of a deep bell, and bring back from the distant shores waves of compassion, of altruism, of selflessness, cleansing, purifying.

Wherever we find, therefore, such feelings as remorse for wrong actions committed, the prickings of conscience, better resolves and altruistic urges, we can be sure that these originate from the mind of the heart, and impress themselves upon man's lower nature. Many explanations have been put forth, many terms and words have been used to account for these experiences, but they are not fully understood. There are people whose lives and characters have been completely transformed as the result of an experience. Why should that happen to that person and not to someone else? And what is it that actually takes place? Theosophy would say it is all the working of Karma, which is a word

meaning the Law of Retribution, the Law of cause and effect, or Ethical Causation. We reap what we have sown not only in the past of this life, but also in other lives, for we have lived in other bodies, we have had other minds and other hearts and other faculties, and we come back into this life with the accumulated experience of all these. Even without the knowledge of this, we sometimes act under the impulse of an urge; we have rung the bell of the heart and something happens, something breaks through — when we are sufficiently freed from the dominance of the lower senses and desires — something beyond the ken of the individual's brain-mind.

Therefore, sometimes, maybe under great duress and stress, the stream of the heart's afflatus pours like a fountain upon that being and he becomes another person, able to accomplish what previously would have been considered a miracle, and is no longer held fast by that which constituted his erstwhile normal, everyday life. The power of the heart to think! The man no longer thinks as he did previously. He feels as if he has risen from one plane to another, has passed from a condition of mortality to a condition of immortality, where his power is illimitable, illumined by the light of the heart. Some people speak of having heard a voice, and if they are too strongly embedded in religious beliefs, they call it the voice of God.

Theosophists would say the same thing, but their "God" would not be a Being or form with limits, the "voice" would not be a cry, but a song. Poets, creative thinkers, sages, prophets, have all related such experiences, generally in language which is symbolical, for it is impossible to put into words the full extent of the language of the heart. It is not so much a thought, an idea, as a feeling, and if we are honest and sincere we shall have to admit that, if we have ever touched greatness within ourselves, perhaps recognized by no one else, then the ideas or thoughts which arose within us followed a feeling and did not precede that feeling; and Theosophy would say that that feeling was the thought of the spiritual man, the Soul. Those who make these ideas realities to their conscious minds are the enfranchised beings, the Mahatmas, the Adepts. We have not made any channels through which that idea can come to our brain-mind other than recognizing it as an ideal, a feeling.

THOUGHTS ON KARMA

THE INCARNATED MIND is not the whole mind. Only a part of Manas incarnates in the body-brain. The remaining part, conjoined with Buddhi and Atma, broods over the man, "above and outside," to use words to indicate a different plane of consciousness from that using the physical senses when the body is awake.

The storehouse of karma needs must be vast. No incarnated "soul" can deal with the whole storehouse of his karma in one life, and only a portion meets him, in the form of the *skandhas*, at the threshold of *Devachan*, on his return journey into a fresh life.

The *skandhas* are our past *tendencies* (trained and used by us) and our *affinities* (good and bad, created by attachment to objects of sense-perception, to enjoyment and aversion alike). These have been the active agents of our karma in the past, and once again become agents of our present karma, determining the character of our personalities.

The exhaustion of past karma would proceed apace but for our ignorance, under the influence of which we generate new karma which leads us away from our self-chosen path, and so we get entangled once again in a widening and deepening web of our own making. How may we break these fetters and free ourselves? This freedom is attained only by knowledge and devotion. What kind of devotion? Devotion to *Dharma* — natural duty — a stern law which confronts each man who wills to take his destiny under his own conscious direction. The devotional books speak of this. With lofty hopes one may vow to *try*, but one has to learn to practise the great law of universal brotherhood. Metaphysically, that law demonstrates the One Universal, Divine Presence in all beings; and morally, therefore, it demands compassion, pity and friendly consideration for all.

The devotee need not worry or trouble himself about his past storehouse of karma; but it is suggested that at every moment of choice he turn within, consult his ideals and aspirations, seek to hold dialogue with Krishna, the Higher Self within, and thus find out what opportunity the hour holds for him.

For the devotee, there is no *good* or *bad* karma; for him, each event is an opportunity. At every turn he should ask himself: "What is my *dharma*-duty now?" This prepares one for the path of discipleship and for the inner life that leads surely to the realization of ideals.

THE TEACHINGS OF PLATO

[This article by Dr. Alexander Wilder is reprinted from *Theosophy* (successor to *The Path*) for July 1897. Dr. Wilder was a well-known scholar and Platonist of New York, highly thought of and widely quoted by H.P.B. in her works.—EDS.]

“Eagle! why soarest thou above that tomb?
To what sublime and starry-paven home
Floatest thou?”

“I am the image of great Plato’s spirit
Ascending heaven; Athens doth inherit
His corpse below.”

“OUT OF PLATO,” says Ralph Waldo Emerson, “come all things that are still written and debated among men of thought.” All else seems ephemeral, perishing with the day. The science and mechanic arts of the present time, which are prosecuted with so much assiduity, are superficial and short-lived. When Doctor James Simpson succeeded his distinguished uncle at the University of Edinburgh, he directed the librarian to remove the text-books which were more than ten years old, as obsolete. The skilled inventions and processes in mechanism have hardly a longer duration. Those which were exhibited at the first World’s Fair in 1851 are now generally gone out of use, and those displayed at the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876 are fast giving place to newer ones that serve the purposes better. All the science which is comprised within the purview of the senses is, in like manner, unstable and subject to transmutation. What appears today to be fundamental fact is very certain to be found, tomorrow, to be dependent upon something beyond. It is like the rustic’s hypothesis that the earth stands upon a rock, and that upon another rock, and so on; there being rocks all the way down. But Philosophy, penetrating to the profounder truth and including the Over-Knowledge in its field, never grows old, never becomes out of date, but abides through the ages in perennial freshness.

The style and even the tenor of the *Dialogues* have been criticized, either from misapprehension of their purport or from a desire to disparage Plato himself. There is a vanity for being regarded as original, or as first to open the way into a new field of thought and investigation, which is sometimes as deep-seated as a cancer and about as difficult to eradicate. From this, however, Plato was entirely free. His personality is everywhere veiled by his philosophy.

At the time when Plato flourished, the Grecian world had undergone great revolutions. The former times had passed away. Herakles and Theseus, the heroes of the Myths, were said to have vanquished the manslaying monsters of the worship of Hippias and Poseidon, or in other words, supplanted the Pelasgian period by the Hellenic and Ionian. The arcane rites of Demeter had been softened and made to represent a drama of soul-history. The tragedians had also modified and popularized the worship of Dionysos at the Theatre-Temple of Athens. Philosophy, first appearing in Ionia, had come forth into bolder view, and planted itself upon the firm foundation of psychologic truth. Plato succeeded to all, to the synthetists of the mysteries, the dramatists of the stage, to Socrates and those who had been philosophers before him.

Great as he was, he was the outcome of the best thought of his time. In a certain sense there has been no new religion. Every world-faith has come from older ones as the result of new inspiration, and Philosophy has its source in religious veneration. Plato himself recognized the archaic Wisdom-Religion as "the most unalloyed form of worship, to the Philosophy of which, in primitive ages, Zoroaster made many additions drawn from the Mysteries of the Chaldeans." When the Persian influence extended into Asia Minor, there sprung up philosophers in Ionia and Greece. The further progress of the religion of Mazda was arrested at Salamis, but the evangel of Pure Thought, Pure Word, and Pure Deed was destined to permeate the Western world during the succeeding ages. Plato gave voice to it, and we find the marrow of the Oriental Wisdom in his dialectic. He seems to have joined the occult lore of the East, the conceptions of other teachers, and the undermeaning of the arcane rites, the physical and metaphysical learning of India and Asia, and wrought the whole into forms adapted to European comprehension.

His leading discourses, those which are most certainly genuine, are characterized by the inductive method. He displays a multitude of particulars for the purpose of inferring a general truth. He does not endeavour so much to implant his own conviction as to enable the hearer and reader to attain one intelligently, for themselves. He is in quest of principles, and leading the argument to that goal. Some of the *Dialogues* are described as after the manner of the Bacchic dithyrambic, spoken or chanted at the theatre; others are transcripts of philosophic conversations. Plato was not so much teaching as showing others how to learn.

His aim was to set forth the nature of man and the end of his being. The great questions of who, whence and whither, comprise what he

endeavoured to illustrate. Instead of dogmatic affirmation, the arbitrary *ipse dixit* of Pythagoras and his oath of secrecy, we have a friend, one like ourselves, familiarly and patiently leading us on to investigation as though we were doing it of our own accord. Arrogance and pedantic assumptions were out of place in the Akadémé.

The whole Platonic teaching is based upon the concept of Absolute Goodness. Plato was vividly conscious of the immense profundity of the subject. "To discover the Creator and Father of this universe, as well as his operation, is indeed difficult; and when discovered it is impossible to reveal him." In him Truth, Justice and the Beautiful are eternally one. Hence the idea of the Good is the highest branch of study.

There is a criterion by which to know the truth, and Plato sought it out. The perceptions of sense fail utterly to furnish it. The law of right, for example, is not the law of the strongest, but what is always expedient for the strongest. The criterion is therefore no less than the conceptions innate in every human soul. These relate to that which is true, because it is ever-abiding. What is true is always right — right and therefore supreme: eternal and therefore always good. In its inmost essence it is Being itself; in its form by which we are able to contemplate it, it is justice and virtue in the concepts of essence, power and energy.

These concepts are in every human soul and determine all forms of our thought. We encounter them in our most common experiences and recognize them as universal principles, infinite and absolute. However latent and dormant they may seem, they are ready to be aroused, and they enable us to distinguish spontaneously the wrong from the right. They are memories, we are assured, that belong to our inmost being, and to the eternal world. They accompanied the soul into this region of time, of ever-becoming and of sense. The soul, therefore, or rather its inmost spirit or intellect,¹ is of and from eternity. It is not so much an inhabitant of the world of nature as a sojourner from the eternal region. Its trend and ulterior destination are accordingly toward the beginning from which it originally set out.

The Vision of Eros in the tenth book of the *Republic* suggests the archaic conception generally entertained that human beings dying from the earth are presently born into new forms of existence, till the three Weird Sisters shall have finished their task and the circle of Necessity

¹ Plato taught that the amative or passional soul was not immortal.

is completed. The events of each succeeding term of life take a direction from what has occurred before. Much may be imputed to heredity, but not all. This is implied in the question of the disciples to Jesus: "Which sinned, this person or his parents, that he should be born blind?" We all are conscious of some occurrence or experience that seems to pertain to a former term of life. It appears to us as if we had witnessed scenes before, which must be some recollection, except it be a remembrance inherited from ancestors, or some spiritual essence has transferred it as from a *camera obscura* into our consciousness. We may account it certain, at any rate, that we are inhabitants of eternity, and of that eternity Time is as a colonial possession and distinct allotment.

Everything pertaining to this world of time and sense, is constantly changing, and whatever it discloses to us is illusive. The laws and reasons of things must be found out elsewhere. We must search in the world which is beyond appearances, beyond sensation and its illusions. There are in all minds certain qualities or principles which underlie our faculty of knowing. These principles are older than experience, for they govern it; and while they combine more or less with our observations, they are superior and universal and they are apprehended by us as infinite and absolute. They are our memories of the life of the eternal world, and it is the province of the philosophic discipline to call them into activity as the ideals of goodness and truth and beauty, and thus awaken the soul to the cognizing of God.

This doctrine of ideas or idealities lies at the foundation of the Platonic teachings. It assumes, first of all, the presence and operation of the Supreme Intelligence, an essence which transcends and contains the principles of goodness, truth and order. Every form or ideal, every relation and every principle of right must be ever present to the Divine Thought. Creation in all its details is necessarily the image and manifestation of these ideas. "That which imparts truth to knowable things," says Plato, "that which gives to the knower the power of knowing the truth, is the Idea of the Good, and you are to conceive of this as the Source of knowledge and truth."

A cognition of the phenomena of the universe may not be considered as a real knowing. We must perceive that which is stable and unchanging — *that which really is*. It is not enough to be able to regard what is beautiful and contemplate right conduct. The philosopher, the lover of wisdom, looks beyond these to the Actual Beauty — to righteousness itself. This is the *epistémé* of Plato, the superior, transcendent knowing.

This knowledge is actual participating in the eternal principles themselves — the possessing of them as elements of our own being.

Upon this, Plato bases the doctrine of our immortality. These principles, the ideals of truth, beauty and goodness, are eternal, and those who possess them are ever-living. The learning of them is simply the bringing of them into conscious remembrance.²

In regard to Evil, Plato did not consider it as inherent in human nature. "Nobody is willingly evil," he declares; "but when any one does evil it is only as the imagined means to some good end. But in the nature of things, there must always be something contrary to good. It cannot have its seat with the gods, being utterly opposed to them, and so of necessity hovers round this finite mortal nature, and this region of time and ever-changing. Wherefore," he declares, "we ought to fly hence." He does not mean that we ought to hasten to die, for he taught that nobody could escape from evil or eliminate it from himself by dying. This flight is effected by resembling God as much as is possible; "and this resemblance consists in becoming just and holy through wisdom." There is no divine anger or favour to be propitiated; nothing else than a becoming like the One, absolutely good.

When Eutyphron explained that whatever is pleasing to the gods is holy, and that which is hateful to them is impious, Socrates appealed to the statements of the Poets, that there were angry differences between the gods, so that the things and persons that were acceptable to some of them were hateful to the others. Everything holy and sacred must also be just. Thus he suggested a criterion to determine the matter, to which every god in the Pantheon must be subject. They were subordinate beings, and as is elsewhere taught, are younger than the Demiurgus.

² Professor Cocker has given a classification of the Platonic Scheme of Ideas, of which this is an abridgement.

I. *The Idea of Absolute Truth.* This is developed in the human intelligence in its relation with the phenomenal world, as (1) the Idea of Substance; (2) the idea of cause; (3) the Idea of Identity; (4) the Idea of Unity; (5) the Idea of the Infinite.

II. *The Idea of Absolute Beauty or Excellence.* This is developed in the human intelligence in its relation to the organic world, as (1) the Idea of Proportion or Symmetry; (2) the Idea of Determinate Form; (3) the Idea of Rhythm; (4) the Idea of Fitness or Adaptation; (5) the Idea of Perfection.

III. *The Idea of Absolute Good*—the first cause or reason of all existence, the sum of the invisible world that pours upon all things the revealing light of truth. This idea is developed in the human intelligence in its relation to the world of moral order, as (1) the Idea of Wisdom or Prudence; (2) the Idea of Courage or Fortitude; (3) the Idea of Self-Control or Temperance; (4) the Idea of Justice. Under the head justice is included equity, veracity, faithfulness, usefulness, benevolence and holiness.

No survey of the teachings of the Akadémé, though only intended to be partial, will be satisfactory which omits a mention of the Platonic Love. Yet it is essential to regard the subject philosophically. For various reasons our philosopher speaks much in metaphor, and they who construe his language in literal senses will often err. His *Banquet* is a symposium of thought, and in no proper sense a drinking bout. He is always moral, and when in his discourse he begins familiarly with things as they existed around him, it was with a direct purpose to lead up to what they are when absolutely right. Love, therefore, which is recognized as a complacency and attraction between human beings, he declares to be unprolific of higher intellect. It is his aim to exalt it to an aspiration for the higher and better. The mania or inspiration of Love is the greatest of Heaven's blessings, he declares, and it is given for the sake of producing the greatest blessedness. "What is Love?" asked Socrates of the God-honoured Mantineké. "He is a great daemon," she replies, "and, like all daemons, is intermediate between Divinity and mortal. He interprets between gods and men, conveying to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods. He is the mediator who spans the chasm that divides them; in him all is bound together and through him the arts of the prophet and priest, their sacrifices and initiations and charms, and all prophecy and incantation find their way. For God mingles not with men, but through Love all the intercourse and speech of God with men, whether awake or asleep, is carried on. The wisdom which understands this is spiritual; all other wisdom, such as that of arts or handicrafts, is mean and vulgar. Now these spiritual essences or intermediaries are many and diverse, and one of them is Love."

It is manifest then, that Plato emulates no mere physical attraction, no passionless friendship, but an ardent, amorous quest of the Soul for the Good and the True. It surpasses the former as the sky exceeds the earth. Plato describes it in glowing terms: "We, having been initiated and admitted to the beatific vision, journeyed with the chorus of heaven; beholding ravishing beauties ineffable and possessing transcendent knowledge; for we were freed from the contamination of that earth to which we are bound here, as an oyster to his shell."

In short, goodness was the foundation of his ethics, and a divine intuition the core of all his doctrines.

When, however, we seek after detail and formula for a religious or philosophic system, Plato fails us. Herein each must minister to himself.

The Akadémé comprised method rather than system: how to know the truth, what fields to explore, what tortuous paths and pitfalls to shun. Everyone is left free in heart and mind to deduce his own conclusions. It is the Truth, and not Plato or any other teacher, that makes us free. And we are free only in so far as we perceive the Supernal Beauty and apprehend the Good.

—ALEXANDER WILDER

THERE IS growing every day among contemporary writers a strong disposition to take up theosophic doctrine, and especially in those light stories that always flow from ideas that are "in the air." This will grow as time goes on, for every one with any means of judging knows that the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation are gaining a hold, slowly perhaps, but surely, on the public mind. Both of these offer a wide field for novelists and magazine writers. . .

This is just the doctrine the people need, and it can easily be understood. When they come to believe that there is no way of escape, either through priest or mere lip-acceptance of a dogma, they will begin so to live, if only for selfish reasons, as that the "next unknown incarnation" will not find them in suffering and misery. While the motive at first may not be of the highest character, it will lead to a wide belief in the doctrines, so that, as the spirit of the age is changed, those who are sincere and unselfish will not have such a hard fight to wage against subtle and dangerous influences. In fine, it will prepare the conditions for the dawn of the day when human brotherhood shall be admitted and lived. Men will then see that legislation and strikes and outward temporary reforms can cure no evil. The evil lies within, in other lives, in this one. In a sense, we are our own ancestors; we are building now the houses we are to live in during our coming lives. For our ignorance of this, nature recks not; she holds us fast in an iron grasp, and will compel us at last through pain to believe in the true doctrine, and to live our lives and think our thoughts in submission to the Higher Law that no human assemblies can revoke.

—*The Path*, June 1888

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Though the "population explosion" theory has of late gained such currency that many countries of the developing world have adopted official policies designed to turn down the rate of population growth, accumulated evidence from many parts of the world demonstrates that public opinion, especially opinions held by women and by those in the medical and associated professions, frequently outruns governmental policy. Even where governments support family-planning services and abortion is legal, survey after survey has shown that such artificial methods of controlling births have not caught on.

Behind all the talk of the dangers of rampant population growth, are there not important areas of ignorance and lingering sources of confusion and contention? Some of these are exposed by Trevor Drieberg, under the title "The Population Bomb Myth" (*Free Press Journal*, March 20):

A whole new subculture has sprung up in the West — and also among those élite groups in the underdeveloped countries which have aligned themselves with all that is western — devoted to what may be called the creed of anti-populationism.

If only the illiterate, underfed masses of the Third World cry halt to their indiscriminate breeding habits — worse than rabbits, according to some learned western pundits on the subject — we shall be able to avert the explosion that will surely blow us all into eternity in the year 2,000, when uncontrolled births would result in a doubling of world population compared with that today. . . . If population growth can be restricted to reasonable limits, the pundits say, the twin problems of the Third World — a low and progressively falling standard of living and simultaneously rising unemployment — could be checked.

This is false. A high density of population does not necessarily engender poverty and unemployment, as such countries as Britain, Belgium, Holland and West Germany show. On the other hand, some of the least densely populated countries in the world, mainly in Africa, have very low living standards and a high proportion of un-employment.

The Western experience will show, however, that a low birth-rate follows an improvement in living standards and not the other way round. When people have a way of life worth preserving, they take an active interest in keeping the size of their families small. . . .

Overpopulation is a purely relative term. It relates to the size of the human population of a country or region in direct proportion to the development of natural resources. If such development is carried out through the planned intervention of the state on the basis of

- social needs and of ensuring a fair distribution of GNP, the problem of too many hungry mouths and idle hands will be solved speedily.

Overpopulation is caused basically by a disproportionate distribution of the world's capital assets and wealth so that the share of the underdeveloped countries constantly diminishes. The affluent nations are against an equitable sharing of these assets. And thus the only answer they can provide to the terrifying spectre they have conjured up of growing hunger and unemployment in the underdeveloped countries is a political one. Family planning is that answer. And it is an answer which suits the élites in the underdeveloped countries as it does not trespass on their entrenched interests....

To get to the rationale of the myth of family planning: The political reason for its creation is that it is regarded as a "substitute for structural and institutional change, a change that is required to make advances in education or in the economy," says Mahmood Mamdani in *The Myth of Population Control*. "Optimism concerning the possibility of population control without a fundamental change in the underlying social reality is, in fact, the weapon of the political conservative."

So the strategy of the family planners is to strive to bring down the birthrate in the underdeveloped countries by artificial means, bypassing at the same time the basic socio-economic changes which alone can make such a programme viable, in fact unnecessary. Thus vast sums of money are spent to finance the operation of a horde of social engineers whose function is to attempt to stave off urgent socio-economic change through a political gimmick which is foredoomed to failure, as the family planning drive has proved in the countries where it has been tried.

What determines growth or decline in birth rates? For students of Theosophy, the controlling factors are simply the Karmic cycles of racial and national incarnation, which are somewhat outside the field of orthodox scientific investigation. Nor are they worried that the earth will not be able to support its population in time; for, as H.P.B. tells us in *The Secret Doctrine* (II. 303), the number of incarnating Monads on earth is limited. "Karma-Nemesis, whose bond-maid is Nature, adjusted everything in the most harmonious manner," she says, "and therefore, the fresh pouring-in, or arrival of new Monads, had ceased as soon as Humanity had reached its full physical development. No fresh Monads have incarnated since the middle-point of the Atlanteans." So the Monads incarnating on earth are those who have been here many times before. It must be borne in mind also that they do not reincarnate at the same interval, but come out of the state after death at different rates, and this again depends on several factors.

The following is from an essay in *Natural History* for March 1974, adapted from the Fairfield Osborn Memorial Lecture delivered last year at The Rockefeller University by Maurice F. Strong, executive director of the United Nations Environmental Programme. Strong, who considers himself primarily a citizen of the world, believes that international co-operation is needed more than ever as we approach the outer limits of world resources and the carrying capacity of the biosphere:

For perhaps the past two centuries, the Western world has been bewitched by the wonders of science and technology. Lately it is the "knowledge explosion" that has mesmerized us. We find it intriguing that more scientists are alive today than have lived throughout history; that the sum total of human knowledge doubles every ten years; that inventions are made so rapidly that some industries are forced to adopt entirely new technologies every three or four years.

For at least the past few decades almost all the nations of planet Earth have been preoccupied with economic growth. Science and technology, spreading rapidly around the world, seemed to offer the key to ever expanding material well-being. At the same time, nature seemed to offer unlimited abundance....

Material progress has created a bewildering pattern of paradoxes of which we are only now becoming aware. Technologies once thought of as liberating are now seen as potentially enslaving. Witness the automobile. It provided mobility for millions throughout the world, but it also led to the decay of the inner cities. It determined their patterns of growth, even threatening some with complete standstill. And automobile congestion has afflicted urban inhabitants with foul air and debilitating noise levels. Paradoxes are even more apparent in the poor parts of the world....

To many, especially the middle-class young, material well-being has brought disenchantment and alienation. High consumption depletes natural resources, pollutes the air and water with waste materials, and generally degrades the environment. A degraded environment, in turn, diminishes the quality of life....

As we approach the final quarter of the twentieth century, new questions arise: How much is enough? How much production, energy, consumption, population is enough? Once basic needs have been met, is more really better? Is the maximum level of any human activity the optimum level?...

The environment issue has made it clear that cause and effect relationships are global in scale; even restricted local actions can affect and, in turn, be affected by other moves that are widely separated from them in space and time. Continued population growth in some parts of the world and a simultaneous rise in per capita

consumption in others reinforce each other at the global level in ways that are producing qualitatively new kinds of problems. These can be dealt with successfully only through new forms of international co-operation and action....

Such a "new internationalism" is not a utopian dream but an objective necessity — and one that is well within our reach. But to achieve it, the community of nations, particularly the countries of the industrialized world, will have to exercise a much greater degree of enlightened political wisdom than they have yet evidenced.

In the final analysis, nations will have to recognize that there can be no basic or enduring conflict between their national interests and the interests of the whole human community. The same compelling pressures of broader self-interest that induced man to form ever larger social and political units — first the family, then the tribe, the village, the town, the city, the city-state, and finally the nation-state — must inevitably impel mankind toward a planetary society. Loyalty to this planetary society will modify but need not negate an individual's loyalty to his nation, any more than loyalty to the nation negates loyalty to the family, the tribe, or the city.

The environment issue has helped make us aware that we do indeed have only "One Earth" and that all humans share both its dangers and its possibilities. Perhaps this awareness will help give birth to a new sense of loyalty to the planetary society. If so, environmental awareness may be the key to a new internationalism that will enable the whole human community to realize the promise offered by technological society.

Dr. Lewis Thomas's "Notes of a Biology Watcher" — a series of essays that appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine* — have now been brought out in book form under the title *The Lives of a Cell*. Discussing the book (*Span*, April 1975), novelist Joyce Carol Oates opines that it "anticipates the kind of writing that will appear more and more frequently, as scientists take on the language of poetry in order to communicate human truths too mysterious for old-fashioned common sense." These progressive among the scientists are men "who have absorbed innumerable facts from innumerable disciplines, and given us reflective, speculative works in which information is transcended and something approaching a vision of unity is attempted."

For Dr. Thomas, divisions are really illusory. Man is completely embedded in nature and is not definable except in terms of his environment. Man's superiority over so-called "brute nature" is, in Dr. Thomas's opinion, a figment of his imagination. "Our genomes," he says, "are catalogues of instructions

from all kinds of sources in nature, filed for all kinds of contingencies." The individual exists in a complex field of energy; his identity is shared by innumerable forms of life, some of which he carries inside him. The review continues:

Undogmatic, graceful, gently persuasive, these essays insist upon the interrelatedness of all life. But what has been common religious knowledge in the East from ancient times always sounds very nearly revolutionary in the West. All truth carries with it political and moral implications; science cannot be divorced from the rest of our civilization, any more than an individual scientist can be divorced from his participation in the world as a human being. Dr. Thomas's underlying thesis is certainly a positive and optimistic one — is not all scientific truth, at bottom, *optimistic*? But he is well aware of the immediate difficulties we are facing, and are going to face, since we carry with us, rather helplessly, 19th-century assumptions about the relative independence and isolation of man in nature, which our new, intellectual disciplines, like ecology, can hardly overturn in a single generation....

In Dr. Thomas's visionary world, the earth is a single cell and the sky is a moist, gleaming membrane ("for sheer size and perfection of function, it is far and away the grandest product of collaboration in all of nature") and man, "natural man," might do well to begin to see himself as a kind of tissue specialized for receiving information, possibly even functioning "as a nervous system" for the earth. Our species is an event, a situation. It might turn out, he speculates half-whimsically, half-seriously, that we are approaching a "special phase in the morphogenesis of the earth when it is necessary to have something like us, for a time anyway, to fetch and carry energy, look after new symbiotic arrangements, store up information for some future season.... may be even carry seeds around the solar system."

Since the grand theme is evolution, and not our peculiar role in it, man has become in a painful, perhaps unwished-for way, nature itself.

"The Music of *This Sphere*," an essay from Dr. Lewis Thomas's *The Lives of a Cell*, is reprinted in the same issue of *Span*, that for April 1975. Dr. Thomas feels that the need to make "music" may be more than a human trait — it might be a characteristic of *all* living things. The relatively new science of bioacoustics has yet much to learn about the sounds made by animals to one another. Even the much-analysed language of bird calls is hardly understood.

Almost anything that an animal can employ to make a sound is put to use. Termites make percussive sounds to each other by beating their heads against the floor in the dark, resonating corridors of their nests. Drumming, created by beating the feet, is used by prairie hens, rabbits, and mice. The head is banged by woodpeckers and certain other birds. The males of death-watch beetles make a rapid ticking sound by percussion of a protuberance on the abdomen against the ground. Fish make sounds by clicking their teeth, blowing air, and drumming with special muscles against tuned inflated air bladders. Gorillas beat their chests for certain kinds of discourse. Animals with loose skeletons rattle them. Leeches have been heard to tap rhythmically on leaves, engaging the attention of other leeches, which tap back, in synchrony.

Dr. Thomas is one who believes that somewhere, underlying all these sounds and signals, "is a continual music":

The individual parts played by other instrumentalists — crickets or earthworms, for instance — may not have the sound of music by themselves, but we hear them out of context. If we could listen to them all at once, fully orchestrated, in their immense ensemble, we might become aware of the counterpoint, the balance of tones and timbres and harmonics, the sonorities. The recorded songs of the humpback whale, filled with tensions and resolutions, ambiguities and allusions, incomplete, can be listened to as a *part* of music, like an isolated section of an orchestra. If we had better hearing, and could discern the descants of sea birds, the rhythmic tympani of schools of mollusks, or even the distant harmonics of midges hanging over meadows in the sun, the combined sound might lift us off our feet. . . .

If, as I believe, the urge to make a kind of music is as much a characteristic of biology as our other fundamental functions, there ought to be an explanation for it. Having none at hand, I am free to make one up. The rhythmic sounds might be the recapitulation of something else — an earliest memory, a score for the transformation of inanimate, random matter in chaos into the improbable, ordered dance of living forms. . . . If there were to be sounds to represent this process, they would have the arrangement of the Brandenburg Concertos for my ear, but I am open to wonder whether the same events are recalled by the rhythms of insects, the long, pulsing runs of birdsong, the descants of whales, the modulated vibrations of a million locusts in migration, the tympani of gorilla breasts, termite heads, drumfish bladders. A "grand canonical ensemble" is, oddly enough, the proper term for a quantitative model system in thermodynamics, borrowed from music by way of mathematics. Borrowed back again, provided with notation, it would do for what I have in mind.

All this, perhaps, links up with what the sages and mystics have been trying to tell us for millennia about the nature of the universe. W. Q. Judge, in his article "AUM" (reprinted from *The Path* for April 1886 in *THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT* for October 1965), has this to say:

In sound is tone, and tone is one of the most important and deep reaching of all natural things. By tone, the natural man, and the child, express the feelings, just as animals in their tones make known their nature. The tone of the voice of the tiger is quite different from that of the dove, as different as their natures are from each other, and if the sights, sounds, and objects in the natural world mean anything, or point the way to any laws underlying these differences, then there is nothing puerile in considering the meaning of tone....

Now we may consider that there is pervading the whole universe a single homogeneous resonance, sound, or tone, which acts, so to speak, as the awakener or vivifying power, stirring all the molecules into action.... This is creation, for without this resonance or motion among the quiescent particles, there would be no visible universe. That is to say, upon sound, or, as the Aryans called it, *Nada Brahma* (divine resonance), depends the evolution of the visible from the invisible....

Just as the *tone* of manners, of morals, of painting, of music, means the real character of each, in the same way the tones of the various creatures, including man himself, mean or express the real character; and all together joined in the deep murmur of nature, go to swell the *Nada Brahma*, or Divine resonance, which at last is heard as the music of the spheres.

Do the complex calls of a bird contain clues to its evolution? Yes, says Paul A. Johnsgard, professor of zoology at the University of Nebraska, U.S.A., in his article "Quail Music" (*Natural History*, March 1974). His ornithological studies have convinced him that

The danger implied by an owl's hooting, the peace suggested by a dove's cooing, and the good cheer represented by a robin's song are all traditional, universal interpretations of bird vocalizations that have nothing whatever to do with the actual biological functions of these utterances. Only by field or laboratory investigations is it possible to gather information about the purpose of bird calls and songs. Some are territorial proclamations or mating invitations; others serve as warnings or threats, help synchronize group move-

ments, increase the probabilities of efficient reproduction, and improve the chances for survival.

Ethnological research has revealed that these vocal communications are highly specialized behavioural adaptations that can shed light on evolutionary processes that have affected whole groups of birds. The calls of the quails of the New World are a good example...

The over-all size and complexity of a bird's vocal repertoire, or language, is a compound result of its ecological needs for effective vocal signals, its anatomical limitations, and its innate or acquired potential for the use of vocal signal systems. By deciphering the calls of quails, we are coming to learn more about the actual patterns of evolutionary divergence and specialization that these birds have followed.

It is an acknowledged fact that blood for transfusions is sometimes contaminated with the virus of serum hepatitis that can result in serious illness and even kill the patient. Now, however, a chemist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Prof. Jack E. Baldwin, has synthesized a substance that may prove to be a safe blood substitute for patients undergoing surgery. (*Newsweek*, March 24).

In blood, haemoglobin carries oxygen from the lungs to body cells where it is released for use in metabolic processes essential to life. The key part of the haemoglobin molecule, Baldwin explains, is a type of compound called a porphyrin that contains iron. Oxygen combines with iron for its journey through the circulatory system. Working with porphyrins in the laboratory, Baldwin was able to fashion one that not only combines with oxygen but releases it as well, thus suggesting that it might be useful as a haemoglobin substitute. The new substance, technically known as a capped porphyrin, can carry more than seventeen times as much oxygen as an equivalent amount of haemoglobin. Tests of this synthetic haemoglobin are now under way.
