

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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“LEAD THE LIFE NECESSARY AND...”

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THE BUDDHIST WORLD celebrated during this month the triple festival of Gautama, the Enlightened One, the festival of His birth, of His reaching Nirvana, and of His casting off His mortal coil. Six centuries before the modern era He taught the practice of the grand doctrines of Theosophy — the immortality of the Spirit who is man, its unfoldment and perfection, and the loving service of all souls in full recognition of the truth of Universal Brotherhood. The entire world gained from His life-mission. Today His profound philosophy is neither fully nor correctly understood, though His sublime ethics command recognition by their inherent power and purity. These moral principles are recognized but not practised because His philosophical and metaphysical fundamentals are not comprehended. In this country of India His spiritual reforms received a setback many centuries ago because the old hag Orthodoxy fought them and succeeded in subverting them. India is suffering from the ill effects of that even today.

Part of the Theosophical mission of H.P.B. was to point to the pure Teachings of the Great Buddha, of Krishna who came to open the great cycle of Kali Yuga, of Jesus who came in a descending cycle, as well as of other Teachers of Theosophy. She, as They all, came to assert the truth of the immanence of the One Spirit and therefore of the solidarity of all Humanity.

Today, as ever before, the greatest obstacle in the way of Theosophy is religious orthodoxy; and next to that is the disbelief in the propositions of Occult Science which that very orthodoxy has engendered. The second group — of sceptics — is not very difficult to

deal with; unfortunately, however, it is not inclined calmly to consider and face facts. Disgusted with orthodoxy and enamoured of Occidental ways — as useless and injurious to health as tobacco, one of their symbols — the young Indian lives an unscientific sensuous existence. He considers himself emancipated, not perceiving that he is bound hand and foot by his own lusts and longings, and is a slave to his crass appetites. Even when he sees that his way is not wise or good he has not the intellectual courage to part company with them and to seek new friends who endeavour to live rationally.

The orthodox religionist claims to think and act spiritually and when the truths of Theosophy are presented to him he glibly says, "But this is the same as my old religion: why should I give up the old gold for the sake of this new?" He does not see that he is not living — and that generations of his co-religionists before him have not lived — the truths of his faith. Has the orthodox Hindu *lived* according to the teachings of his *Gita*? Has the orthodox Muslim lived according to the Sayings of Mohammed? Has the orthodox Zoroastrian practised good thoughts, good words, good deeds in daily living? All of them are as false to their faiths as the Christian who says he cannot live according to the Sermon on the Mount.

Any of them may turn round and accost the student of Theosophy: "But do you live according to *The Voice of the Silence* and *Light on the Path*? Do you practise the *Gita* teachings or the *New Testament Beatitudes*?"

Between no effort and some effort, sincere and sustained, there is a difference. The orthodox man has a wrong concept of religious life; the sceptical materialist does not desire to live according to spiritual principles. All the same, the student of Theosophy owes it not only to himself but to his Movement to set an example in Theosophical living. Accuracy in thinking and acting; punctuality in observing his discipline of study and meditation; methodical habits which help the lives of his own personal constitution and facilitate the lives of others with whose Karma his own is joined; regular, persevering support in time, money and work to the Cause to which he subscribes — these are but the outer and visible signs of the inner and spiritual power gathered by right study and cultivation of right attitude.

The programme of practical living advocated by H.P.B. is the same as that of the Buddha in inner mental and moral exercises, but

there is a difference in outer observances. H.P.B. did not establish a Sangha, an Order of Monks and Nuns, but recommended the living of the Higher Life — control of the senses and the mind; opening to the world of understanding the windows of the heart; doing deeds of right charity in the spirit of sacrifice, as many of them as possible; reverencing Nature as a Living and Unified Whole and serving her instead of robbing her, as is the wont of modern civilization.

Practice without study and understanding is impossible; but mere study and intellectual understanding without proper application is in the long run not only futile but also dangerous.

What the world has always needed is practice of Theosophy — the One Religion of Life, the One Science of Conduct, the One Art which creates harmony and beauty in the Kingdom of Man.

You have powers you never knew you had. You are more than you have thought yourself to be. Believe!

A bird flies into a room. We open all the windows and try to edge it towards one. But often it continues to flutter blindly from corner to corner. Yet the windows are open. Nothing restrains it but itself. The whole sky beckons if it will but fly forth.

So we flutter about the little room in which we find ourselves, come to blind corners in our reasoning, beat vainly against the window panes that are our senses. Yet the windows of our faith are open upon infinity itself, if we will but fly forth.

When littleness in us grows less, the greatness increases. When we are no longer bound to selfish ends, we are free.

When the separateness in us is dissolved, we are at one. When we let go our limitations, we find ourselves beyond them.

As beyond a wave there is the sea and as the wave is not separate from the sea but extends back into the sea and shares the sea's strength, so beyond body, beyond mind, there is the selfless Self where each man knows that he is not separate and little and powerless but one with God. It is here that each man knows: "I am the very best that is!"

—J. D. FREEMAN

THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE

“I have no meal for today, what will become of me tomorrow?”

LONG AGES AGO this depressing question was asked by one overwhelmed by economic forces like unto those of today. Some five thousand years ago it was repeated by Yudhishtira, the eldest of the five Pandavas, reduced to distress by past strifes and by an impending war. It occurs in a talk the Prince has with Krishna, his own and his brothers' benefactor and friend. In the *Bhagavat Yana Parva* of the *Udyoga Parva* of the *Mahabharata*, this is what the head of a royal house is made to say:

When a man born and brought up in a respectable family coveteth the possessions of others, that avarice of his destroyeth his intelligence; and intelligence being destroyed, shame is lost; and loss of shame leadeth to a diminution of virtue; and *loss of virtue bringeth on loss of prosperity*. Destruction of prosperity, in its turn, ruineth a person, for poverty is a person's death. Kinsmen and friends and Brahmanas shun a poor man as birds avoid, O Krishna, a tree that beareth neither flowers nor fruits! Even this, O sire, is death to me that kinsmen shun me, as if I were a fallen one, like the breath of life quitting a dead body! Shamvara said that no condition of life could be more distressful than that in which one is always racked by the anxiety caused by the thought — *I have no meal for today, what will become of me tomorrow?* . . . Some men when overtaken by poverty elect death; others remove from cities to hamlets; others retire into the woods; while others again become religious mendicants to destroy their lives. Some for the sake of wealth are driven to madness; others, for wealth, live under subjection to their foes; while many others, again, for the sake of wealth, betake themselves to the servitude of others. . . . O Krishna, a man who is poor from birth is not so much distressed as one who, having once possessed great prosperity and having been brought up in luxury, is deprived of that prosperity. Having through his own fault fallen into distress, such a person blameth the very gods with Indra and his own self. Indeed, knowledge of even the entire scriptures faileth to mitigate his pangs. Sometimes he getteth angry with his servants, and sometimes he cherisheth malice towards even his well-wishers. Subject to constant anger he loseth his very senses, and his senses being clouded, he practiseth evil deeds. . . . If he is not awakened in time, he goeth

certainly, O Krishna, to hell, and indeed, *wisdom is the only thing that can awaken him*, for, if he obtaineth back the eye of wisdom he is saved! When wisdom is regained, such a man turneth his attention to scriptures; and attention to scriptures aideth his virtue. Then shame becometh his best ornament. He that hath shame hath an aversion from sin, and his prosperity also increaseth; and he that hath prosperity truly becometh a man. . . . He that is without shame and sense is neither man nor woman. . . . He that hath shame obtaineth emancipation, which, indeed, is the highest aim of all righteous persons!

These and the words on war and peace which followed, sent Krishna to the court of the enemy, as an envoy of peace. It was the failure of his mission which brought about fratricidal war, and in the fall of the State, the individuals also fell.

The citizen is bound up with the State. The causes which lead to distress and the forces which restore prosperity form a circle — the circle of evolution. Conditions of today are analogous to those before the great war between the two branches of the human family — the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

Confusion and suffering are rampant in the world today. In every country many are distressed, and more are apprehensive and perplexed. The common weight of woe bears hard upon the sensitive, grieved by their impotence to set right conditions. Many such are goaded by the urge both to act themselves and to have their nation act beyond the confines of their own respective spheres, whereas their only hope of peace of mind lies in a clear delimitation of responsibility for present action for each man and each country.

Power connotes responsibility; only tyranny disclaims it. Conversely, none has responsibility beyond the lines traced by his power and his own duty. There is a fascination in the duty of another, which casts its spell no less upon the State than on the individual. It is so easy to see what calls for righting in a foreign State or in another's character or conduct — so much easier than honest self-analysis and action on the findings!

The whole task of man or State may be summed up as determining the limits of their respective responsibilities, observing those limits strictly, and discharging their duties punctiliously within them. As the State is but an aggregate of the individuals who compose it, the same rules of conduct should apply *mutatis mutandis* to both.

In fact, it is to the failure to demand of the State the standard of morality observed by its foremost citizens in their private lives that have been due many of the evils of secret diplomacy. "Responsibility" is the sheepskin ever donned by the wolves of national greed. "To ride abroad," like mediaeval knights, "redressing human wrongs," appeals alike to nations and to men. None the less, "it is better to perish in the performance of one's own duty; the duty of another is full of danger." Alas! the *Gita's* warning falls often on deaf ears, until experience teaches the lesson.

But avoiding others' duty is a negative virtue. It must be balanced by the full performance of one's own. A State has not fulfilled its whole duty when any within its borders are denied equal rights or privileges on the ground of race, colour, creed, birth, or social position; when preventable misery exists side by side with prodigality, to give the lie to human brotherhood. Will any claim there is not ample scope for the efforts of statesmen and patriots of every land to set their own house in order?

The responsibility of the individual within the limits of his own duty is correspondingly vast — circumscribed only by his powers. To pay that which is due to family, community, nation, and humanity is the duty of each; how to discharge it? That question is debated by politicians, idealists and philosophers.

True progress is in terms of the development of the nobler qualities, and the only sound basis of political reform is individual regeneration. As world peace rests on the good faith of every nation, so does the commonweal depend on every citizen.

The same circle of the fall and rise of virtue was preached by another sage — Confucius. From ancient China as from ancient India the same message reaches our 20th century. Will it listen?—

The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the empire first ordered well their own States. Wishing to order well their States, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their

knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their States were rightly governed. Their States being rightly governed, the whole empire was made tranquil and happy.

From the emperor down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of *everything besides*.

THESE are the secrets of true husbandry:

The body is the field; let mind be the ploughman,
 Good deeds thy ploughing;
 Let thine honest strivings be the tunnels
 That irrigate the field.
 Sow the seed of the Holy Name,
 Make the clods of the field level with contentment;
 Wear, as a farmer, the peasant garb of humility.
 Then with the grace of God, His love will blossom.
 Blessed is the peasant who farms in this wise.
 And thou, great man, thy worldly goods will not
 go with thee;
 Maya, the veil of illusion, hath misled the world
 And few indeed know this to be so.

These are the secrets of honest shopkeeping:

Our transient life is our shop,
 And the Holy Name is the merchandise
 With which we are entrusted:
 Alertness of mind and purity of deed
 Are the warehouses in which to store the Name.
 Let thy dealings be with the saints;
 They are sound, reliable customers.
 Take a fair profit and be happy.
 Travelling tradesman, let thy trade be in a scripture;
 And let thy wagon be drawn by the horses of Truth.
 Gather good deeds for travelling expenses
 And tarry not in thy way.
 When thou reachest thy goal and tradest in heaven,
 After thy travels thou shalt enjoy the peace.

—GURU NANAK

PROBLEMS OF LIFE

FROM "THE DIARY OF AN OLD PHYSICIAN"

BY DR. N. I. PIROGOFF*

VII

ON THE UTILITY OF ILLUSION, ON WILL, DESIRE
AND PURE REASON

[Reprinted from *Lucifer*, June 1891.—EDS.]

January 28th, 1891

A KIND of *dolce far niente* . . . a singing in the ears, not from quire only, but intensified—as the echoes of the evening noises in the streets of a large city.¹ A whole kaleidoscopic world in the head *statu nascente*, one thought rapidly replacing the other, the past changing into the present without cessation. Attention fails to catch and fix a single idea; meanwhile attention and cerebration and fancy and memory are all there, and all acting at the same time. It proves to me that in me, as in all others, I believe, in healthy as well as abnormal conditions, none of these faculties act separately; my mind now playing on their respective keys, now lightly touching memory, then passing on to imagination, then again to reason. Only memory does so now softly, in a very weak way, extracting from the kaleidoscope dull though not altogether disconnected tones and sounds. But such a state of mind is not without its charm; for it is the *dolce far niente* of our I.

Looking over the pages written during these last days, I find that I have spoken of illusion. Yes, this screen, as I have called it, is indeed our talisman. For a man who watches himself carefully will be easy to understand the kind of service illusion renders him, and by becoming still more careful he will not permit it to darken too much the path before him—that path which is indicated to him by his inherent, hence irrepressible, drawing towards the truth.

Everything will be explained, everything will become clear,

*Translated from the Russian, by H.P.B.

¹This diary was written by Dr. Pirogoff in his country place, in the government of Podolsk, far away from any city, and during the last years of his life, when he was already constantly ailing. Much matter not directly concerned with his philosophical speculations is left out in this translation, as having no interest to the English reader.

him who knows how to deal with fact — illusion whispers. Learn to carefully observe, sharpen your senses, know how to discriminate correctly; and then will disappear the wonders and mysteries of nature, and the arrangement of the Universe will become as simple a fact for you as all that you now know, and that you hitherto considered arcane and quite inaccessible. Such is the conviction which with every day takes more hold, not only of the high priests of science and the foremost intellects, but of the masses likewise. And this is one of the most important modern illusions, the most beneficent as it is the most useful. This illusion is more than useful, inasmuch as it directs all our mental forces to objects subservient to the most exact sense-analysis and investigation, and prevents us at the same time busying ourselves with that which, to us, has to remain a most commanding mystery. The more the object of our investigation is special, the more it is limited; the stronger the illusion, the more hope there is for an exact and clear result; hence the more blissful and calm he feels who has devoted all his time and attention to the investigation. Having plunged into and devoted all our life to research on these lines, we arrive at last at the conviction that there is nothing behind the scenes on the stage of our action, and that what appears hidden behind the scenery is so only to him who does not want or knows not how to throw a searching look into those nooks. And yet it is sufficient to think seriously, without being carried away either by the striking grandeur of sundry discoveries or by the colossal results obtained through the inductive methods of investigation, and calmly examine and analyse the sum and essence of the knowledge we have acquired by these methods, to obtain the certitude that we learn exclusively thereby only the exterior side of the universe that surrounds us, and also of ourselves.

Thus some of us are solely interested in the mechanism of phenomena, the construction, materials and action of certain sets and apparatuses of life, and its forms; others are occupied with the practical, hence also with the external side of life. By this method our knowledge and conceptions of the life of this world are undeniably increased; its external side is subjected to an examination from different sides; but it remains as much as ever undeniable now as before, and as it always was, that *in's Innere der natur dringt kein geschaffener Geist*. It is this consciousness — so keen for our spirit — that we blunt by means of the beneficent illusion, which makes us

fix and concentrate all our attention on the external side of world-life.

Who, among the men occupied with the investigation of evidences of truths and practical life, will ever think of reflecting upon the essence of things? Who of those busy with practical affairs would believe that this essence is not at all what our senses make us believe it is? All seems plain and simple to him who has got into the habit of viewing everything as plain and simple. The really scientific investigator is more concerned with the *how* than with the *why*. We see a plant growing, we watch it growing, we learn the organization and the component parts of its cells, and follow step by step the division and the multiplying of the cells, and the whole mechanism of the growing process is discovered to us as plainly as it can be. But what is it that makes the leaf grow just as it is, and not in a different way? What is it that makes the plant and the animal assume this or another characteristic species? Why do the seed and the egg contain respectively a germ precisely of the same type and species as those from which they originated? What is it that attracts the alkalis to the acids? What is that cohesion which forces the particles to unite together, and what attracts one body to the other? Why does muscular motion get transformed into heat, and heat into motion; and why does the vibration of atoms produce in us the feeling of heat? All these and a thousand more questions, remaining unanswered to this day owing to our ignorance of the ultimate essence of things, show that we are surrounded with mysteries; and if many of these mysteries are regarded by us as miracles and wonders, it is only because we meet them at every step. Instead of wonders, we call them phenomena, based on natural laws, though we are ignorant of their origin. But when, on the other hand, we meet with something far less marvellous, but less common, we do not hesitate for a moment to deny its reality; we do not believe in it, or else we believe too much, and forthwith call it a miracle. Such are our illusions — and thank heaven for them! Without our dear illusions it would be unbearable for us to live in this mysterious world, circumscribed by an enchanted circle out of which there is no exit.

February 8th, 1888

But is it, indeed, so? May it not be also an illusion to say, or to believe, that there exists an essence of things of some kind, unknown and not subject to our analysis? May not that ultimate essence

again only that which becomes known to us by means of experiment and observation? Why should not our senses be fitted by nature herself expressly to recognize things as they essentially are? *Sensus nos fallunt* may be only another term for *asylum ignorantiae*. It is only necessary to learn how to use our senses, to habitually train and sharpen them, to know how to correctly interpret and explain to ourselves the sensations conveyed to us by their organs, and our senses will never deceive us.

Such are the arguments brought forward and there is some truth in them, but only *some* truth.

To begin with, we judge of our senses and the results derived therefrom only subjectively and individually. Verification of these is based on the general solidarity of opinion. But the judges of our sensuous perceptions are those same senses. That which seems to all undeniable on the testimony of their senses today, may be controverted tomorrow on the same authority. There is a limit to the acuteness of the senses and the more one sense is sharpened, the more easy becomes error, the more difficult the verification of that sense, or its checking by another sense. Finally, however acute and trained my senses may have become, still the question, what is the object observed by me outside myself, remains unsolved. I recognize any object only through the impression and sensation it produces on me. And a sensation without my *I* is unthinkable to me. Meanwhile, the certitude remains to my reason that every object that I investigate can, and will, exist without me. What is then this object? But even besides this evidently unsolvable question, the essence of things — *das Ding an (und) fur sich selbst* — must be for us something else, and not that which is conveyed to us by our senses, simply because our sensuous and mental perceptions and representations, however clear they may be, can never give us a complete and full comprehension even of the external side of the object investigated by us. Could we fully fathom and penetrate into the essence of things even from their external sense-side alone, we would then know what is force and what is matter. And if we could get a representation of things not as they seem but as they really are, without the help and participation of our senses, then would we comprehend the mystery of creation, and also the mysteries of the creative powers. But not only is this unreachable to us, but even the possibility of subjecting every object to the analysis of all our senses is denied us.

Myriads of things remain unexplained; other myriads will remain for ever entirely unknown to us; while our mental representations about those things which are yet likely to be discovered and analysed through an artificial cultivation of our senses, however clear they may seem to us, are still in reality no better than phantoms, misty pictures and faint echoes, often alluring the mind into the inextricable labyrinth of conjectures and illusions.

Another beneficent illusion is our unshaken conviction in the freedom of our will, thought and conscience. Without this conviction, so dear to us, moral life would become impossible, while the phenomena of physical life would meet at every step impediments in ourselves. It is not an easy matter for me to make myself lose the conviction that I cannot fail to wish for that which I desire, and that I cannot fail to desire that which it is natural for my psychic and mental faculties to long for. My thought cannot manifest itself outside of fixed and well-known laws of cerebration, without the risk of getting transformed into something inane. My conscience demands of me only that which I consider conscientious and moral; and if I act contrary to the laws of conscience, I profess that it is because the latter has lost the freedom of its action. However, we can only maintain that will, thought and conscience are not arbitrary, though they are certainly free within the limits determined by certain organic and psychic laws. Absence of causation and freedom are certainly not synonymous terms; nor are will and desire equivalents. I *will* and *desire*, are two different notions. But neither our willing nor desiring can be arbitrary, though they do seem to us so to be. I am wishing (or desiring) at this moment something, because my inner or organic sensations (*i.e.*, those conveyed to me by the organs), and all the preceding circumstances and conditions force me to desire just this and not anything else; I can alter my desire or force it to be silent, but only so long as my will has not yet been weakened under the yoke of various desires and other abnormal conditions. Will, in its normal state, must always be stronger than desire. Will is ever active and is the ruler of our actions. Hence, I can will something good, and at the same time wish something bad. It is only physical obstacles that can impede the actions of a strong or normal will. In will, there is indeed a tendency to arbitrary action; nevertheless, even will cannot be disproportional in its strength to the organic energy of our *I*. I may will to lift my arm.

but my will and its subsequent action are limited by the faculty of transmitting my will to the arm; and if the latter is paralysed, then, with all my will to lift it, there will be no active wish to do so. I shall have probably to return more than once in this diary to this important subject.

The third illusion of our psychic life, an illusion as beneficent as the former two, depends on the inconsistency of our mind and fancy.

Pure reason, *i.e.*, reason viewed apart from the other psychic faculties, cannot, of course, be inconsequential. But we are unable to so argue that pure reason alone should act; while arguing, we at the same time pay attention, we remember, imagine, desire, and (in practical life) frequently excite ourselves, and get carried away by some passion or other. Therefore, our mind, consistent in principle, becomes almost invariably inconsistent in practice. And this is our fortune and also our misfortune.

Thus our mind, owing to its innate consecutiveness, is brought during each of its world-concepts, of its speculations upon the phenomena of the universe, to accept whatever it may be trying to investigate in its world-contemplation, the infinite, the limitless and the eternal, whether it be in space, in time, motion, force, substance, or what not. It has finally to confront infinitude, the illimitable, and eternity, even though it can never form for itself any definite and clear conception of these. And no power of our argumentative fancy can represent to us any image of that infinitude, the recognition of which our mind with its inherent consecutiveness fatally reaches. This undeniable existence of the infinite, limitless and eternal principle, so fatally reached by our mind and its ideation, while analysing the finite, the conditioned and the temporary, is not only a fact subservient to our sense, but it stands higher than any fact, because it is the unavoidable postulate of pure reason which it transfers to the domain of phantasy. At the same time both reason and argumentative phantasy are incessantly occupied in practical life with the contemplation of the various transformations of all that surrounds us, and it is these ceaseless changes in space, time, motion, force and substance, which constantly contradict in themselves the consequential conclusions of pure reason, forcing us to find in everything that surrounds us only that which is temporary, conditioned and determined. This is that very illusion which is our fortune and our misfortune, but on the whole more beneficent than otherwise,

since it forces us to centre all our mental faculties on the research of changes taking place outside of us in infinite space and time. Without this forced inconsecutiveness of our mind and the out-flowing illusion, the activity of our intellect and fancy would be lost for us, engrossed as it would be in a fruitless contemplation of (to us) an unreachable infinitude.

(*To be continued*)

THE TWO first principles — co-eternal and infinite, were already with the primitive Phoenicians, spirit and matter. Therefore the theory is as old as the world; for Democritus was not the first philosopher who taught it, and intuition existed in man before the ultimate development of his reason. But it is in the denial of the boundless and endless Entity, possessor of that invisible Will which we for lack of a better term call God, that lies the powerlessness of every materialistic science to explain the occult phenomena. It is in the rejection *a priori* of everything which might force them to cross the boundary of exact science and step into the domain of psychological, or, if we prefer, metaphysical physiology, that we find the secret cause of their discomfiture by the manifestations, and their absurd theories to account for them. The ancient philosophy affirmed that it is in consequence of the manifestation of that Will — termed by Plato *the Divine Idea* — that everything visible and invisible sprung into existence. As that intelligent Idea, which, by directing its sole will-power toward a centre of localized forces called objective forms into being, so can man, the microcosm of the great Macrocosm, do the same in proportion with the development of his will-power. The imaginary atoms — a figure of speech employed by Democritus, and gratefully seized upon by the materialists — are like automatic workmen moved inwardly by the influx of that Universal Will directed upon them, and which, manifesting itself as a force, sets them into activity. The plan of the structure to be erected is in the brain of the Architect, and reflects his will; abstract as yet, from the instant of the conception it becomes concrete through these atoms which follow faithfully every line, point and figure traced in the imagination of the Divine Geometer.

—*Isis Unveiled*, I. 61-62

OUR ATTITUDE TO RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS

IN THE PROCESS of self-reform, what should be one's attitude in regard to customs belonging to the religion of one's birth? To submit passively is wrong. To ignore everything is also unwise.

If Theosophy is "the philosophy of the rational explanation of things" and if "it alone can furnish the beacon-light needed to guide humanity on its true path," the duty of the student is clear. Seek for a rational explanation of any custom and examine it by the light of Theosophy. Seek the value of any custom by looking at the effects it produces. It will not be difficult to conclude that some religious customs are injurious, some are irrational, and others have a basis in knowledge or virtue.

It is a Hindu religious custom, for instance, that a Brahmana should not eat with a Shudra. Here is a custom which has done positive harm to the country because it has been practised without a rational inquiry into its meaning and purpose. What should a student of Theosophy who happens to be a Brahmana do? Seek the rational explanation: to eat food in the company of people who have unclean habits, whose personal magnetism is impure, is unwise. The rule was good when the caste institution was real. Today there are members of the Brahmana caste whose habits of life, whose characters, whose orthodoxy and religiosity, and consequently whose magnetism, make them very objectionable company to which that of a *mlechchha* is preferable. But for that reason to disregard the principle underlying the practice and mix and mingle and eat in the company of any kind of men and women is wrong. To break caste does not mean to eat meat, to drink alcohol and to do things which orthodoxy forbids; nor to disregard the principle of good company.

Take another religious custom — performance of ceremonies for the dead. Looking rationally at the mental and moral condition of the priest called in to perform the rites, there could never be any efficacious results, even if we were to presume that such ceremonies are magic-rites. To procure beneficent results through magic-rites, they must be performed by wise magicians. Let alone absence of wisdom, the priest is often not even morally fit, nor physically clean. Further, are these prevailing ceremonies for the dead magic-rites? Attention is invited to the Theosophical explanation given by H.P.B. in an

Editor's Note in *The Theosophist* for June 1883:

In every country, as among all the people of the world from the beginning of history, we see that some kind of burial is performed — but that very few among the so-called savage primitive races had or have any funeral rites or ceremonies. The well-meaning tenderness felt by us for the dead whom we loved or respected, may have suggested, apart from the expression of natural grief, some additional marks of family respect for them who had left us for ever. But rites and ceremonies as prescribed by our respective Churches and their theologians, are an afterthought of the priest, an outgrowth of theological and clerical ambition, seeking to impress upon the laity a superstition, a well-paying awe and dread of a punishment of which the priest himself knows nothing beyond mere speculative and often very illogical hypotheses. The Brahmin, the Mobed, the Augur, the Rabbi, the Mullah and the Priest, impressed with the fact that his physical welfare depended far more upon his parishioners, whether dead or alive, than the spiritual welfare of the latter on his alleged mediatorship between men and God, found the device expedient and good, and ever since worked on this line. Funeral rites have originated among the theocratically governed nations, such as the ancient Egyptians, Aryans, and Jews. Interwoven with and consecrated by the ceremonies of theology, these rites have been adopted by the respective religions of nearly all the nations, and are preserved by them to this day; for, while religions differ considerably among themselves, the rites often surviving the people as the religion to which they owed their origin have passed from one people to another. . . .

Under the circumstances, what should an earnest student of Theosophy do? Refuse to perform such ceremonies as are useless formalities. But this does not mean that he shall not respect and remember those called the "dead"; he must use his knowledge of Theosophy and not neglect to remember "the existence of another world."

In every instance the student's duty is to seek a rational explanation and make his application on the basis of the Theosophical fundamental that all processes in nature proceed from within without; motive and thought are much more important than outer observances.

But in all these matters the student of Theosophy must remember not to interfere with the actions of another. He must respect the

feelings of the non-theosophists to whom their own religion is sacred and true. And, further, he should avoid causing pain and becoming unkind. Sound knowledge and a sense of proportion will always help the student to adjust himself to his environment without becoming untrue to his own perceptions and soul-resolves and also without causing unnecessary turmoil to others who may be concerned.

There is a beautiful story of Guru Nanak, the religious reformer, regarded as the founder of the religion of the Sikhs. He was a contemporary of Martin Luther and in many respects the work Nanak undertook is similar to that of Luther, which produced the Reformation in Christendom. Nanak, like Buddha, was born a Hindu; and, like Buddha, even as a boy he saw through the absurdities of a creed organized by priests. At the time of his thread ceremony his iconoclastic spirit expressed itself most forcibly.

Everything was ready. The priest called the boy to attention. Nanak looked into his eyes and asked: "Pandit, what is the use of this thread? What purpose does it serve? What is the meaning of wearing it?" The purohit explained: "You see, dear boy, no one can perform any rite, social or religious, without it. The thread purifies, and will entitle you to be a man of your caste, who has religious rights and religious duties. No thread, no religion." But Nanak argued: "Yet, if a man puts it on and changes not his ways? All our caste men are not pure, yet they all wear the thread and they all perform ceremonies; therefore the thread has not purified them all." The purohit did not know what to say. "Argue not," he shouted, "it is so written in the Shastras and our forefathers have all done it. Enough!" Then the influence of the Higher Self came upon Nanak, and he uttered these memorable words: "O Pandit, out of the cotton of compassion spin the thread of contentment; tie knots of continence, give it the twist of truth. Make such a sacred thread for the mind; such a thread once worn will never break nor get soiled, burnt or lost. The man who weareth such a thread is blessed." The wise words of the young boy, gently yet firmly spoken, awakened the priest-initiator to some perception. He spoke: "Good and true are the words you have uttered. But now look at all this expense and trouble taken on your behalf. Surely, you can see that you must accept the thread and wear it." "Enslave myself?" inquired Nanak. "No, I would rather give my life. I cannot put it on. True conviction gains respect. True and truthful living brings perfection.

No, I cannot wear this." Imagine the confusion in the assembly! There was much entreaty. The priest threatened, and the friends flattered. Both threats and flatteries alike failed. His own mother, at last, said: "Please do it for my sake. Do not disappoint me, son!" "Mother, I obey you," answered Nanak, and he took the thread. He had shown the way, had set the example by his words. He had made it clear that the form matters nothing without life. He who has real Life needs no form, though he may use it for some good reason of the outer life. In Nanak's case he took the form side only out of filial obedience.

Yield and remain whole;
 Bend and remain straight.
 Be empty and remain full.
 Be worn and remain anew.
 Own little and be replete.
 Own much and be restless.
 Therefore the Sage embraces the One
 And sets an example for the whole world.
 He does not display himself,
 And so he shines;
 He does not defend himself,
 And so he is distinguished;
 He does not swagger,
 And so he never stumbles;
 He does not exult,
 And so he excels.
 He does not contend,
 And so the world cannot contend with him.
 The ancient adage "Yield and remain whole"
 Is not empty assertion.
 Be truly whole
 And all things will come to you.

—*Tao Te King*

PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WEARY WORD, WORK

It is not for the sake of alliteration that the letter "W" acquires prominence as above, but since Work is, alas, a weary word to many, the title inevitably suggested itself. Every reference to it comes from one who was himself a worker *par excellence*, and whose use of the word covers work of all types, from the simplest task to his own supreme service of the Theosophical Movement — Mr. Judge.

Here, however, we think rather of ordinary daily work, the kind that so often grows burdensome, so often seems of but little value. Has he anything to say of that? Yes, plenty, for he did just such work himself, routine work that tied him to his desk and that possibly showed little fruitage at the time.

"That work is to be done which lies before each," was his attitude (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 120). It is not its interest or its importance that matters. Be it in the home, the office, or wheresoever, he bids us "fulfil faithfully and conscientiously every known duty," setting the example himself by the patience and fidelity of his routine labours, which served the Theosophical Movement as vitally as did his inspired writings.

"I am swamped in work," he tells a correspondent, and we get the impression that it was not the type of work that would have been his choice, for he adds, "But my courage is up, and I feel the help sent from the right place." Yet from faithful performance of such work he gained, as he himself avows when bidding an inquirer, "Make yourself in every way as good an instrument for any sort of work as you can," drawing on his own experience as proof of the value of such an attitude when he adds, "Every little thing I ever learned I have now found out to be of use to me in this work of ours" (*Ibid.*, p. 134). Thus, though the world would have us do our best by our present work, even as he did himself, he indicates the future benefit that can accrue from it. For, if the "weary word" is a synonym for duty, then you gain, says Mr. Judge, "by attending to it, no matter how small the duty may be." (*Ibid.*, p. 132)

But Mr. Judge's work, some reader may reflect, though strenuous and all-possessive, was invaluable, whereas our own so often seems mere routine. What else can we do but weary of it, hankering after something more worth while?

Mr. Judge can answer that, but in a way which may not appeal to everyone, for he speaks always from a higher level than the mundane. Would the busy housewife, the bored office clerk, the tired mechanic, good at heart and earnest in purpose, respond with genuine zest to his call to "fulfil faithfully and conscientiously every known duty," even though he adds that "it is in and through the incidents of daily life, in work well done, in duties thoroughly performed, that we today can most readily make progress in the higher life—slow progress, it may be, but at any rate sure. These are stepping stones to better things." (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 30)

Mere preaching, some may retort. But no, it is a fact. Even such seemingly humble work can be of use, if only as helping to curb a wandering mind. For, "the truest work," Mr. Judge again avers, "is done on the inner planes, and without this there could be no work done on the outer planes." (*Letters, Am. Ed.*, p. 171)

Pondering these words, we must needs agree, since it is our inner self that motivates our outer one. Our relationships, our conduct, our whole way of life depend on *that*. Therefore Mr. Judge is right when he points out our primal work, which is "our own work, in and on ourselves, each one. That has for its object the enlightenment of oneself for the good of others" (*Letters, Ind. Ed.*, p. 75). With that attended to, the "weary work" will surely be transmuted, becoming instead Mr. Judge's own watchword, Service.

Another instance of putting the word, Work, to better use. "Each," says Mr. Judge, "must work out the problem of life in his own way" (*Letters, Ind. Ed.*, p. 107). Such work should surely not be wearisome. Rather should we find stimulus in it, and encouragement. Think of the vistas that Theosophy opens up! And to those who value and seek to live by its precepts, how near Mr. Judge seems brought to us when he says, "Like you, I merely want to work. . . . I am devoted as far as my lights in each life will permit to the service in the altruist army. Just now I only find T.S. to work in here. Next time, some other way—or the same." (*Letters, Am. Ed.*, p. 164)

Every student of Theosophy knows the extent of Mr. Judge's service of the Movement from its beginning. Did not he keep the newly formed organization alive in America by his own solitary devoted service throughout the years when H.P.B. and Colonel Olcott were in India? Many would have shrunk from the respon-

sibility, many, however well intentioned, might have failed outright. Had Mr. Judge regarded it as merely "weary work," the Movement might not have survived there. It did, however, and grew, sustained literally to his last breath by Mr. Judge, who acted unflinchingly up to his own words, already quoted but well worth imprinting on our minds: "That work is to be done which lies before each."

Does some reader assume that, in speaking of work, Theosophic work only is implied? The impression that Mr. Judge refers to no other would be wrong. Granted, he served the Movement devotedly — was not he the editor of *The Path* magazine and the capable promoter and organizer of Theosophic work in America? — but he was also a specialist in Commercial Law, in which capacity he travelled to South America. Obviously, he must have had his share of "weary work." And writing from his editorial desk we find him mentioning "great pressure and hurry" (*Letters*, Am. Ed., p. 187). Had he chosen so to do he could well have proffered instances of "weary work," and doubtless spoke from experience when he pointed out to some troubled inquirer that "difficulties and friction are the accompaniments of existence, and if everything was smooth and all right all the time we would have nothing to do." (*Ibid*, p. 170)

Needless to enlarge upon the theme. Mr. Judge, from first to last, was a worker, and it is good to read the tribute paid to "A Friend of Old Time and of the Future" by that other devoted worker, Robert Crosbie. Under that heading the latter writes thus of W.Q.J. in *Vernal Blooms*: "His was the voice that encouraged or admonished, his the hand that guided matters to a harmonious issue. . . . The future . . . will show the real scope of his life-work. We know that to us that life-work has been an inestimable boon." (pp. 1-2)

Such words are unlikely ever to be applied to *us*, who must be content to serve Theosophy on a humbler level. The example is ours, however, and the reminder that no work lying to our hand need be weary, even if it is not what we would choose at the moment. For, "Wait," says Mr. Judge. "All things come to him who waits in the right way. Make yourself in every way as good an instrument for any sort of work as you can. Every little thing I ever learned I have now found out to be of use to me in this work of ours" — that small last word drawing us in to be, in *some* degree, of service to the Movement, whatever our present circumstances. (*Letters*, Ind. Ed., p. 134)

“ LIGHT ON THE PATH ”

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The Soul of man is immortal and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour has no limit.

IT IS with extreme diffidence that I venture to undertake a short commentary or analysis of the book whose title heads this article; not only because of the nature of the work itself, but also because it has already been twice commented upon, once by the author and once by a very learned student of Eastern Literature. The author's notes, however, were rather an extension of the original text than a commentary in the strict sense of the word; while the object of the second annotator was more an attempt to show the identity of the doctrines contained in *Light on the Path* with those of ancient Brahmanical Philosophy, than to give the nature of those doctrines in themselves.

The object of this paper on the contrary is to attempt to analyse the scheme of Philosophy in accordance with which this little book has been written; in other words, to attempt to set forth the intellectual counterpart of the spiritual doctrines of *Light on the Path*. It is inevitable that, in thus changing the doctrine from the Spiritual to the intellectual plane, so to speak, the intellectual counterpart should be inferior to the Spiritual original. To counterbalance this loss, however, it is true on the other hand that the intellectual counterpart may render the spiritual original accessible to some, the conformation of whose minds renders them unable to appreciate it directly. It is in the hope that this may be so that the present paper has been attempted.

To begin with, then, the work we are considering indicates a possible enlightenment of the Soul, and development of the higher part of our nature; and further states that these results cannot take place before a certain battle has been fought and won: we have, therefore, to discover what the soul is; what is the nature of the battle; what are the opposing forces; and what are the results of the struggle.

The combatants are the higher nature, or Soul, on the one side; and the lower nature or egotism on the other. The higher nature includes the intellectual, Spiritual, and aesthetical powers; that is

to say, the powers which deal with the perception of truth, goodness, and beauty.

The sense of truth is characteristically manifested in the conquest of some intricate mathematical problem, or in following successfully some difficult chain of reasoning.

The sense of beauty is manifested in the joy with which we behold the splendour of a glorious sunset.

The sense of goodness is manifested in the voice of an approving conscience, or in the reverence and admiration we feel for some godlike and noble character.

It is undeniable that the intellect can discriminate between what is, and what is not, true; within its own domain, the aesthetical faculty also can pronounce with certainty as to the presence or absence of that quality which we call beauty.

So can the moral nature decide without hesitation as to what is or what is not in accordance with Righteousness. These three powers of the higher nature are subject to development, that is to say, at different periods they will perceive the qualities of beauty, truth, and goodness in different objects, and in different degrees, but as to the reality of the three qualities, their voice is ever the same.

The three powers perceive three harmonies, each in its own domain; when the three are harmoniously developed, the three harmonies are perceived to be one, and to this one great harmony are given the names of the Eternal and the Law of God. The seer of old, feeling the sense of Righteousness within him, exclaimed: "I will rejoice in the Eternal, and in him will I put my trust." When the powers of the higher nature are developed, under all temporary disharmony and chaotic disturbance are perceived a deeper order and more enduring harmony ever at work. Marcus Aurelius had perception of a deep Spiritual truth, when he wrote the concluding sentences of the following utterance:

Figs, when they are quite ripe, gape open; and in the ripe olives, the very circumstance of their being near to rottenness adds a peculiar beauty to the fruit; and ears of corn bending down, and foam which flows from the mouth of wild boars, and many other things — though they are far from being beautiful, in a certain sense — still, because they come in the course of nature, have a beauty in them, and they please the mind; so that if a man should have a feeling and a deeper insight with

respect to the things which are produced in the universe, there is hardly anything which comes in the course of nature which will not seem to him to be, in a manner, disposed so as to give pleasure.

That is, in all things, could we but perceive it, is the harmony of the Eternal.

The first harmony, the harmony of truth, is perceived by the scientific materialist; that is to say, he is capable of perceiving the reign of law in the physical universe.

The artistic nature can perceive the harmony of beauty in nature and art.

By the spiritually-minded is perceived the moral harmony.

It is the distinctive mark of modern civilization that the harmonies of truth and beauty, of science and art, are perceived and openly recognized by all, while the harmony of Holiness is passed over in silence and oblivion. It is the object of Theosophy to arouse the world to a renewed sense of the harmony of Righteousness.

So much for the higher nature. Confronting it stands the Egotism. For, where the moral sense dictates peace and goodwill to all men, the Egotism raises a selfish claim for a monopoly of all good things, all pleasures, all enjoyments. The first enjoyment the Egotism demands is to surpass and dominate all other Egotisms which it seems to see pursuing the same pleasures as itself. Hence the command: "Kill out ambition." Having once gained this domination, the self cries out for enjoyments, both sensual and sensuous, for all the pleasures of life. Hence the need for the command: "Kill out desire of life." The self is also deterred by indolence from carrying out any good inspirations that may descend through the thick mist which surrounds it, from the higher nature. Against indolence it is written: "Kill out desire of comfort."

But the moral sense condemns the existence of this self, this centre of force, which is not in accordance with its perception of Harmony. When once the moral nature comes to perceive the evil of egotism, the question inevitably arises for solution, "Shall this cause of disharmony cease or continue?" If the decision is for its continuance, one of two things will happen. Either, before the moral nature has been completely paralysed and atrophied by neglect, before the seared conscience is completely silenced, the fact will be recognized,

in the midst of pain and sorrow unspeakable, that "to work for self is to work for disappointment"; and in that case the moral nature may at last meet with its development and all may be well. "The weak must wait for its growth, its fruition, its death. And it is a plant that lives and increases through the ages." It has been said also, "The forging of earthly chains is the occupation of the indifferent, the awful duty of unloosing them through the sorrows of the heart is also their occupation"; and truly "both are foolish sacrifices." Either this takes place, or the moral nature at last becomes completely deadened; all the force and vital power which has been drawn away from it goes to strengthen the Egotism which becomes henceforth a centre of evil, of destruction; an enemy of the eternal.

It seems that individual existence means a certain amount of force, which may vitalize either the powers of the higher nature or those of the egotism, or those of both, in part. It seems also that the egotism is a group of centres, so to speak, from some or all of which the energetic force of the individual may work; so that, for example, when this force works from one centre in the egotism sensuality arises; when from another centre, hate; from another, evil ambition, and so on. When the energetic force is raised to the higher nature it may act from various centres; from one, as charity; from another, as holiness, and so on. Hence, "any good quality may become any other good quality" — if the conditions are favourable. It seems also that the Will can degrade the energetic force from the soul to the egotism, or, conversely, can raise it from the egotism to the soul; so that, by the alchemical power of the will so to speak the baser metal becomes converted and, rising to the top of the still, becomes pure gold. Besides the higher and lower natures we have been considering, there resides also, in the complete being, the consciousness or sense of existence and will. When all the portions of energetic force — or the Satvic sparks, as they are elsewhere called — rise to the higher nature, the individual becomes one with the Eternal and a part of the United Spirit of Life, and individual existence ceases, in a sense. When the question is asked, "Shall the self cease or continue?" the moral nature answers decisively, "It ought to cease." If the truth of this mandate is recognized, at once a terrible struggle arises; self opposed rises with tenfold force and violence; again and again it craftily casts doubt on the truth of the moral nature, raises obstacles, temptations and hindrances. All the plea-

asures it has enjoyed are to be swept away forever; all the momentum and power that the egotism has gained, through long continued indulgence and unhindered growth, are brought to bear at once on the struggle; the whole nature is torn by the conflict, the will is tried to the uttermost. But under all this turmoil and strife lies the assured consciousness of final victory; it is felt that sooner or later the self must be destroyed, that it is built for time and not for eternity, that its days are numbered. During the struggle, intervals of peace occur and grow longer as the end approaches, till at last, when the final victory is won, this peace becomes habitual.

But as the conflict goes on, the will at last gains strength to say, once for all, "Henceforth, forever, will I serve self no more." And immediately the first struggle is ended. The dominance of self is forever destroyed. In reply to the command, "Seek in the heart the source of evil and expunge it," the soul can say, "This also have I done." Then comes "peace to the troubled spirit," peace deep and pure. The soul recognizes that the self has been the cause of individual existence: when the self is removed the soul tends to harmonize itself with the great harmony, to become one with the eternal. But all the evil tendencies to selfishness and sin must be gradually overcome, for though their cause and source has been destroyed, yet they maintain a certain momentum. Not yet can it be said that the soul is perfectly at one with the united Spirit of Life. Much remains to be done, yet much has been done already, for during the struggle the energetic force has become loosened from the centres of self, and has ascended to strengthen and vivify the soul, which becomes strong, fully awakened, and in harmony with the eternal. The flower of the soul is opening, the first step on the Path is taken. In the *Idyll of the White Lotus* the same author has given the same history in another form. The New Testament story is the same, and so is the scheme of Christian Theology for those who have eyes to see it; for that story is "the tragedy of the soul; it has been told in all ages and among every people."

Enter the Path! there spring the healing streams
 Quenching all thirst! there bloom th' immortal flowers
 Carpeting all the way with joy! there throng
 Swiftest and sweetest hours!

—CHARLES JOHNSTON

WORLDS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

PSYCHIC COMMUNICATIONS

THE RELIGIOUS INSTINCT is a basic factor in human conduct, for it is common to all mankind. Its most potent manifestation is Psychism. Although allied to Mediumship, the differences are as great as the similitude. Although the materials for study and comparison of these two phases of intercommunication are abundantly provided by both, one may search in vain in the one as in the other for any coherent understanding of the phenomena presented. No more than the Medium is the Psychic able to explain either his peculiar gift or the nature of the influences exercised on him.

Mediumship pure and simple is exceedingly limited in its field; its communications are almost wholly personal, and hence it is barren of the elements of definite continuity. Moreover, its practitioners are in many cases physically and nervously deranged; addiction to it rapidly wears down the moral and intellectual fibre of the medium, so that all force of character is gradually dissipated.

In Psychism, however, there is often a heightening of the intellectual and moral nature, even though verging on what would be accounted insanity, were it not coupled with ideas generally revered by mankind. Mediumship shows a greater and greater dispersion of thought in the practitioner, while in Psychism there is always an intense concentration of the whole nature in a particular channel. The Medium has no mission; the Psychic always has, and by none is this mission more seriously regarded than by the Psychic himself. In fact, he is consecrated to it, regards himself as the direct agent of divine Authority, brooks no questioning of the authenticity of the relation established.

The medium is always in more or less of a trance or cataleptic condition during the production of his message or other phenomena; preserves little or no recollection of what occurs; cannot be depended upon for any particular phenomena, or indeed for any manifestations at all at any given *séance*; is always accompanied by a "control" or "controls," that is, a "familiar spirit," which manipulates the performance. The Psychic or Sensitive, whether clairvoyant or clairaudient, is always more or less conscious of what takes place; is able to produce his communications more or less at

will; does not require the physical concomitants of ordinary mediumship; usually receives his chief "inspirations" when alone. The genuine Psychic submits himself to a given regimen of discipline and conduct, and is in all leading cases imbued with an increased energy and force of character by his experiences. The examples of Psychism are numberless and some of its practitioners have exercised a power over their followers, and even an influence over succeeding generations.

Mediumship, if not positively immoral, is in all cases certainly unmoral, for men of any and every shade of moral infirmity become mediums. Since in every case passivity and a large degree of unconsciousness are necessary to successful mediumship, no Medium is strengthened intellectually and morally regardless of the nature of his communications. Many, if not most, Mediums do deteriorate. Psychism requires a rigid moral practice of a nature consonant with the communications received, and demands a like conservation of energy to make the communications effective on the minds of others.

Psychism has been the governing factor in all religions and the originator of all religious sects. To limit for present purposes an otherwise unlimited record, Psychism is the same potent influence today as in all former times. Omitting the founders of the various large divisions of sectarian Christianity, made respectable by time and numbers, there have been astonishing communications from psychics. Once the accessible facts are studied it would seem impossible for any ordinarily intelligent and honest man to apply the epithets of fraud and hallucination to these psychics or to their communications. It suffices nothing merely to label such extraordinary specimens of the possibilities latent in human beings, and those who are content with such scepticism are, to say the least, no nearer understanding than those who are content blindly to believe in them, or to surrender to their manifestations. What is even more astonishing than blind scepticism and blind faith, is the indifference with which the worldly-wise leaders of mankind have uniformly treated this scientifically unexplored domain. The mysteries of physical nature are as nothing compared to the mysteries of human nature. Though religion is now gradually losing its hold, it has till lately exercised a vastly greater influence on humanity than any and all sciences, any and all governments, any and all purely social, intellectual, and other movements — for all these other cycles of activity have de-

pended on the religious ideas of mankind. It is not too much to say that nothing survived except as it was rooted in the soil of the religious instinct. Men ignore this instinct, or succumb to it, but no study of it is made for what it is—the greatest psychological mystery of all time.

It should be observed that the breakup of any old established religion does not mean the death of the religious instinct. The dissolution of the old and the establishment of a new religion or sect are accompanied by the same phenomenal outbursts—Mediumship and Psychism. As these cease in the old they appear as precursors of the new. Every new religion and every new sect appears, from the standpoint of the older crops, to be unreasonable, unmoral or immoral, and its originators and converts to be unbalanced where not insane, actuated by sinister motives where not deluded and hallucinated. This may be true enough, but it is forgotten or ignored that the signs and portents of the new were also the portents and signs of the old in *their* beginnings; that every argument against the new claimant is equally valid as against the established faith, and conversely that the same phenomena which originally secured the tenure of the old faith now attest the sanctity of the new.

To the “inspired” leaders and their devoted adherents, the communications from another world are as holy, as consecrated, as genuine as the message of Mohammed or Jesus, Buddha or Krishna. They are no more to be ignored or scoffed at by “orthodox” sectarians than the life and messages of George Fox, of John Calvin, of countless other founders of sects in the West and in the East. The plain truth is that no believer in *any* religion, let alone any sect, has the moral or logical right to impeach or deride any other, no matter how absurd or bizarre. And why not? Because they all rest on the same phenomenal basis, all adduce and employ the same facts and factors, all alike are open to the same objections. What applies to one applies to all the rest.

What is needed by the world at large, and what must be undertaken for himself by each new investigator of the subject, is an examination, not of any particular “revealer” and his messages, but of the fundamental nature of Psychism itself. By all too many men Mediumship and Psychism are identified with the world Spiritual. Fundamentally, the average man lives in this world and believes in “the other world.” For him there are only two worlds: the world of

the living and the world of "Spirits." On this naive basis, it is an unassailable logic which regards as "spiritual" any and every manifestation which does not have its origin in the world of the living; since mediumistic and psychic phenomena and phenomenal communications when and where genuine do not originate with living men, they must come from "Spirits." Equally, it is common belief that just as in this world there are good and bad men and influences, so in the other world there are good and bad "Spirits." Inevitably, to each Medium or Psychic *his* "Spirits" are the good, *his* messages the genuine.

Considered merely from the standpoint of their effects on living man, this human instinct and logic with their concomitants of Mediumship and Psychism have been the governing factors in racial evolution — of all its good and of all its evil. When weighed for their potential influence on the destiny of the human Soul after death, they become simply immeasurable. All the more reason, then, that the thoughtful man should overlook no possible criterion by which to determine his own choice and course among the countless varieties of Psychism.

Were Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, H. P. Blavatsky, Mediums or Psychics? Were *their* phenomena of the same nature as the psychological experiences of the countless founders of religious sects? Were *their* Messages delivered under the same auspices, to be accepted or rejected on the same basis, as those provided by the Psychism and the Creeds of religion and religious sects?

To admit the *bona fides* of these many Psychics, the actuality phenomenal or otherwise of their multitudinous messages, does not imply the necessity of also accepting the wisdom of these teachers or the verisimilitude of their teachings. What the careful student must face is another fact — that unless criteria exist independently of any and all purported teachers and teachings, superior to them all, and accessible to the humblest as to the highest man, there is no real choice possible, no real path through the confusions of this world, let alone the other. It is self-evident that no teaching is presented as false or erroneous, whatever it may be in fact; that whatever teaching is accepted is adopted because it is believed to be true.

What is needed by the world and by the individual seeker after the Mysteries is not more "truth," revealed or otherwise, but a common and infallible standard by which to determine the actual

nature inherent in any and all experiences, mundane or super-mundane. A teaching may be never so true, but if it appears as false to any man, its benefits are lost to him. A teaching may be never so false, but if it appears as true to any man, he will adopt it, give his life for it, suffer endlessly for his mistake — here, we know, and hereafter it must be, if there be a hereafter.

What are those Fundamentals by which a man may weigh in the same scales his own faith and experiences as well as those of any and all others? *There* must be the true Occultism.

(*To be concluded*)

THE REAL CONTROVERSY surrounding the relation between man and other animals in Darwin's time was essentially a problem of science versus religion. . . . Even Wallace wrote an essay saying the morphology of man could be entirely accounted for by natural selection, but that man's "intellectual and moral faculties . . . must have had another origin . . . in the unseen universe of Spirit." Except for a disturbing resurgence of anti-intellectual fundamentalism in North America in recent years, this idea that the Creation must have supervened somewhere along the evolutionary line leading to man is no longer the issue. The idea has, however, been replaced by a doctrine held firmly by many social scientists. They see human culture and civilization as being something so special and so unlike anything elsewhere in the animal world that it can only be analysed in its own terms, and not in terms of the level below (that is, not in terms of biology). The argument is interestingly similar to that of Wallace and other religious people in the nineteenth century: the body of man is indeed a biological structure, but his culture, which stems from his extraordinary and unique mind, is on a new, higher hierarchical level of its own; evolutionary biology has nothing to tell us about this higher level.

—JOHN TYLER BONNER and ROBERT M. MAY
(From their 1981 introduction to *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, by Charles Darwin)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Dr. Lewis Thomas, the celebrated author of *The Lives of a Cell* and president of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Centre in New York City, is one of the more perceptive scientists of our time. His musings on "The Way the World Works" (*Reader's Digest*, Indian ed., February 1982) lay emphasis on "symbiosis" and the universal urge to be useful:

One way of looking at Nature [he writes] is to put together all the scientific facts learnt so far and conclude that we are here through the blind accident of an infinite series of random events, that we are trapped like insects in a pointless, centreless universe and have no responsibilities except to our individual selves.

I believe something different. I am convinced we have come not to the end of knowledge, but only to the edge of it. . . . Even the earth, looked at over geologic time, is plainly in the process of developing, like an immense embryo. It is, despite its stupendous size and the infinite variety of its life forms, an organism, with every tissue dependent for its existence on other tissues. Or if you want a more conventional but less interesting term, it is a system. . . .

We have responsibilities, even though we are not sure just what they are, but we do not run the place. It runs itself, and we are a part of the running.

In this century, for the first time in our history, it has dawned on us that we might be swerving the whole structure into a stone wall. To our anxiety, we are sensing that other forms of life have some importance, too, that they are significant, and that we cannot get along without them. . . .

The system works by "interliving" — interchange, trading among the parts, collaboration — in other words, by symbiosis. Creatures accommodate each other, move to one side to make room, live by rules. Symbiosis is the fundamental mechanism that makes the system viable. Without it, the place could not work.

The most spectacular symbionts of all are the mitochondria in all our cells, direct descendants of ancient bacteria, which tap the sun and use it in aid of the rest of us. But every living form is engaged, one way or another, in feeding other forms. There is a kind of mutual responsibility at work, holding all the parts together, surviving one cataclysm after another, and emerging