

# THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

A Magazine Devoted to  
The Living of the Higher Life

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1877.

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### THE SIN OF INGRATITUDE

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"Ingratitude is not one of our faults." We always help those who help us. Tact, discretion, and zeal are more than ever needed. The humblest worker is seen and helped.

—A MASTER OF WISDOM

IN the life of every earnest worker for the Cause of Masters, which is the redemption of the Race, there comes a time when he feels himself forgotten, unrecognized, unappreciated. Master's words quoted above contain an encouragement and a promise which it is well to remind ourselves of at this turn of the cycle when the mighty Movement, which received its Original Impulse from Living Gurus who still stand behind it, enters its [124th] year. The seventeenth day of the eleventh month marks also the beginning of a new volume for this magazine.

Students of Theosophy, in trying to walk the path of impersonality, are apt to take for granted, as only to be expected, the sacrifices of time, money and work made by co-students and co-workers. While praise and blame constitute one of the pairs of opposites which the neophyte is asked to rise above, to fail to give encouragement and to express appreciation where these are due is to misinterpret the teaching about impersonality. In Occultism, lack of gratitude is counted not merely as a defect but as a sin. "In our sight," the Great Ones have said, "there is no crime worse than ingratitude and injustice."

While human hearts may fail to respond in gratitude to another's labour of love from which they have profited, there is great comfort to be derived from the fact that not a sincere helper, however insignificant in his own sight or in the sight of others, is outside the range of the watchful eye and the helping hand of the Silent Watchers and the Compassionate Helpers. Every deed is noted; every aspiration fostered; every spiritual need perceived. If in some dark hour the earnest worker imagines himself abandoned, supposes his services to be too insignificant for remembrance, the above-quoted words, in all their pregnant significance, reassure him and refresh and strengthen him with the knowledge that he can help Those who help all. "Time and space are no barriers between Them and the aspirant; where thought can pass They can come." None but ourselves can shut us away from Them.

The grandest gift which the human kingdom ever received, as animal man grew into the Thinker, was the capacity for devotion or gratitude. The compassion which moved the Divine Fathers of the Race gave birth to devotion in the hearts of infant humanity. This feeling of devotion manifests as gratitude for the sublime in Nature and in humanity, as love for all who are at a stage of evolution akin to ours, and as sacrifice for those who have not yet come up to our stage.

Though innate in the heart of each human being, many in our stiff-necked generation have smothered the benign feeling of gratitude lest it be mistaken for the badge of servility. Gratitude felt by anyone for the knowledge imparted, the sympathy expressed, the sacrifice made or any gift bestowed, does him enormous good. H.P.B. has said that "gratitude does more good to the man who feels it, than to him for whom it is felt."

Cold logic might indicate that in a universe where justice rules, where whatsoever a man reaps, that he must have sown, gratitude is uncalled for. But which normal person does not recognize this heart quality to be a moral requisite and feel a stab of conscience in repressing it? Nothing can come of itself; life itself is a gift, and to receive benefits without giving anything in return is to incur a debt which leaves us spiritually insolvent and morally bankrupt.

Life is sustained on the principle of interdependence, of mutual intercourse. Our existence is bound up with and dependent upon the lower kingdoms and the elements. It is in the fitness of things that that part of Nature to which we stand in the relation of elder brothers should be nourished by us as we are nourished by it. He who enjoys what has been given to him by the "gods," the powers and properties of Nature that minister to his needs, "and offereth not a portion unto them, is even as a thief," says the *Bhagavad-Gita*. When anything is accepted without gratitude, not only the human agencies instrumental in bringing that benefit to us but all the lives engaged are cold-shouldered; cheated of recompense for the service rendered, robbed of nourishment, they are made less potent for bestowing blessing on us.

Life, then, is a constant exchange of benefits. Those above us, our Elder Brothers; those below us, the beings and intelligences of Nature that have not yet reached the man stage of self-consciousness; and those who are our equals, our brothers of the human family—all serve us in one way or another.

How can the disciple express gratitude for the service or gift received? Gratitude has no meaning apart from the use to which the gift or the service is put. To the extent that the recipient does not pass on the benefits received to others, does not himself become a beneficent force in Nature and among his fellow men, he is lacking in gratitude.

Applying this to the Cause of Masters, we might say that we are grateful for Their help and inspiration to the extent that we fit ourselves, "by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and reach others." There is hardly a student-practitioner who is unable to help, in one way or another, his fellows who are foundering in quagmires of delusion. Correcting prevailing misconceptions of Theosophy and clearly explaining its teachings to outsiders is something all can do. For this, self-education is needed. Our gratitude to all those who stand in the intangible but mighty *Guruparampara* chain, not a single link of which can be ignored, is expressed to the extent to which we are trying to constitute ourselves companions of the Master-Custodians of the Ancient

Wisdom and have taken upon ourselves the task of rediscovering and promulgating the mighty Truths. *Pari passu*, we fit ourselves to receive further gifts from Them. Let us then be grateful for the opportunity to serve those who form the "Guardian Wall" that protects humanity, and hold the lofty ambition to make ourselves one of the stones in that living Wall.

The highest expression of gratitude may be summed up in these words from *The Voice of the Silence*:

Know that the stream of superhuman knowledge and the Deva-Wisdom thou hast won, must, from thyself, the channel of Alaya, be poured forth into another bed.

Know, O Narjol, thou of the Secret Path, its pure fresh waters must be used to sweeter make the Ocean's bitter waves—that mighty sea of sorrow formed of the tears of men.

Alas! when once thou hast become like the fix'd star in highest heaven, that bright celestial orb must shine from out the spatial depths for all—save for itself; give light to all, but take from none.

Thus we see why the Compassionate Ones always feel grateful and come to the aid of those who are trying to help Their Cause. In Them, compassion and gratitude perfectly coalesce.

All co-students and co-workers are, or should be, bound together by the tie of mutual gratitude, arising out of mutual aspiration and mutual help. There is no tie equal to that which binds together those comrades who, with devoted hearts and clarified minds, hold Truth to be dearer than all material life and, deriving light and sustenance from one another, endeavour to make It a living power in their lives. "LOVE and TRUST," Mr. Judge has assured us, "are the only weapons that can overcome the REAL enemies against which the true theosophist must fight."

Who are these enemies? The task is not simply that of defending Theosophy against the ignorance or malice of its critics outside the Theosophical fold. Earnest and reliable Theosophists must contend also against "nominal but ambitious Theosophists" who have always existed and against whom H.P.B. warned as far back as 1888. The former are greater in numbers, she wrote, than one might

ink, and they *shall* prevail if only they remain staunch to Masters' programme and true to themselves.

The deliberate cultivation of gratitude towards our comrades, necessitating the sacrifice of all selfish and uncharitable thoughts and desires, will save us from many a pitfall and enable us to rise above dissensions or differences of individual opinion when they arise. Mr. Judge, writing to a correspondent at a time when clouds were gathering in the affairs of the then Theosophical organization, pointed to the right attitude to adopt:

There are two forces at work in the T.S., as well as in the world and in man. These are the good and the bad. We cannot help this: it is the Law. But we have rules, and we have preached of love and truth and kindness; and above all, we have spoken of gratitude, not only of Masters, but among us. Now this applies to this question of ———. Again, he may be incompetent...and yet be competent for the little he has to do....Now let me tell you: the work must not fail because here and there personalities fall, and sin, and are unwise. TRUTH remains, and IT IS, whoever falls: but the multitude look to the visible leader. If he falls apart like an unjointed puzzle, at once they say, "there is no truth there, nothing which is": and the work of a century is ruined and must be rebuilt again from its foundations, and years of backward tendency must come between the wreck of one undertaking and the beginning of another. Let me say one thing I KNOW: only the feeling of true brotherhood, of true love towards humanity aroused in the soul of someone strong enough to stem this tide, can carry us through....If I, or you, go into this battle from pride, from self-will, from desire to hold our position in the face of the world, from anything but the purest motives, we shall fail. Let us search ourselves well and look at it as we never looked before: see if there is in us the reality of the brotherhood which we preach and which we are supposed to represent. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, pp. 101-2)

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TRUE beauty consists in purity of heart.

—M. K. GANDHI

## IDEALS FOR DAILY LIVING

THE daily toil, which began at birth and will end at death for all men and women, is made up of pleasures and pains, successes and failures, ups and downs. We speak of it as the round of life. It is an excellent word, this word "round." It reminds us of the Greek concept of *kuklos*, cycle, which was derived from the Sanskrit *chakra*, wheel, symbol of *yuga*, the round of an age or a cycle. We use the same word and designate the daily duties and obligations of life as the common round. The "round of life," the daily round of common tasks, for most men and women means drudgery, out of which all divinity has gone.

Thus the common round of daily life for ordinary men and women is a veritable maze in which they are lost. To most, life seems aimless and they live through it without grasping its purpose and meaning. Verily, "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not"—for our days are dark with drudgery of petty deeds, sometimes pleasurable, at most times insipid, at others positively painful. Little successes, small failures, some peace, and a great deal of struggle—and life ebbs away and it all seems such a waste.

Yet the great thinkers and philosophers and poets have regarded this very common life as something great and sublime—"drudgery divine." Just as scientists have harnessed the electrical energy in Nature to give us light, heat and other comforts, so the true poet-philosophers speak of an ocean of radiance surrounding us, and everyone, they say, is capable of "hitching his wagon to a star." It is a beautiful idea and worth contemplating by all of us. Our small lives are part and parcel of the great Universe, and each one of us can make that life grand and glorious, if we but look for the light. In our night of darkness, there are stars, whose light will guide the wayfarer ever onwards.

And that brings us to the chief word in the title of this article—"Ideals." Ideals are patterns of light which lead us on in our journey through space and time. Our tasks become drudgery, our life becomes dreary, because the light of ideals is absent. Without

deals we live a life of hit and miss; opportunities come and we do not recognize them as such till they have gone. Every year, every month, nay every day, we come at the crossroads of life, and in our ignorance we take the wrong fork of the road. People sometimes think that such important crossroads come but a few times in a whole life, but that is not so. Crossroads are encountered hour by hour, and the moment of great choice is but a culmination of the innumerable moments of small choices. A hero is not born miraculously; a thousand acts of small sacrifices bring him the opportunity for a supreme act of heroism. In the journey of life, we go round and round because we walk without the light of ideals, and at the crossroads of our journey we take the wrong turn. Once the light of ideals is accepted, we begin to comprehend the meaning, the purpose, and also the methods of life.

We must seek, then, the light of ideals. And what are ideals? Look upon them as eternal images, immortal patterns, which have been fashioned for our beholding. Turn to Plato and examine his teaching about archetypal forms or Ideas. Ideas, according to Plato, rule the world, but what kind of ideas? Spiritual and immortal Ideas—not the ideas of puny cerebrating mortals, but the Divine Ideas which collectively form what is called the Divine Mind, or sometimes is spoken of as the Logos, the Word.

The first concept to grasp is this: patterns for living our own daily lives have been drawn by master-minds, by sage-seers, by poet-philosophers. The truly great mind tries to understand the Ideas existing in the mind of Deity; the true seer perceives what the ancient sages have painted; the true poet sings of what he hears of the Eternal Song Celestial. Our humanity is so conceited, so self-centred, so proud, that it looks upon the past as the age of savagery, it views Spirit as "fumes of flesh" and it thinks that vital truth was never known in ancient days and all that we can do therefore is to struggle and experiment. The old view, the true view, is that truths exist as images, as patterns, as archetypes, as cosmic numbers, and all the events of our lives, small incidents or important happenings, are true or false according to whether they are correct reflections from those divine images, or shadowy creations of mortal minds.

So ideals are patterns of life, models according to which we can shape our common round of daily tasks and make drudgery divine, looking upon our duties in the true light. There is so much confusion of thought, and such heart-burning in reference to what we call duties! Duties are regarded as irksome, and their performance as difficult. But if we link up our duties with these patterns and images which are the true ideals, we see a way out. Ideals show us what our duties are; ideals resolve the great conflict of duties; ideals reveal how our true duties may be correctly discharged. Ideals are the weapons of the soul and they help us to act and live correctly.

One might ask, "If these ideal-images exist, why is it that we do not see them?" Imagine a cart-driver jogging along on a bumpy road at night. Does he look up to admire the beauty of the starry firmament? He is blind to the sky as we humans are blind to the ideals of life. If the wagon-driver were intelligent, those stars would tell him many things; they would act as his guides and friends. Have we not contemplated, while travelling by train or bus or car, how the sun, the moon and the stars accompany us, ever and always? Such are our ideals; they are always with us as guides and friends, but engaged in earthy matters we do not recognize them. We are so engrossed in noticing the passing scene that we have no eyes for the sky and its brilliance!

Let us look at some definite ideals which could be used by us in our daily living. In choosing a few particular ideals, naturally we are keeping in mind the needs of men and women of ordinary intelligence, who doubt the spiritual aspect of things because they understand not the meaning of their own trials and tribulations; they see not any purpose in the trivialities of daily struggles; they know no other end save death. Boys and girls learn of evolution at school, but they are not taught how to use this knowledge and so they do not make any application of it to their own lives. The greatest gift of the lesson of evolution comes to us in the clear perception that progress is continuous. Through disintegration of form, decay of matter, death of bodies, new forms, new shapes, new bodies come to birth. All boys and girls learn this to be a fact in Nature, but wrong notions, social habits, religious beliefs and customs, prevent most

men and women from making an application of this tremendous lesson. So the first ideal which seems necessary for us all is:

(a) *Ideal of Human Progression and Perfection.* The very first thing we need is an inner conviction that each of us is an evolving entity, an unfolding being. Every human being is progressing, advancing. The moment this ideal is grasped, even vaguely, we begin to look for the course of the evolutionary flow. One supreme difficulty stands in the way, and that is the false belief that the past and the future, the whence and the whither, are divine mysteries which human minds should refrain from probing. If modern science has taught us one thing, it is that the sacred nature of subjects and objects, of things and beings, is better appreciated when we probe the mystery inherent in them. So let us put away the superstition that it is not for mortal man to understand the mystery of Divinity and Immortality. Let us proceed on the well-established basis that evolution is a fact in Nature, and that each of us is an evolving being. What does evolution imply for us at our stage of growth? It implies that our senses are getting keener and sharper, our brains and nervous systems more sensitive, our minds more deep and broad, our characters more noble and benign, our acts more selfless and altruistic. In the whole of our being, in every part of our constitution, we are becoming better, nobler, wiser.

Two phenomena puzzle people at this stage: First, how can this be when before our very eyes we behold so many who are deteriorating, going from bad to worse? Is it not a fact, people ask, that for every one person who grows in goodness and moral strength and wisdom, half-a-dozen are growing in selfishness and moral worthlessness? Secondly, people say, the more we try to elevate ourselves, to purify our hearts, to acquire wisdom and to become unselfish, the more we perceive our weaknesses, the greater becomes the number of our follies. Both these observations are correct, but what are they due to? First, more people deteriorate in life compared to those who become better; this happens because most people do not accept for themselves the ideal of evolution. What else is there to be done, they say, but to eat, drink and accept the inevitable death? These people do not know their own fine

possibilities. Next, as a person struggles to grow, to become better, he sees more of his own blemishes. It is not that these blemishes come into existence anew; they have been there, but we never saw them; our sincere efforts at self-improvement force them on our attention, and it is a sign of growth and evolution that we know what we have to overcome.

To turn to the constructive and positive aspect of this ideal of evolution: Suppose a person accepts the fact that he *is* an evolving being; he will naturally see that every event of his life, trivial or important, is a means of growth. Every person he meets becomes a teacher; every genuine praise, every stupid flattery, every word of adverse criticism, every pet and every kick, are avenues of growth, if he uses his intelligent mind and asks *why* and *how* at every turn. People become so engrossed in the events and the toils of life that they do not give themselves a chance to question their own motives, to look into the meaning of words and acts of others. This ideal of evolution reveals to us that through every joy and every pain, in health as in sickness, at the cradle or at the grave, we should be learning, learning, learning, all the time. Those who do not apply to their own lives this ideal of evolution do not always learn though they go through the experiences. This attempt at learning produces the sublime virtues of contentment and patience. Contentment does not mean passive and resigned acceptance of things; contentment springs from the conviction that from every up or down of life come strength and growth. Similarly, patience does not mean we must put up with wrong; it means sustained effort, with calmness ever present, to set right that which is wrong. And thus when we apply to our own lives the ideal of evolution we come upon another ideal:

(b) *Ideal of Self-Dependence*. This is a difficult doctrine for most people, but it is the most merciful teaching and the most practical. Evolution and progress of one's own being result from one's own efforts. None can hinder, none can help us, without our own consent and volition. Who can hinder one who resolves to grow, who wills to improve? And can we help anyone, the dearest of relatives or friends, if he refuses to see and to be helped? "The Teacher can but point the way"; each must walk that way by

himself. Educators and reformers cannot change a person's nature; he himself can change it. So, it becomes necessary to recognize the ideal of self-reliance and self-dependence. It is the very law of evolution. Evolution proceeds according to law, and this law teaches us the ideal of self-dependence. This law of evolution may be called the law of links. Evolution is a tremendous process which sweeps the oceans of space and time, and all its products, all its creations, are linked together in a mighty whole. As Shelley puts it:

Nothing in the world is single,  
All things by a law divine  
In one another's being mingle.

Kingdoms of Nature are linked; the sky and the sea are linked; the past and the future are linked; therefore it may be called the law of links. Links have two aspects—cause and effect. The seed is the cause of the fruit, but that very fruit producing another seed becomes a cause. Cause and effect are the makers of every link in life. Science, we say, has revealed to us the reign of Law in Nature—that nothing happens by chance, that there are no accidents, that everything in Nature is both a cause and an effect. This law of links or law of causation needs to be applied to our own lives. We say or do something, important or unimportant—it is both a cause and an effect. We eat because we are hungry; we ultimately get hungry because we ate several hours ago. We will go to sleep because we woke up this morning, and wake up we will tomorrow because we go to sleep tonight. Everything, without exception, is linked to that which preceded and to that which will follow. It is this mighty chain of links that the Buddha spoke of as the chain of *Nidanas*.

Because we do not understand and do not see cause and effect in the world of morals and character, or of thoughts and mind, we come to look upon our lives as made up of accidents, of good luck or bad luck. And when we say that, we put ourselves among a class of people whom the proverb describes as fools. "A wise man rules his stars, a fool obeys them." How are we to rule our stars and avert our bad luck? By understanding the current of this process of

evolution—it proceeds from within ourselves; the cause and the effect are moving from within outwards. We are self-conscious intelligences, whose will is free and the power to choose and determine is ours at every turn, at every moment. From within we generate peace or strife, from within we produce folly or fair accomplishment. Therefore we have named the ideal of self-dependence as the second ideal.

And that brings us to the third ideal, the third pattern of light:

(c) *Ideal of Service.* Everyone is progressing; every human being is weaving from within himself his own web of life. Each one is like a spider and by his thoughts and feelings, words and deeds, he weaves for himself his own web. In doing so, and in the absence of real knowledge, his ambitions, his spirit of competition, his personal selfishness blind him to that inherent law of unity which is the foundation and the basis of the whole universe. Because man has free will, in ignorance he exerts it in the wrong way. He tries to elbow out other people and to push himself forward, only to find that he has gone counter to Nature and Nature's law.

We saw that the whole of Nature is linked and each one is but a link in the mighty chain. Therefore when we plan to act, when we feel and think, even with the laudable object of progress and evolution, we should take into cognizance this law of unity. In doing small things or big things, in speaking or in feeling, it becomes necessary to take account of this stupendous fact—by our selfishness we hinder ourselves. If, for a moment, we were to clear our own mind as to our goal in life and see that we are all seeking peace and enlightenment, it would not be difficult to look upon Nature, and especially the human kingdom, as upon a gigantic family. Just as an ordinary family is a unit, so is the whole of Nature but one unit composed of millions of beings. We recognize and condemn the mean father, the irresponsible son, the brazen-faced daughter, the irritable mother, and we look upon that member of the family as really good who sacrifices unselfishly for the other units in the family. The ideal, the pattern of light, brings us the vision of unity and solidarity and we must not only talk about the great human family, but each one of us must remember to act as a member

of that family. Self-sacrifice does not at all mean that we should permit other members of the family to exploit us; self-sacrifice implies a justice to one's self. The ideal of self-dependence and the ideal of interdependence do not contradict each other. Each one of us must become self-reliant, acting from within our own heart, but in so acting from within, we must remember to set an example to others, which is the most powerful of precepts. Every time we fail or succeed we drag down or we elevate the whole of the human family, nay, the whole of Nature.

We have seen three great ideals, three patterns of light: First, each one of us should be learning, growing, progressing, evolving, day by day, hour by hour. Second, this growth really takes place only when we energize ourselves, only by our self-induced and self-devised efforts. Thirdly, our desires and thoughts must take into account the supreme fact that Nature, composed of countless units, is one indivisible whole, and each labouring in its own way affects all, for weal or for woe.

These three ideals look remote, cold, hard to understand or too simple. A little study of them, a little thought on them, will show that these are the very water and air and fire we need for our real sustenance, our moral, mental and spiritual life. The first teaches us that each one of us, great or small, is learning, not from books and schools but from daily striving and hourly living; the second, that within each of us is the actor, the inspirer as well as the admonisher who thinks, who ideates, who wills, and that it is necessary to seek him out, to listen to his voice within the heart; finally, that each of us must act with justice to ourselves and with mercy towards others, for sacrifice implies both justice and mercy. These three ideals are three powerful lights; they show us what our true duties are, and enable us to fulfil them. They are harbingers of knowledge which brings vision, of peace which brings power, of wisdom which begets love. With their aid our drudgery becomes divine, our life becomes an inspiration. May all of us gather the strength to live by the three lights, so that peace reigns in our hearts and radiates on all we contact!

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## "KILL OUT ALL SENSE OF SEPARATENESS"

"KILL out all sense of separateness," teaches *Light on the Path*. The note on this verse points out: "Do not fancy you can stand aside from the bad man or the foolish man."

Sometimes we come across people with faults which probably we do not possess. Would it be wrong, then, to avoid the company of such people? Of course we are advised not to associate with a person who is likely to have an adverse influence on our character, unless we feel strong enough to be able to reform that person by keeping his company. Jesus said: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." On the other hand, importance is given to *sat-sang* or good company.

It is not true, however, that we do not have that fault in us which we see in another. If we look carefully, we shall find that an element, however slight, of most faults which are in the race is in us also. As Mr. Judge suggests, whenever we see a fault in another, we should ask ourselves two questions: "(1) Am I the judge in this matter who is entitled to try this person? (2) Am I any better in my way, do I or do I not offend in some other way just as much as they do in this?"

In attacking the fault of another, we are starting on the wrong basis. We fail to see the real person and think of the fault as *him*, and ourselves as "out there" looking at it. In this respect, there is a sense of separateness in us. We need to look at this evil as part of the larger range of human experiences. Each of us as a human being is, therefore, linked with this fault, because in the ultimate analysis it is a human experience, which we may have had earlier or may have in the future.

*Light on the Path* advises us to regard such a person as our brother whose feet have become too heavy with mud. Let us tell ourselves, "I will help him come out of this situation if I can; but if I cannot, then I do not want to be in the same situation and so I should keep myself away from him, just as I would keep away from a person suffering from a contagious disease. I will not go near him, but I will have goodwill towards him and harbour the thought that

he strive to get rid of this fault and learn to manage his troublesome personality." The attitude of mind is most important.

Therefore are we told:

...remember that the soiled garment you shrink from touching may have been yours yesterday, may be yours tomorrow. And if you turn with horror from it, when it is flung upon your shoulders, it will cling the more closely to you. The self-righteous man makes for himself a bed of mire. Abstain because it is right to abstain—not that yourself shall be kept clean. (p. 17)

Let us remember that he and we are fellow travellers and this stage can come for us in the future if it has not yet come. We must thank our Karma that we are not in that situation, but at the same time let us remember that we are dealing with human beings, and this is a human weakness or simply a product of a diseased mind.

We have created the total situation, *i.e.*, we have contributed in making humanity as it is today. A son may walk out of the house of his father who earns money by unfair means, but it is not so simple to sever himself from his family, as he has made a contribution in the making of the family as it is today. Thus, "the sin and shame of the world are your sin and shame." The man with a fault is as much a part of humanity as we are, and so we cannot treat his sin as pertaining to him alone and condemn it.

We too have our vices and shortcomings, but we never identify *ourselves* with these. We consider them as a passing phase which we will get over in time. We should take the same stand also about other people's vices and faults.

There is an occult law which says: "If you allow the idea of separateness from any evil thing or person to grow within you, by so doing you create Karma which will bind you to that thing or person till your soul recognizes that it cannot be isolated."

This clearly shows that if we have aversion for a thing, then it will attach to us the more closely. It is very difficult not to feel aversion for a vice like greed or lust. Are we then still binding ourselves to that vice? More often than not, we tend to identify the sin with the sinner. We must remember that one may not be mean and yet perform a mean action; that one fault or vice is not the whole

man. "Condemn the act but not the actor," we are told.

In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge advises: "We are not to love vice, but are to recognize that it is a part of the whole, and, trying to understand it, we thus get above it." We can see that evil is good gone astray. We must consider vice as a part of a machine that is malfunctioning. If a person has a gangrene, then a good doctor does not concentrate only on the gangrene but is concerned about the complete health of the person. So, to have aversion for the sin is understandable, but that aversion should not lead to lack of charity. We may have aversion for snakes, for instance, but if our first reaction on seeing a snake is to kill it, then this is failure in charity.

*Light on the Path* also suggests that the bad man or the foolish man are yourself, though in a *less degree* than your friend or your master. We can see that a Master is the closest to the disciple; in fact, the disciple is considered to be an outpost of his Master's consciousness. The Master and the disciple have their consciousness connected like two tanks of water, so that ideas flow freely from one to the other. We are all interrelated, but we have a closer affinity with our friends than with the bad or foolish man.

"Your Karma is inextricably interwoven with the great Karma. And before you can attain knowledge you must have passed through all places, foul and clean alike," says *Light on the Path*. This seems to suggest that it is necessary for an individual to pass through all kinds of experiences, good as well as bad. But is it not true that one can learn from the experiences of another? Experience is in the mind. For some people, nothing is an experience till it happens to them. Mr. Judge suggests that we have formed grooves in our minds by thinking along the same old lines, and that we must fill up these grooves by learning to look into the lives of other people around us and profiting from their experiences; then we shall have in one life the advantage of having lived several lives.

This learning from other people's experiences calls for a lot of imagination and sympathy. While travelling in a railway compartment, if we look around us we shall find that some passengers are full of life and enjoying themselves; some may be

in a pensive mood, some may be quarrelling, and so on. For those who are attentive, this journey may prove to be an experience, but for one who is engrossed only in what he will do on getting down, the journey means nothing. The same also happens in life.

In order to reach perfection, one must learn that light and darkness, good and evil, are the world's eternal ways. It is no use being puritanical, because there is a difference between the innocence of a child and that of a saint. A person who is pure and innocent like a child because he has never come face to face with temptation and evil, will find that he is not able to handle evil when he encounters it. The first reaction to encountering evil is a shock, whereas the whole idea of spiritual perfection is being able to handle evil oneself and also helping others overcome it when they are faced with it. In fact, those who are spiritually advanced understand more about evil than the one who is sinful. Just as a swimmer whose head is under water is not aware of what goes on around him, so also one who is deep in vice or sin—and is not detached at the same time—does not know much of evil.

Sometimes people mix up goodness with ignorance. We are not expected to cultivate such goodness that we remain unaware of evil. As Milton says, "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary..." *i.e.*, virtue which is developed within the walls of a monastery has little merit. Real virtue is that where a person is exposed to wrong and evil, yet he chooses right and good. Free will is very important spiritually. One takes the risk of going wrong, yet is able to choose the right path. Knowledge implies maturity or total understanding that one cannot get in a carefully guarded surrounding.

The question may arise: Even though it is possible to have experience through imaginative sympathy, is it not true that we *really* learn only when we go through the experience ourselves? After all, what is important in an experience—the event or the lesson learnt by the soul from that event? Obviously, it is the learning and the change produced in the person as a result of that event that is important. That event can happen in one's own life or someone else's life. In fact, literature, music, painting, etc., are also

means through which one may acquire experience.

How does one develop imaginative sympathy? We get this opportunity by reading literature; *e.g.*, there is Fagin, the nasty character in *Oliver Twist*, who trains boys to steal. We may never try to understand such a character if we encounter him in real life. Our experiences and encounters in real life are limited. Just as we are able to regard characters in literature impersonally, so also we must learn to regard all those we encounter in real life. It may be our neighbours or people in the office. The Buddha says, "I, Buddh, who wept with all my brothers' tears...." He did not feel the emotion the way we do, yet his consciousness could take in and understand how human consciousness works. Says *Light on the Path*:

Yet stand alone and isolated, because nothing that is embodied, nothing that is conscious of separation, nothing that is out of the eternal, can aid you.... Grow as the flower grows, unconsciously, but eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air. So must you press forward to open your soul to the eternal. But it must be the eternal that draws forth your strength and beauty, not desire of growth. For in the one case you develop in the luxuriance of purity, in the other you harden by the forcible passion for personal stature. (p. 3)

This suggests that, in one respect, we have to kill out the sense of separateness, and yet we must learn to remain alone and isolated and not have dependence on any outside thing or person except our higher nature. As *Light on the Path* points out elsewhere, a disciple follows his duty, but according to his own understanding of it, and not as dictated by his community or society. It implies that he must not start out with the thought of progress, but be prepared all the time to respond to the divine in himself and obey the dictates of his higher nature. When he obeys the higher, he will grow spontaneously, as does a flower.

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## IS OUR FATE PREDESTINED?

"DESTINY" is a word that puzzles most people. What it is, how it is made, and who is responsible for it, is not known to the majority. Individuals and nations, races and civilizations, rise to fall and fall to rise like the tides in the ocean. The belief that all that happens is the result of destiny has led men and women to an irresponsible way of thinking and living, and therefore to negligence of their own duties, fear of their fellow beings and constant despair for the state of affairs in the world. It has also driven them away from the path of self-effort for true spiritual freedom. It is often considered that destiny is woven by a personal God, separate from man and nature, according to his own whim and fancy. For some, he is so liberal as to shower sunshine and happiness all through their lives, and on them fortune always smiles. With others, he is strict and severe; their destiny is full of knots; they have to struggle hard for their very existence from birth and often find no way out of that bondage! Thus, from the cradle to the grave people succumb to the sway of their so-called destiny.

It is also believed that destiny depends on the stars, that each individual is born under the influence of certain stars, that no one and nothing can change the course of what is predestined and preordained, and that what will be, will be! There are others who do not take this view but consider themselves masters of their own fate and therefore fully responsible for their own choices and moves in right or wrong directions.

Theosophy teaches that destiny, or fate, and free will are both necessary for evolution. Man is a self-moving unit with the power to think and choose. He may think ten times before he makes his choice, but, once it is made, that choice becomes his destiny which binds him down. Today's destiny is made by each individual through his choices in the past, as today's choices will weave his future destiny. So destiny has three aspects—past-present-future according to time; cause-effect-cause in terms of motion. If a person makes the choice to go in the right direction, he moves forward, in his evolutionary march; if he chooses the wrong

direction, he slips backward. Thus he himself is the weaver of his destiny, and thread by thread the pattern is woven. If the basic principles of the Eternal Verities are kept in mind and applied, the pattern of life will be in terms of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. It is true that at times our wrong actions in the past may create obstacles in our way, in our right endeavours, but if the attitude is right they can be taken as stepping-stones to further progress.

The first of those principles is that Alaya's Self or God, and Eternal Harmony or Law, are synonymous terms. Were no one to break that Harmony, "Karma-Nemesis would have neither cause to work for, nor weapons to act through" (*S.D.*, I, 643). Karma, the Law of Moral Retribution, works on this plane of heterogeneity because we continually break the harmony through our selfish actions; the Law only brings about adjustments. If, instead of working impulsively and psychically, we were to act noetically, after deliberate thought, then harmony would prevail, this earth would be transformed into an Arcadia of lofty souls and strifes and struggles would cease. So this Law of Harmony neither rewards nor punishes, being an impersonal Law. It cannot be prayed to or propitiated; "it knows not wrath nor pardon." Sir Edwin Arnold makes Lord Buddha speak of it thus in *The Light of Asia*, Book VIII:

It will not be contemned of anyone;  
 Who thwarts it loses, who serves it gains;  
 The hidden good it pays with peace and bliss,  
 The hidden ill with pains.

So, in weaving our destiny it is necessary to remember at every step and at every turn not to *thwart* the Law but to *serve* it, which can only be done by preserving harmony within ourselves and outside of us. The Law works not only on the plane of action but also on the plane of thought and feeling, which is hidden. Destiny is woven in the minds of men, thread by thread, the threads of Love and Life; and Death and Pain are the shuttles of its loom. How to serve the Law? It is explained by Lord Buddha in the simplest way:

Evil swells the debts to pay,  
 Good delivers and acquits;

Shun evil, follow good; hold sway  
Over thyself. This is the Way.

Self-control is the key to open the gates of Harmony. Good and evil exist only in the human kingdom. Working with the Law, serving it, spells good; going against it, thwarting it, means evil. Both good and evil are relative terms in this phenomenal universe, the results of pure or impure thinking.

"Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny." Thought, act, habit, character and destiny form a chain of cause and effect, from the inner to the outward planes of life. Destiny starts with the choice of the seeds of thought, how and where they are planted, how they are nurtured, what flowers and fruits they will bear. Each one is born with a divine destiny; he himself is the weaver of his freedom. No one compels him to act in one or another manner.

The second principle of the Eternal Verities to be remembered in serving the Law is to act for and as the Self of all creatures; to think not of one's own benefit but of the good of all. Whatever one has by way of knowledge, capacity, possession, is to be shared with others. The divine plane where harmony rules supreme radiates the light of Wisdom and of Compassion. The light that we have received has to be used to illumine the path of others. We have to be in attunement with the kingdoms below us because they are all within us, and it is our privilege and responsibility to train them and give them a forward impetus. Before making any choice, the good of the whole is to be considered.

The third principle that would enable us to serve the Law efficiently is to live in the world without being of the world. It is not by escaping from the world but by living with suffering humanity, alleviating its suffering to some extent at least, that the Law can be served. False asceticism leads one to desert his family duties, to go away from his kith and kin; this is thwarting the Law. Theosophy teaches us to perform every duty with a different attitude of mind and heart, so that living in the world we may soar higher, above the ways of the world—*i.e.*, not get involved in worldly allurements, not have attachment for worldly things, but serve our fellow beings

by serving the Law. Thus life will acquire new values.

One of the qualifications for chelaship is: "Calm indifference for, but a just appreciation of everything that constitutes the objective and transitory world, in its relation with, and to, the invisible regions." Thus, personal life can be adjusted to the spiritual realities. The interrelationship between the inner and the outer worlds will be established harmoniously. Each individual, as he attempts to transform his thinking and acting, will build a better, nobler character and weave his destiny according to the archetypal pattern. It is not the stars that rule our destiny, but *we* put ourselves under the influence of the stars according to our behaviour and conduct. We are put in favourable or unfavourable circumstances not by an outside god but by ourselves, as we deserve them in terms of our self-made destiny. When this is understood, the word "destiny" ceases to mean fatalism. It is not something static but moves according to the free will of man. That great power of the will is to be trained and directed along spiritual lines so that the threads of personal bondage may be loosened and divine destiny fulfilled. The weaver weaves according to a certain pattern. Every individual has to keep before his mind's eye the embodiments of the Divine Pattern, the never-failing guardians of the Eternal Law, so that Their instructions may prove a source of inspiration and energization in serving the Law while living in this world of ignorance and darkness.

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BEWILDERMENTS of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind's eye, quite as much as of the bodily eye; and anyone who remembers this when he sees anyone whose vision is perplexed and weak, will not be too ready to laugh. He will first ask whether that soul of man has come out of the brighter life, and is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark, or having turned from darkness to the day, is dazzled by excess of light.

—PLATO

## AGENTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

WE must live with reality, and when it does not fit our "rathers" we can, by the power of example, become instruments of change.

Keeping an ear turned inward will help us realize that the conscience always opts for self-improvement rather than criticism of others. This temptation toward mutual criticism is probably stronger among ourselves as we, through close association, fancy ourselves seers of one another's faults. The personality will ever urge us to "call a spade a spade," for it judges by appearances and presents no real alternative other than words, while the soul "criticizes" by becoming an *outstanding* example.

The authoritarians will disagree with us on this, being advocates of personal achievement, ostentation and power by position and assumption, by external coercion rather than the excellent example of a life of sacrifice. Yet their answers have turned to poison in this age of ours. The blindness caused by habitual error makes change for the better difficult unless we who know a better way become exemplars of it, willing to let ourselves be made scapegoats—not in anger, but simply as a recognized duty to the human family.

Not malice, but ignorance, has built nation-states with their reliance on violence. Some national leaders, having become certain that power can be obtained and retained through the ability to inhibit rather than transform, need the light of voluntary sacrifice to take them beyond the "policeman" concept of law and order. People may give lectures on why we should not be martyrs, or why we should be "effective," or how such-and-such could be done better. Yet these very same people will turn round and make themselves lifetime martyrs to materialism and all the short-sightedness that comes from believing in one life only. Mistaking appearances for reality, they opt for "separatism" and consider life to be lived for their own benefit. This failure to benefit others first and themselves second ignores the unity of all life. By such devious personalism we deny our responsibility for the condition of life and ignore our duty to be agents for improvement.

We are responsible for the "little lives" that make up our bodies, the thoughts that inhabit our minds and all the duties connected with being alive, whether or not we like the fact or even recognize it. We disregard this responsibility at our own peril, just as the disease cells in a human body endanger their existence by pursuing separatism at the expense of the very body to which they themselves belong, thus making the mistake of personal ambition.

People who consider the idealistic life a useless martyrdom neglect to consider the relative effect of men like Socrates and Croesus, or Buddha and Genghis Khan. In the light of history, Socrates would appear to have made a much more pragmatic series of choices than Croesus. In the "Apology" we read that he had the materialistic choice offered him by a wealthy man who was able to buy his way out of prison and had a safe refuge prepared where he could pass the remainder of his days in safety and comfort. Socrates' answer, in refusing this offer, showed that he had some fundamental ideas regarding why life was worth living, ideas which made an excellent example more dear to his heart than another day unreel inside the body.

There is a contentment in trying to do one's natural duty (*dharma*) to other beings that cannot be found in the pursuit of lust or possessions. We may not be the best of human cells in this great body, "Humanity," but we can be as good as it is within our power to be. It might be that the true pragmatist will turn out to have been that man who lived by serving his fellow men, having only ambition and desire for a better world.

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THE monk looks for peace within himself, and not in any other place. For when a person is inwardly quiet, there is nowhere a self can be found; where, then, could a non-self be found? There are no waves in the depths of the sea; it is still, unbroken. It is the same with the monk. He is still, without any quiver of desire, without a remnant on which to build pride and desire.

—*Sutta Nipata*

## CYCLES OF TIME

PUNCTUALITY is an important Theosophical principle very much missed out in our modern civilization. In fact, it is not even considered wrong these days to be unpunctual in private or in public life. This is because of carelessness: the value of time is not recognized; how cycles of time occur and how they should be taken advantage of is not understood; no deliberate planning ahead is undertaken, and no consideration for others is shown.

Ordinarily, time is divided into past, present and future. Every moment the future changes into the present, and the present in its turn becomes the past in which the never-ceasing stream of conditioned existence moves on. One of the Masters is quoted in *The Secret Doctrine* as saying:

I feel irritated at having to use these three clumsy words—Past, Present, and Future—miserable concepts of the objective phases of the subjective whole, they are about as ill-adapted for the purpose as an axe for fine carving. (I, 44)

Theosophy teaches that time is both finite and infinite; the latter is known as eternal duration, the subjective whole in which objective phases of time take birth from the moment manifestation starts. Before that, "Time was not, for it lay asleep in the infinite bosom of duration" (*S.D.*, I, 27). Each period of time is known as a cycle or wheel, so that a whole period of manifestation is made up of wheels within wheels, the smaller wheels within the larger ones, but the motion of each and every one of them is precise and punctual. Sri Krishna teaches in the Eighth Discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

Know that the day of Brahma is a thousand revolutions of the yugas and that his night extendeth for a thousand more. At the coming on of that day all things issue forth from the unmanifested into manifestation, so on the approach of that night they merge again into the unmanifested.

This denotes utmost punctuality in time in this vast universe and is symbolized by the Great Breath; the breathing out

corresponds to the period of activity and the breathing in to the period of rest. "Brahma 'expands' and becomes the Universe woven out of his own substance" (*S.D.*, I, 83). One of the Divine Excellences of Sri Krishna as given in the Tenth Discourse is: "Among computations I am Time itself." So nothing in the Universe is haphazard; everything takes place precisely.

Nature shows forth punctuality in all its departments, following the Law set in motion at the dawn of manifestation. Movements in the starry firmament above take place at the appointed hour. Tides rise and fall cyclically. Seasons follow each other in rhythmic succession. Flowers bloom and fruits ripen at the proper time. Blood circulates and the heart beats in an orderly way. Man alone hinders this great Law in Nature through his unpunctual behaviour.

What is the relationship between man and time?

Man is certainly *no* special creation, and he is the product of Nature's gradual perfective work, like any other living unit on this Earth. But this is only with regard to the human tabernacle. That which lives and thinks in man and survives that frame, the master-piece of evolution—is the "Eternal Pilgrim," the Protean differentiation in space and time of the One Absolute "unknowable." (*S.D.*, II, 728)

Man has to realize that he is a Divine Spark of the Absolute, that he is an "Eternal Pilgrim." The quickening or retarding of his progress lies in his own hands. As he is a product of Nature's gradual perfective work, he has also to recognize his responsibility to the lower kingdoms of Nature, to all the lives under his command, so as to lift them up in an orderly way to his stage. This implies punctuality in time in a dual manner. This life-cycle of a pilgrimage of full seven Rounds is expected of every individual. But Theosophy advocates that each take his evolution into his own hands, and if, with the help of the Teachings, he works diligently he may arrive at the goal earlier and become one of the helpers of the human race.

That humanity as a whole is behind time in the evolutionary

journey is shown by Madame Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*:

In sober truth, vice and wickedness are an abnormal, unnatural manifestation, at this period of our human evolution—at least they ought to be so. The fact that mankind was never more selfish and vicious than it is now, civilized nations having succeeded in making of the first an ethical characteristic, of the second an art, is an additional proof of the exceptional nature of the phenomenon. (II, 110)

A lesson can be learnt from a similar incident at an earlier stage of human evolution:

...the monads which had not reached the human stage by this point will, owing to the evolution of humanity itself, find themselves so far behind that they will reach the human stage only at the close of the seventh and last Round. (I, 173)

These Monads are called "laggards" further on. This is past history; what about the future?

In Theosophical literature, in several places the "moment of choice" is referred to, which for humanity in general will come at a later stage—a choice to go in the right or wrong direction deliberately.

At the present day *Manas* is not fully active in the race, as Desire still is uppermost. In the next cycle of the human period *Manas* will be fully active and developed in the entire race....all will then be compelled to consciously make the choice to right or left, the one leading to complete and conscious union with *Atma*, the other to the annihilation of those beings who prefer that path. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 63-64)

The full development of *manas* imposes full responsibility on the race, and thus we see how the turning point is reached and what it may mean, and also what is the meaning of the "moment of Choice." With full responsibility the choice must be made by the race which thus has perfect *manas*. It is for and towards that period that the Masters of Wisdom are now working so as to prepare the present Egos for the momentous days when the choice of the good or evil path must be

intelligently made. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 15*, p. 9)

It is a grave responsibility and lack of punctuality would lead to disastrous results.

The great Teachers of humanity appear on earth cycle after cycle, as Sri Krishna says in the Fourth Discourse of the *Gita*:

I produce myself among creatures, O son of Bharata, whenever there is a decline of virtue and an insurrection of vice and injustice in the world; and thus I incarnate from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of righteousness.

They follow not only the law of cycles but also the law of necessity in order to bring humanity out of the darkness of ignorance to the light of Wisdom. They hold life and death in their strong hands. Do we not have the example of Bhishma who lay on his bed of arrows awaiting his self-chosen hour of death after the sun had started on its northern course? They have all given the selfsame teachings, one of which is punctuality in time, called the Divine Discipline of Yoga in the Sixth Discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. "The meditation which destroyeth pain is produced in him who is moderate in eating and in recreation, of moderate exertion in his actions, and regulated in sleeping and waking." Lord Buddha has given similar advice in the *Dhammapada*:

He who does not rouse himself when it is time to rise and though young and strong is full of sloth, whose will and thought are weak, that lazy man will not find the Path of Wisdom. (Verse 280)

This is a good picture of us human beings at the present time, for many turn night into day and day into night. Those who are privileged to have contacted Theosophy learn to understand the value of time, to be vigilant and watchful, to be punctual always, so that they may choose to act righteously when the great moment of choice comes.

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## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Thirty years after the moon landing, search for life beyond Earth continues—and will go on continuing in the century to come. Scientists' fascination with outer space and alien worlds is the theme of a special report in *Newsweek* for July 26. Oliver Morton writes:

Science is reaffirming a potential for life far from Earth, envisioning a biological universe of which Earth is an extension, not an exception. We are learning of far-off solar systems where life may exist while seeing new possibilities for its past presence closer to home. The search for life will be the dominant theme of the next 30 years of space-flight, a grand attempt to mend the breach between the heavens and Earth....

In the great catalog of extreme environments where life manages to persist—around volcanoes on the oceans' floors, in the rocks of deep bore holes, in the cores of nuclear reactors, under the surfaces of antarctic pebbles—water is the one thing always present. It may not be there all the time, but it's there just enough. And if the same holds true on Mars, then Mars should once have been alive. Its rocks should hold fossils....

But the planets and moons of our solar system are not the only ones there are—or even the only ones we can study. In the past four years, astronomers using Earth-based telescopes have discovered indirect but compelling evidence for about 20 large planets around other stars.

These big planets are interesting in and of themselves; but small, Earthlike ones would be much more so. And they, too, should soon be discovered, if they are out there. In the next 10 years space-based telescopes should provide indirect evidence for the existence of planets as small as the Earth or smaller. Soon after that, more ambitious instruments should be able to detect those planets directly, and perhaps to sense the presence of water and life in their atmospheres. That will mark the second great triumph of the next 30 years of exploration....

The new planetary systems found in the past three years look very unlike our own, which reduces the chance that we will find a place like Earth around these particular stars....

In the coming century the science of life and the powers it brings will be central to the human experience, central to our technology, our politics, our values. Biology, not physics, will be the key science. Space exploration, born out of the physics of the rocket and the bomb, is mutating to reflect this change in its intellectual environment. It is finding a new way to matter, a new way to mean something: only by discovering life elsewhere will we truly be able to understand the life we already know.

Since no single atom in the entire Kosmos is without life and consciousness, how much more then its stars and planets? The whole of antiquity believed in the universality of life, but it would be the height of absurdity to believe that life in other worlds could be judged by the standard of terrestrial life. The section "On Chains of Planets and their Plurality" in *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 699–709) has this to say:

Unconsciously, perhaps, in thinking of a plurality of inhabited "Worlds," we imagine them to be like the globe we inhabit and peopled by beings more or less resembling ourselves.... While accepting the old Hermetic axiom: "As above, so below"—we may well believe that as Nature on Earth displays the most careful economy, utilizing every vile and waste thing in her marvellous transformations, and withal *never* repeating herself—we may justly conclude that there is no other globe in all her infinite systems so closely resembling this earth that the ordinary powers should be able to imagine and reproduce its semblance and containment....

The ordinary man has no experience of any state of consciousness other than that to which the physical senses link him.... Even great adepts (those initiated of course), trained seers though they are, can claim thorough acquaintance with the nature and appearance of planets and their inhabitants belonging to our solar system only. They *know* that almost all the planetary worlds are inhabited, but can have access to—even in spirit—only those of our system....

Scientific reasoning, as well as observed facts, concur with the statements of the seer and the innate voice in man's own heart in declaring that life—intelligent, conscious life—*must* exist on

other worlds than ours. But this is the limit beyond which the ordinary faculties of man cannot carry him. (II, 700–702)

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Although people know in their heart of hearts that forgiveness of someone who has hurt them, offended them, abused them, even taken the life of someone they love, would liberate them from the past and help them to move on with their lives, yet they are often reluctant to grant it. They see no reason why, from their own pain, they should summon feelings of compassion for that person. "The art of letting go" may not be easy, argues Stephanie Dowrick (*Utne Reader*, March-April 1999), yet it marks a triumph of the human spirit.

Dowrick, who is the author of the book *Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love*, writes:

As challenging as it is, forgiveness may be the supreme virtue, the apotheosis of love, for it declares: "I will attempt to go on loving the life in you, or the divine in you, or the soul in you, even when I totally abhor what you have done or what you stand for...."

Simply contemplating the act of forgiveness may bring us closer to a person, to events, or to our own most painful and vulnerable feelings than we want to be. Holding on to our anger, outrage, or fantasies of revenge may be harmful for our physical and emotional well-being. But we do it because we believe that it keeps us separate—and safe. Or we do it because we believe we owe it to someone else who has been wronged.

Yet it is one of life's most terrible ironies that betrayal can be as connective as love. It can fill your mind and colour your senses. It can keep you tied to a person or to events as tightly as if you were bound, back to back—or worse, heart to heart. The person you want to think of least may become the person you think of constantly.

It may only be by giving up while not surrendering that you catch your first, precious glimpse of freedom. You do this by withdrawing your attention from the person who has hurt you and returning it to yourself and whoever else is in your care; by taking your attention from the past and bringing it into the

present moment. You do it by giving up the illusion that your prolonged suffering will ultimately affect that other human being and teach a meaningful lesson. You do it by abandoning that person to fate, and abandoning the desire to affect that fate....

We often talk about forgiveness in a context that suggests we are giving something away when we forgive. Or that we are accepting something in return when others forgive us. This is illusory. Offering our forgiveness, or allowing forgiveness to arise in whatever nascent forms within us, takes nothing away from us. It restores us to something that is always within us but from which we have become unbound: a sense of unity expressed through the qualities of trust, faith, hope, and love.

Genuine forgiveness is not passive but is a positive act that requires moral and spiritual strength. It helps the forgiver even more than the one who is forgiven. The greatest of psychologists, Gautama the Buddha, sums it up thus: "In this world never is enmity appeased by hatred; enmity is ever appeased by Love. This is the Law Eternal." This seemingly simple yet profound prescription could be applied to many a problem plaguing humanity, not only at the personal level but in all walks of life—even in the national and international spheres.

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Child behaviour experts are saying that children from a very young age lead a richer moral life than adults often assume. We hear the grim news about children going on a rampage in their schools and communities, engaging in antisocial acts, committing thefts and even murders. But these are exceptions rather than the rule, says William Damon, a developmental psychologist who has studied intellectual and moral growth, educational methods, and peer and cultural influences on children. In his article "The Moral Development of Children" (*Scientific American*, August 1999) he writes:

What many people forget...is that most children most of the time do follow the rules of their society, act fairly, treat friends kindly, tell the truth and respect their elders. Many youngsters do even more....Young people have also been leaders in social

causes....

All children are born with a running start on the path to moral development. A number of inborn responses predispose them to act in ethical ways. For example, empathy—the capacity to experience another person's pleasure or pain vicariously—is part of our native endowment as humans....Although the emotional disposition to help is present, the means of helping others effectively must be learned and refined through social experience. Moreover, in many people the capacity for empathy stagnates or even diminishes....

A scientific account of moral growth must explain both the good and the bad. Why do most children act in reasonably—sometimes exceptionally—moral ways, even when it flies in the face of their immediate self-interest? Why do some children depart from accepted standards, often to the great harm of themselves and others? How does a child acquire mores and develop a lifelong commitment to moral behaviour, or not? Psychologists do not have definite answers to these questions, and often their studies seem merely to confirm parents' observations and intuition....

The study of moral development has become a lively growth industry within the social sciences. Journals are full of new findings and competing models. Some theories focus on natural biological forces; others stress social influence and experience; still others, the judgment that results from children's intellectual development. Although each theory has a different emphasis, all recognize that no single cause can account for either moral or immoral behaviour....

How does a young person acquire, or not acquire, a moral identity? It is an incremental process, occurring gradually in thousands of small ways: feedback from others; observations of actions by others that either inspire or appall; reflections on one's own experience; cultural influences such as family, school, religious institutions and the mass media. The relative importance of these factors varies from child to child.

Moral or immoral conduct during adulthood often has roots in childhood experience. Children need to be presented with realistic expectations and structural guidance that challenge them to expand

their moral horizons. Parents, teachers and multiple social influences, all contribute in giving the child a moral identity—the key source of moral commitment throughout life. Children must hear the message enough for it to stick.

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The profound impact of behaviours and attitudes on health is now widely recognized. Behavioural medicine is today a growing trend and a new relationship is emerging between patient and doctor. Patients want doctors who will dictate less and educate more, and doctors are now better able—and increasingly more willing—to advise patients on what to do, not just what to avoid. An increasing number of doctors are now recommending for some disorders a change in the patient's lifestyle as a better method of treatment than drugs.

Richard A. Lippin, founding president of the International Arts-Medicine Association and chair of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, writes in the June-July *Futurist* on the psychology of health and stress-reducing behaviours:

Good and caring physicians have always tried to supplement their classic medical (pharmacological) prescriptions with sensible advice for living. Recently, however, empirical advice has advanced this common practice to a new level of scientifically based advice, or "behavioural prescriptions." ...

One trend contributing to the rise of behavioural medicine is what I call "the democratization of psychiatry." Examples include growing acceptance of behavioural medicine as approved treatments for addictions to alcohol, tobacco, and (more recently) food-related compulsions. Cardiologists, rheumatologists, and other traditional medical specialists are also now applying behavioural medicine principles....

The number of behavioural-medicine techniques now being widely used in many health venues demonstrates the enormous contribution that modern psychiatry has made to the redefinition of health itself. It is time to formally recognize and integrate modern professional psychiatric principles into all health-care endeavours and to provide appropriate training of doctors.

The behavioural prescriptions Lippin offers his patients include "responsible pleasures" such as participating in the arts, enjoying nature, doing work that is meaningful and gratifying, encouraging specific stress-releasing physiological behaviours such as laughing (the mirth response), engaging in intellectual pleasures, reading, being creative, solving problems, playing games, being appreciated, appreciating others, and many more. Given the creative changes in medical advice we are already seeing, the future of behavioural medicine appears bright.

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Can the Bible be trusted? And does it matter? asks Hillel Halkin in his article in the July-August *Commentary*. He comments on two recently published books—one arguing that almost everything in the Bible that is commonly thought to be history is myth; and the other, that almost everything therein commonly thought to be myth is history.

Thomas Thompson in his book, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel*, presents archaeological evidence to show that "the Bible's stories...aren't about history at all, and that to treat them as if they were history is to misunderstand them." On the other hand, David Rohl's *Legend: The Genesis of Civilization*, claims that "much of the Old Testament contains real history. Archaeology disproves some of the Bible stories; but "what does this text tell us about its *own* history?" asks Halkin.

The answer, of course, is many things—nearly all of which have been commented on *ad infinitum* since modern biblical scholarship began. That the books of the Bible have different strands and different authors, for example. And that different parts of them appear to have been redacted in different places and at different times. And that not all of those who wrote or edited them shared the same point of view. And that all had *some* point of view that they sought to impose on their material. And that some of this material is clearly fanciful or imaginary....

Although the Bible may not be telling the truth, then, neither is it making much up. It is using literary techniques to transmit a tradition—or, rather, a large number of traditions.

This is hardly a revolutionary proposition. It is what nearly all biblical scholarship prior to the minimalists has maintained. Nor does even Thompson deny the presence of traditional material in the biblical text. Neither he nor his fellow minimalists, however, quite face up to the implications of this, or of the fact that an oral tradition, unlike a text, is inherently undatable....

The fact is that we know a great deal about the transmission of oral traditions among peoples all over the globe—and what we know tells us, above all, two things: that such traditions can have extremely long histories, and that they constantly mutate in the course of them.... There is relatively little in the Bible that cannot conceivably be a distant echo of something that once happened. Unfortunately, distinguishing an echo from an echo of an echo is for all practical purposes impossible....

National myths and passions run deeper than the excavations of archaeologists.

Those ignorant of the Bible's symbolical meaning and of the universality of the truths underlying and concealed in it, are able to judge only from its dead-letter appearance. It reveals its verities only to those who, like the Initiates, have a key to its inner meaning, says H.P.B., and is "quite misleading to anyone ignorant of its Esotericism."

The worship of the dead-letter in the Bible is but one more form of *idolatry*, nothing better.... The Bible is *not* the "Word of God," but contains at best the words of fallible men and *imperfect* teachers. Yet read *esoterically*, it does contain, if not the *whole* truth, still, "*nothing but the truth*," under whatever allegorical garb. Only: *Quot homines tot sententiae*. (H.P.B. in "The Esoteric Character of the Gospels")

There is the esoteric interpretation of the Christian texts which, read in the light of, and translated into, "the language of the Mysteries," show us the identity of the fundamental and definitely universal truths; by this means, the four Gospels, as well as the Bible of Moses and everything else, from the first to the last, clearly appear to be a symbolic allegory of the same primitive mysteries and the Cycle of Initiation. (H.P.B.'s Notes on Abbé Roca's "Esotericism of Christian Dogma")

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