

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 66, No. 11

September 1996

### PHASES OF THE ARCHAIC WISDOM

#### II.—GOOD AND EVIL

[Reprinted from THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, November 1951.]

WHAT the Wisdom-Religion declares concerning Good and Evil is of primary importance. Man's nature consists of seven distinct characteristics or divisions, which Theosophy calls "principles"; according to the predominance of one or another characteristic, a man's thought and action will be guided. Three constitute the more spiritual nature of man and four the lower. There is constant opposition between these two divisions, because the inertia of the earthly ever checks the higher. It is these lower principles, making up man's bodily and personal self, that cause all the trouble. But man can transform his personality. He is not its slave. The lower principles are his tempters, but they should be and can be made his helpers; for, without them the higher are too pure to operate in earth-life. The lower nature of man is potentially under the governance of his own Will, working with his Highest Self, the ATMAN, that deific Ray of the Absolute which is the Be-ness within each man. Actually, therefore, every man holds his destiny in his own hands; because all men, being identical with Deity, possess in their essence, and in one sense *are*, the *powers* of Deity. The whole purpose of evolution, physical and spiritual, is to prove this stupendous fact—men gradually moving, by, in and for themselves, and for the benefit of all others, up to the full height and out

to the broad expanse of their divinity. They can do this by realizing more and more that the boundless Unnamable ONE is in All, *is* ALL, and that nothing is outside of IT.

In the confusion of earth experience, men like to think of Deity as Good only. Yet, if nothing is outside of Deity, nothing outside of Good, what and where is Evil?

The seeming separation of Good and Evil begins with the manifesting of the One Life, for here starts the operation of the Law of Contrasts or of Opposites. Through contrast only can the manifested terrestrial consciousness live and expand. Only by knowing one set of opposites can man know the converse set. This is true of man's *lower* mind; but in his higher nature, and more and more as he spiritualizes himself, he can rise above the "pairs of opposites" and gradually know in his own thinking only Good.

There is another worth-while point: we say that all is Life and contained in Life; and we say that the Law and Purpose of Life are an ever-progressive evolution of manifested beings, having life, *being* life, into further degrees of divinity. Is it not evident, then, that there must be within the One Life many Essences, some less divinely evolved than others? If we see that, can we not also understand that it is these less divinely evolved Essences, it is their acts and ways of manifested living—their inertia, their ignorance, their inexperience and their selfish, wilful resistance—it is these that make the opposing forces for the more divinely evolved? But then, turning the question around, must we not see, too, that even the more divine are not fully evolved, that they too include qualities and acts that offend even the less divine? If we admit that, must we not also admit that each man's Good and Evil are largely within himself, that it is *his* thoughts and feelings about the ideas and deeds of others that bless or curse himself? And so is he not necessarily throwing back upon or rousing in his fellows a like curse or blessing?

Good and evil, then, should not be seen as entities or as outside ourselves; they are more truly our own reactions to the experiences we have in our self-evolving processes. For this reason a man can change an evil into a lesser evil, and it again into a still lesser evil,

until at last he sees it disappear. Little by little he can come really to understand that the One Life, by Its All-Inclusiveness, *must* contain all phases of both Evil and Good; and that to believe in them as positive, separate and permanent opposites is philosophically a mistake, because it denies the *all-ness* of the ALL. Many men have realized that human experience on earth is an illusion because it is temporary; because from the standpoint of boundless Eternity it is like a wink of the eye.

Such seeing men have perceived that the mighty impressiveness of Good and Evil is part of the Great Illusion; perceived also that they themselves as personalities—or as Vahans of their inner Flame—are likewise illusive. Yet, too, they know that while they are on earth the illusions seem very real; they admit the apparent power of the unreality and their duty to change its character, knowing that, under the LAW, all the struggles and the opposition are actually means of evolution. In this process, that which men call evil is, by transcending it, used eventually for what they call good; and by this procedure the ideal Harmony of the Universe is not destroyed but maintained.

Men know that they cannot with impunity destroy the Harmony that should and finally will prevail. Accordingly, such Seers accept men's responsibility, as self-conscious beings, for the ways in which they create and use the opposing forces in their mutual relations. For a man is made by his thinking, and through it he can injure or rescue his own personal life.

These simple words are genuinely Pan-Theistic, because they place in the Deity within each man the powers and qualities that are deific. In man's self-conscious mind is the deific power to *decide* what he will think and do. In considering himself as identical with the Absolute THAT and with the One Life, a man comes to see that he has the right, the power and the duty to *choose* in the ALL-LIFE that which is divine, and to raise up the less divine. In so far as he does this, he may realize that he is in fact exemplifying the true Pan-Theism, with which we have already dealt.

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## THE ART OF LIVING

LET us try to understand life, try to find out what is our relationship to the Divine in Nature as well as to the material world. Perhaps there is no better way of doing so than by looking at the lives and teachings of the Great Ones who have come from age to age and lived among men. Christianity speaks of Jesus, the Son of the Divine Father, yet a man. Hinduism speaks of Krishna, the Avatar of Vishnu, who took a body of flesh in order to help and teach humanity. Buddhism speaks of Gautama, the Prince who became the Buddha, the Enlightened. Many more examples can be found—the long line of Zoroasters, the ancient Chinese Sages, Lao-tse and Confucius, and the Aztec and Egyptian Initiates. Jesus taught the Fatherhood of God and therefore the Brotherhood of man. Krishna taught that all men are dear unto Him, for He is in all. The Buddha spoke of the Brotherhood of all, rooted in the ALL of which each is a part.

All the Great Teachers have taught us what we should be like and how to become as They are; how to make our union with the Divine as They have made; how, in fact, to realize our relationship with God and to live the true Way of Life. Their teachings are embodied in Their lives and also in the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Dhammapada* and all other Sacred Scriptures. They all show how we can draw near to Them by sowing the seed of thought in the heart. Mere mental thought too often results simply in negation or in academic learning, while thought in the heart gives understanding and soul-satisfaction. Jesus said to his disciples, "Come, follow me," and "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." The *Bhagavad-Gita* makes Krishna say: "Place, then, thy heart on me, penetrate me with thy understanding." The Buddhist says:

I take my Refuge in the Buddha.

I take my Refuge in the Dhamma (the Law).

I take my Refuge in the Sangha (the Brotherhood).

These sayings are not to be taken as implying that the individual

is to take shelter behind these Great Ones, but rather as portraying the relationship between pupil and Teacher. A child does not ask his teacher for forgiveness if he has done a sum wrong; and the teacher does not punish the child, or leave the matter unresolved. He teaches the right way to do the sum and so helps the child to evolve. So it is in all spiritual things, for our birthright is to *realize in actual fact* that we are all "sons of God," and the Teachers who have realized this kinship show us the Way.

It is true that we have forgotten our birthright, that we are selling it for a "mess of pottage," as did Esau; but that is the world's tragedy. No nuclear weapons can do us as much harm as this unbelief, for the former destroy but the body, while the latter destroys the soul. Time and time again in the history of mankind this birthright has been forgotten and one of the Great Ones has had to come forth to re-establish the idea. So short a time ago as about two thousand years, one such, Jesus, came to reiterate this spiritual truth, but again it has been forgotten. Were he to come today, would he not say to our Christian leaders, popes, prelates, priests and so on down the scale, as he did to the Sadducees of his time: "Ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (*Luke, XI, 52*)? Jesus, the Christ, gave us the Sermon on the Mount; people say that it is impossible to practise its teachings today.

It is time we turned to ethics and followed them in life; without them we are a world at tension, almost an armed camp. The church does not truly guide the people, and science upholds the exploitation of almost every resource. We contaminate the earth with chemical fertilizers, we "pasteurize" milk, we inject foreign matter into the body; we then point to lower death rates and say that they are the result of injections, immunizations, blood transfusions, new drugs, etc., but men and women still die. The body has become a laboratory in which this and that is tested, tried—and discarded; whereas right living, pure food, cleanliness and common sense would do away with much of the illness prevalent in the world. But this implies a change of attitude to life and a change of heart—more difficult than even the cure of disease.

Only the growing realization that man is divine, that nature is divine, that life has a goal, and that all sink or swim together, will turn us to right action.

The great American writer, Emerson, says:

Life invests itself with inevitable conditions which the unwise seek to dodge; which one and another brags that he does not know and that they do not touch him; but the brag is on his lips, the conditions are in his soul. If he escapes them in one part, they attack him in another more vital part.

It is because of these facts that we need help to see how we can live peacefully and constructively, and, hard as it may seem, the first great lesson to learn is the first truth taught by the Buddha: Sorrow is. There is no life without sorrow or suffering in some form or another, physical, emotional, mental. The baby suffers in growing; the child, in its developing emotional life; the adult, in his mature anguish. We only need to look at the lives of those around us, or read biographies, to know that this is true. From birth to death, happiness and misery, sorrow and joy, alternate.

Even death, which comes to all, brings sorrow, sometimes one of the greatest of sorrows, and its very universality ought to show us that too great a grief at the death of a loved one is unseemly. The Buddha asked the young mother with her dead babe at her breast to go and fetch him a few mustard seeds; only, he said, they must come from a home which death had not visited. The mother searched and came again to the Buddha, but without the mustard seeds. He thus taught her what we all should learn: "The grief which all hearts share grows less for one." In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare makes the King say to the sorrowing Prince, "...your father lost a father; That father lost, lost his." While we are alive and well, we should face the fact that death is inevitable.

Much of the sorrow and suffering, however, is unnecessary: it is produced by our own actions, feelings and thoughts here and now. This kind of sorrow and suffering can be prevented, but only if we realize that at the present stage of evolution suffering and sorrow are our lot. Once this fact is faced, the inquiring mind asks: Why should this be? What is the cause? Having found the cause, the next

step is to find out how it can be removed. It was because Prince Siddhartha, who became the Buddha, saw the suffering and sorrow of the world that he began his search for the answer to life and its riddles; and having found the answer, he made it the basis of his first sermon in the Deer Park near Benares, 500 years before Christ.

This question cannot, as he showed, be satisfactorily answered, unless to the idea of reincarnation is added the twin concept of Karma, or the law of cause and effect, beneficent and retributive. We already know that this law works in visible, material nature, for on it all our daily living is based. We know that there can be no effect without a cause, and no cause without an effect, on the physical plane, but we are not so familiar with the ramifications of this law over the invisible aspects of life, over our thoughts and feelings. But none of these can escape being changed into effects, and these effects come back to the producer of the causes. The old proverb, "Curses, like chickens, come home to roost," is fundamentally true of all life, both visible and invisible, for whatever happens or is, is the result of a prior cause. If this is true, then our character, our environment, our opportunities and lack of them, are all effects from causes generated by us, somewhere, sometime.

Many see God's hand in bringing the effects to us. The Christian scriptures contain such statements as: "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But translate the word God as Law, and many misconceptions are cleared up; for, though we see the inevitability of the statement and indeed its dreadfulness, as it seems to us at first, it holds in itself a redemption, for nothing is *final*. The law is inevitable, but each *new* cause produces *its* effect and therefore we, the actors, are always the masters of our Fate. We can sow what causes we choose; nothing hinders us except the effects of our own past sowing, and these are only obstacles to be overcome. It is essential that we think of these ideas. They are well expressed in *The Light of Asia*:

...each man's life

The outcome of his former living is;

The bygone wrongs bring forth sorrows and woes,

The bygone right breeds bliss.

He cometh, reaper of the things he sowed,  
Sesamum, corn, so much cast in past birth;  
And so much weed and poison-stuff, which mar  
Him and the aching earth.

And lest we say that this is not true, because often we see that it is not the wicked but the good who suffer, we read on: "Tomorrow it will judge, or after many days."

Here is the science of living, the explanation of all the seeming mishaps, great or small. Here is a statement of the Great Ones that we can prove for ourselves, if not fully, at least in part. Logically, it is a perfect answer to the cause of wars, crime, misery, opportunities; to the incidents of birth, race and locality. It is the logical answer to those otherwise inexplicable incidents of "one being taken and another left," which we read of in connection with air accidents, bombings and other calamities. In Lin Yutang's words, "The moment we live in, is a causal and indissoluble link between yesterday and tomorrow."

These things are not mysteries into which we may not pry, but operations of universal law for us to watch. Here, too, is the explanation of the differences in character in the members of one family, differences of "talents" or capacities. This conception removes the idea of someone else punishing us or rewarding us, and we see the truth that "Ye suffer from yourselves. None else compels."

If we were sure that our actions would undoubtedly bring lawful reactions, *i.e.*, reactions in terms of the action, then we could begin to build our lives on a scientific basis.

We live in an environment in which other personalities also live, all brought together by previous actions, thoughts and feelings, and therefore the present interaction between these personalities is either pleasant or unpleasant. It is important to remember that, pleasant or unpleasant, it is the result of previous actions of us all, however remote they may seem from the present.

The first result of this line of thinking is that very many of our bad tendencies fall away. Revenge, for instance, which is a canker in the mind and heart, can no longer be felt, for nothing can be done

to us which is not our own doing in the past returning to us as an effect. If law brings us the result of our dealings, then who is to blame but ourselves? If, for example, we touch a hot plate and burn our fingers, we do not seek revenge on the plate. If we tie up a branch of a tree too loosely so that the cord gives way and the branch hits us, we do not have feelings of revenge towards the tree. Logically, therefore, we cannot feel revenge towards any human being through whom our own returns to us.

We cannot feel anger or jealousy; we cannot retaliate. There is no reason to feel resentful because others have money and position, for at some period they must have earned it, and we did not. In other lives we shall reap the result of riches well spent or misspent, opportunities used or misused. We can, indeed, "trust the Law." Nothing we can do by way of revenge will fit the case, for the *suitable* revenge lies concealed in the original cause. Hence the saying: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord [Law]." Shakespeare pointed to this fact when he wrote in *Richard III*: "He [God] needs no indirect or lawless course to cut off those that hath offended him." All we do in harbouring revengeful thoughts is to sow new causes, the effects of which will return and hit us.

Is there then no such thing as evil? What *is* evil? Apart from the universal laws of ethics and harmony, there is no set criterion of good or of evil that will last for centuries, because humanity is progressing towards a greater understanding of the meaning and purpose of life, however much we seem at the moment to be in a dark cycle. We can take heart when we realize how the conscience of the world is stirred by much that goes on during a war; how we are beginning to take interest, as individuals, in whether capital punishment and flogging are right or wrong; in whether racial discrimination is right or wrong; in whether nuclear warfare is right or wrong, etc. But we have a long way to go yet, since, unfortunately, we so often think that expediency is more important than ethical action.

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## SPIRITUALISM—FALSE AND TRUE

THE basic law of Nature is that of Cycles, by which all events recur, again and yet again. Occult history traces the return of epidemics of physical and psychic diseases, as also of periods of health and upliftment for the souls of men. Under that very Law of Cycles, the phenomena of so-called "spiritualism" held sway in the seventies of the last century.

Knowing that an epidemic of the disease known as mediumship was due, the Lodge of Masters took measures to stem its attack on the citadel of the human heart. They tried to bring the light of rational explanation to the phenomena which were then gaining popularity, and sent Their Agent, H. P. Blavatsky, to the spot where certain prominent mediums were located, and where the epidemic began. This also does away with the notion that spiritualism was unknown before the 19th century; the disease has broken out many, many times, and in India it is known as "*bhuta-worship*."

But what *is* spiritualism? It is the materialization of entities from the invisible regions of the universe, through the mediumship of men and women of certain psychical temperaments. These entities try to communicate with those present at the séance through the aid of the medium. Because among these entities forms of dead friends and relatives appear, and because a slight token of knowledge about the dead person is displayed, the hasty conclusion is drawn that the communicating entities are the genuine souls—or "spirits" as they are usually termed—of the departed. For our purposes, it will suffice to define spiritualism as the process or method resorted to by men and women to contact the invisible through the agency of the medium.

A medium is a person with a peculiar psychic organism, with a diseased astral body, on which the invisible entities can work and through which they can contact our world of objective existence. Various are the methods used and numerous are the types of mediums (trance mediums, materializing mediums, etc.), but all of them can be classified under our general description. The fate of almost all mediums is a non-moral state of sickness and degenera-

tion.

While mediumistic phenomena do occur, their source and purport are other than what is ordinarily held by spiritualists. When, therefore, we hear from a person who has himself been to a spiritualistic circle that he has received a message or seen a phenomenon, let us ask—what then? Does he understand the rationale of these phenomena? We live in the midst of the most awe-inspiring phenomena of Nature; but when we exclaim, "wonderful, wonderful," do we understand them? Can we master them, or are we but their slaves?

There is no question that spiritualistic phenomena do take place. To say that "It is all moonshine" is as mistaken as to believe hastily the theory of the spiritists and the spiritualists that the entities who appear at seances and give messages are the returning souls of the dead and no other. The descriptions of phenomena witnessed are one thing, the explanations tendered are another. Let us say that among the spiritualists there is neither science nor philosophy about mediums and their controls, about how messages are received; only one single item of belief is tenaciously held, that it is the "spirits" of the dead who return to commune with the living. That is why they call themselves "spiritualists."

There is another class—the psychical researchers. They are more rational and their aim is to test spiritualistic phenomena scientifically. While their record of the description of many kinds of phenomena is genuine and valuable, the explanations they give are mostly partial or incorrect. Let us not accept the claim—once again it is arrogance that speaks—that the psychical researcher is doing something unique and that no one before him studied the psychic sciences. The Jewish Rabbis studied it in their temples and knew much more than does the Society for Psychical Research. Among the Sufis, a certain school was set apart for the study of the subject, and their descendants are the fakirs of today—not the "fakers," but those to whom certain types of phenomena come naturally though unconsciously. Among the Brahmanical texts, detailed knowledge exists: *Bhutas*, ghosts of all shades and colours, are defined and described—*pretas*, *pisachas*, *yakshas*, *devatas* of

certain types, and so on. These ancient *Tantrik* and especially *Yantrik* and other texts warn gravely against *practising* mediumship—*i.e.*, evoking the entities of the invisible world.

To understand our subject, we must first know about the human constitution. First, there is the body which functions through its orifices and centres; its five senses (*Jnana-Indriyas*) and five organs of action (*Karma-Indriyas*). These are all connected by nerves and are all rooted in the foundation of this house of ours called the body. Just as the foundation of every house is invisible, so is the astral body, which is the foundation of the physical body. The latter is like the shadow of the astral; without the astral, there would not be the physical body. Sometimes the astral is called the "double" of the physical body; but truly speaking the physical is the double of the astral.

In the astral body are the roots of our senses and sense-organs. Just as nerves connect the different organs in the physical body, so *Nadis* connect the root-centres existing in the astral body. As there is lymph and blood circulating in the physical body, so there are fluids circulating in the astral body. The *Vayus* or airs with which we are familiar in our physical body are but shadowy reflections of aerial currents in our astral body. Therefore is the latter called *Pranamaya Kosha*—the vehicle or sheath of life. It is the life-preserving body; the moment it ceases to support the physical body, that moment the latter dies. Most diseases are centred in the astral body, yet medical science takes no cognizance of it. It will repay us greatly to study the astral body.

Next to the astral body, whose power to draw and retain life from the great Ocean of Life enables it to procure and preserve the physical body, is the constituent of desires and passions, good or bad. For the study of our subject, this is a very important factor. *Kama* or passion is composed of living, but not self-conscious, organisms called elementals or *devatas*. These elementals exist in Nature, and by our own past feelings we attract them. They, like all else, live in the Ocean of Life—*Jiva*. These elementals, impressed by our own desire-impress, stamped by our own passion-stamp, fly together, bringing ultimately the astral into existence at the time of

our birth. Different men have different desires, *i.e.*, different kinds of elementals work in them—not by chance, luck, favour or accident, but by and under law. These elementals congregate and make our desire nature. They are the root cause of our blood. "Blue blood" is not an empty phrase; "blue blood" exists, but not where people think it exists. We have a psychic pedigree as we have a physical pedigree. These elementals work in and through our astral body and their expressions are called our passions, desires, feelings, emotions—good or bad, powerful or weak, superficial or profound. They affect and control the *Pranamaya Kosha*, the astral body, when they are not controlled by the higher principle of mind.

Mind is the instrument of the soul. When the soul wants to work in the body, it has to pass through the intermediaries of desires and astral body. Very often it is enslaved by our *Kama*; when that happens, the desire-beings, the elementals, gain a certain type of intelligence. Our good thoughts make the elementals noble, our evil ones make them more cunning and depraved. When we master the feelings, *i.e.*, desire-elementals, we purify and raise them; when we succumb to our passions, we lose our mental energy; it is absorbed by the desire-elementals who become crafty and cunning through the process, because they have absorbed our mind's energy.

At death, the physical body gives up the ghost, *i.e.*, abandons the astral body, which is the abode of these elementals and also of the soul. The soul and its instrument, the mind, surrounded and penetrated by these desire-elementals, depart from the body and we say the man is dead. After the death of the physical body, a second death takes place—separation between the soul and its mind which carries away the elementals made noble and uplifted by pure thought, and leaves behind the whole assemblage of evil elementals who fasten upon what remains of the astral body and become an entity called *Kamarupa*, Passion-form, *Bhuta*-ghost. This *Bhuta* or *Kamarupa* is conscienceless, for the mind and the soul have left it. Therefore it is called an empty shell, empty of mind and soul, of conscience and discrimination. But it is a living entity, and like an animal it has Kamic- or passion-Intelligence. It is not self-con-

scious, for the self-conscious thinker has departed.

It is these *Kamarupas*, empty astral shells, wicked sometimes, cunning more often, and stupidly senseless most often, who are attracted by the medium at spiritualistic séances. They are behind most of the mediumistic phenomena. Here is the explanation of the senseless piffle which comes so often as "messages from the dear departed." But they are not the only entities of the invisible world who appear at séances. There are two other classes:

(1) The unfortunate ones who die unnaturally—suicides and executed criminals—are one class. Those who will-fully strike down their physical body cannot dissociate themselves from their astral body; the second death does not take place in their case until their normal span of life is over. They are therefore detained in the lower part of the invisible world with the *Kamarupas*. Executed criminals are also there, for they are but deprived of their physical bodies. The pest of criminality is in fact fostered by the institution of capital punishment. These angry executed ones also linger in Kamaloka, along with the suicides. Both these types often fasten upon the medium, sometimes using the empty *Kamarupa* of some deceased person, and come to the séances, and then we have a better class of phenomena, but a more dangerous one to moral health.

(2) The much-to-be-dreaded Black Magicians are also drawn to séances. Those who indulge consciously in the evil arts commit suicide in another way; soul-death takes place, and after the death of the body they live as self-conscious entities in the company of the executed, the suicides, and the *Kamarupas*. They become "controls" of the spiritualistic séances and are the most dangerous foes of humankind. They are the only "devils" in Nature, but are powerless against a pure heart and an enlightened mind.

The souls of ordinary men and women dwell in the higher, spiritual region of the invisible universe; no medium, no mortal, can call them back. They, the self-conscious souls, never come to the séances. People are fooled into believing that they can communicate with the souls of their "dear departed" and are drawn to the séance. It is an unholy place and a degrading experience for those present. The better and more powerful the medium, the more

dangerous he is to the sitters, who by contact develop mediumism which can become the root of dread diseases in another life.

This false spiritualism is rightly named necromancy. But there is a true Spiritualism—not resorting to the unconsciousness of the medium, but unfolding the powers of one's own Spiritual Soul and becoming the Mediator between the beneficent powers of the spiritual realm and the ignorant minds of men on earth. Theosophy teaches that the Adept evolves in the opposite direction to the medium. The Adept is self-conscious, uses his Will with Knowledge, his powers with deliberation. He is always in *Samadhi* and knows all about it in his brain and in his heart. The medium, passive and ignorant, goes into trance where he or she is but a subject of visible and invisible operators. The way of the Adept, says Theosophy, is more difficult indeed, but soul-preserving, while spiritualism as commonly practised is soul-destroying.

Pure living is the first step, and our effort, if earnest and real, will compel us to seek knowledge. Living by true Knowledge is the second step. *The Voice of the Silence* says: "To live to benefit mankind is the first step. To practise the six glorious virtues is the second." We become that on which we dwell. Let us think of the Adepts, learn about Them, who They are, what Their nature is. The marks of the Adept are Wisdom, Compassion, Supreme Sacrifice. The Enlightened Ones blaze like Perpetual Fires. Our souls alone can contact Them. The Soul in the Heart, and the Heart of the Soul, is the real Fire, the true Adept. Purity of life brings Him out, Wisdom unveils Him a little more, complete Sacrifice reveals the true Fire. Adepts do not show Themselves to all, but They show Themselves to the faithful, to those who seek, those who study, those who serve. "If you want to know us, study our Philosophy; if you want to serve us, serve our Humanity," said One of Them. That is the task before us.

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HE is a Knower of the Self to whom the ideas "me" and "mine" have become quite meaningless.

—SRI SANKARACHARYA

## SILENCE AND SPEECH

Not until the whole nature has yielded and become subject unto its higher self, can the bloom open. Then will come a calm such as comes in a tropical country after the heavy rain, when nature works so swiftly that one may see her action. Such a calm will come to the harassed spirit. And in the deep silence the mysterious event will occur which will prove that the way has been found....The silence may last a moment of time or it may last a thousand years. But it will end. Yet you will carry its strength with you.

—*Light on the Path*

WHAT is this strength of the silence? It is obviously a spiritual experience, one greatly to be desired, that is here poetically described, but are there benefits within the gift of even ordinary silence which we may be missing? Folk wisdom has intuitively grasped that "Speech is silver, silence is golden," but leaves it to Theosophy to explain why.

All power is ultimately from the Spirit, and silence conserves spiritual energy which wagging tongues fritter away in idle chatter, misuse in curious prying, debase in gossip, desecrate in lie and slander.

We have, moreover, Patanjali's assurance that "concentrated attention to two objects cannot take place simultaneously," and yet, while we are doing other things, how freely our tongues sometimes run on, and often about things which are none of our concern! And even when we speak unnecessarily about ourselves and our own affairs, are we not feeding our personality and its liking for the centre of the stage? We may well remind ourselves of a Chinese aphorism: "A sage does not say what he does; but he does nothing that cannot be said." And Buddha reprobated garrulousness in words that reverberate in the heart: "Better than a thousand-word speech of empty words is one pregnant sentence hearing which one feels peace." (*The Dhammapada*, verse 100)

Those who practise silence for any worthy purpose feel its benefits in a greater or a lesser measure, though to make a show of

the practice vitiates its value to the practitioner. The law of necessity should be the ordinary rule, but silence sometimes "speaks too loud." To keep silent when one hears an innocent person slandered, for example, is unthinkable for the man or woman of honour.

Gandhiji told a visitor to Sevagram that silence had become both a physical and a spiritual necessity for him, adding:

Originally it was taken to relieve the sense of pressure. Then I wanted time for writing. After, however, I had practised it for some time I saw the spiritual value of it. It suddenly flashed across my mind that that was the time when I could best hold communion with God.

One of the Mahatmas named, among the means to fit oneself for receiving illumination from within, "silence for certain periods of time to enable nature herself to speak to him who comes to her for information."

That we cannot speak and listen properly at the same time is obvious. For that reason, if for no other, the aspirant to the spiritual life has to practise silence. But the mere absence of audible sound is not enough. *Light on the Path* tells us that "to obtain the pure silence necessary for the disciple, the heart and emotions, the brain and its intellectualisms, have to be put aside."

*The Voice of the Silence* also says: "Silence thy thoughts and fix thy whole attention on thy Master, whom yet thou dost not see, but whom thou feelest."

How frequently, though we have silenced our lips, there is an inner hubbub which disturbs our thoughts and hinders hearing any promptings that might come from the gracious Master, from our conscience, or the still, small voice of our spiritual consciousness!

The Old Testament records that it was only after the "great and strong wind" and the earthquake and the fire had subsided that Elijah heard the "still, small voice."

The many inner voices— that of the body urging, "I am tired; I am cold; I am hungry"; the voice of selfish desires and ambitions; the voice of the lower mind, scheming to gratify those desires; even the voice of exclusive personal affection, of care for "a little group

of *selves*, near and dear to us"—drown out not only intimations from our higher nature but also the cry of "the great orphan," Humanity, to which no spiritual aspirant should be deaf.

Neither grief nor dismay nor disappointment nor pleasure can be allowed to shake the soul if it is to keep its hold on the calm spirit that inspires it.

The self-imposition of periodic silence will yield results in inner steadiness if, during its observance, the thoughts are quieted; but this, be it noted, does not mean making the mind a blank. If the waking mind remains passive, it is going toward sleep—or toward insanity.

The disciplinary value, as well as the difficulty, of suppressing needless speech is well brought out by Mr. Judge in his *Letters That Have Helped Me*:

Begin by trying to conquer the habit, almost universal, of pushing yourself forward. This arises from personality. Do not monopolize the conversation. Keep in the background. If someone begins to tell you about himself and his doings, do not take first chance to tell him about yourself, but listen to him and talk solely to bring him out. And when he has finished suppress in yourself the desire to tell about yourself, your opinions and experiences. Do not ask a question unless you intend to listen to the answer and inquire into its value. Try to recollect that you are a very small affair in the world, and that the people around do not value you at all and grieve not when you are absent. Your only true greatness lies in your inner true self and it is not desirous of obtaining the applause of others. If you will follow these directions for one week you will find they will take considerable effort, and you will begin to discover a part of the meaning of the saying, "Man, know thyself."

A valuable study of "Listening and Speaking" appeared in our pages, in two parts, in January and February 1962, to which the attention of students is invited. The earnest aspirant will find much practical help also in "The Vow of Silence" which appeared in our issue for January 1960. The following paragraph concludes that article:

There are a hundred who plunge into the waters of the ocean for pleasure or profit to only one who dives for the pearl of great price. The latter proceeds to his work in the secrecy of silence and his art in the ocean is of a very different kind from that of the ordinary swimmer. Those who are in search of the pearl of wisdom must acquire the strength of muscle, the control of breath and the finesse of stroke necessary against the stormy billows of this ocean of *samsara*. These lie securely hidden in the Power of Silence. That power must be invoked, not by a pledge to some other being, but by a vow silently sung and silently registered in the sanctuary of the Heart. Thus the path begins in silence and secrecy and ends in the hearing and the chanting of the Soundless Sound.

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LET US repeat for the hundredth time: The Truth is one! but the moment it is presented, not under all its aspects, but according to the thousand and one opinions which its servants form about it, it is no longer the divine TRUTH, but the confused echo of human voices. Where can one look for it as a whole, even approximately?...

Like the Bible, the Kabbalistic books have their dead letter, the exoteric sense, and their true or esoteric meaning. The key to the true symbolism, which is that also of the Hindu systems, is hidden today beyond the gigantic peaks of the Himalayas. No other key can open the sepulchres where, interred thousands of years ago, lie the intellectual treasures which were deposited there by the primitive interpreters of the divine Wisdom. But the day of resurrection for all these dead cannot be far away.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

## ACCEPTANCE—REJECTION

DOUBT and despair are attitudes rooted in the lower mind and affecting the emotions as effects. They are dangerous companions for anyone, yet to say, "Never doubt," "Never despair," is of no help to the one who doubts or despairs, and there are many such in the world today. Unaware of the meaning of life, lacking the capacity to manage themselves and their own life, without philosophy or inspiration, they are impelled by the animal urge to survive and to grasp power which enhances the feeling of "self." This urge to survive and retain a feeling of importance and self-identity can also overcome the student of Theosophy. It is the desperate need of "survival" that prevents us from learning the art of "self-surrender"—surrender of our own ideas as to Truth or as to the way things ought to be done.

But the other side of this question must be faced. To accept blindly any teaching or any "authority," living or dead, is the way to a worse suicide, and honest "doubt" is infinitely preferable to the giving up of one's inalienable right to freedom of action in terms of conscience, and to the relinquishment of one's responsibility for one's own path through life.

To remedy this condition of doubt-despair, the student has to turn to discrimination, the one invaluable privilege of a human being.

What is discrimination? The power of the mind to *weigh* facts and ideas and sentiments and judge between them without bias. Unless this faculty is used, unless under *all* conditions of life "facts" are weighed before decisions are taken, ruin lies ahead.

Hence the vital necessity for understanding the "principles" that underlie all things. We are required to seek and act up to certain fundamental principles. They are simple and easy to find when the emotional nature is under control. Unless they are followed, we lose discrimination; and if we lose that, all else is lost. Principles of right action lie rooted in the higher mind guided by Buddhi. We see, therefore, that discrimination is not choice in the ordinary sense of the word. Choice depends on our wishes, wants or likes. For the

wise man, discrimination precedes choice.

How often do we find before us two lines of action, or two lines of thought between which we have to choose? How shall we decide which course is right and true and which is not? What shall be our attitude? Sometimes the trouble goes deeper; our conscience is called upon to decide and we are not sure. Sometimes we strive to retain our individuality at all costs, to retain our freedom of choice, our right to choose. It is here that doubt creeps in.

Even doubt has two aspects, one negative and one positive. The negative aspect is to discard that which we doubt; the positive aspect is to act on it and watch the consequences. Doubt is indeed an excellent servant and helps us to learn through trial and error, but it is a bad master; once it takes root in our consciousness it will grow until, in extreme cases, we end in insanity, for we doubt everything that we do not understand. But even so let us add that to accept everything leads to a condition worse than insanity, for it makes us lose our sense of discrimination and judgment, and without the use of the mind we become less than human.

Despair has no chance of a foothold in our consciousness if we are active in discrimination or in the use of our faculty of conscious choice, or if we watch in order to learn.

Let us then accept or reject a thing *after* principles have been sought as a basis for discrimination. If doubt still remains, then let us watch and wait.

To do away with doubt is not to accept everything blindly. To say, "Whatever H.P.B. says is right," "Whatever W.Q.J. says is right," etc., is to thwart our mental progress. Our attitude should rather be: "Here is something to learn and study given by H.P.B. or W.Q.J.; what I cannot understand I shall put aside for the time being and wait; what I do understand I shall *apply* wherever possible; I shall emulate the Wise Men of the Fifth Race who spent their lives in learning, testing and verifying the teachings." Further, those Wise Men—and how wise they were compared to ourselves!—never accepted anything as true unless it had been tested and proved by their peers. Let us search and study certain fundamental ideas and use them as axioms for the understanding of all else. Let us

*prove* a proposition wrong before giving way to doubt and discarding it. If we cannot do this, then let us put it aside until more knowledge is gained. If we *can* prove it wrong, let us discard it.

Nothing should be condemned until we have proved it to be wrong. It is wise to give a thing the benefit of the doubt, otherwise we shall cast away many a pearl of wisdom.

Let it not be said: "Oh, Theosophical students believe implicitly in every word written by H.P.B. and W.Q.J.!" Attention needs to be turned to the right attitude for study. Let us read "My Books," the last article H.P.B. wrote, and note the difference between words and ideas; and let us realize that even when we have made mistakes we can profit by them in that they show us the dangers of lack of discrimination. They are very good checks on those who would accept without thought; very good warnings to those who doubt without thought.

Through doubt and despair we strengthen our discriminative faculty, provided we see them as operations of Kama and obstructions for the time to the light of the higher mind or Buddhi-Manas.

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THE PART we play, major or minor, does not concern us at all....Our *work* is to call attention to the true basis for Union among Theosophists—and at the same time to set the example. People need, whether new students or old, to grasp the message of Theosophy for itself—not because of belief in any person or organization. If students succeed in grasping and applying the Philosophy, they will have true clairvoyance as to men, things and methods, and their gratefulness will include all that contributed to their opportunity; this gratitude will find expression in their doing the same for others.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

## ISLAM—SELF-SURRENDER

### A STUDY IN RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

[This article was originally published as *Theosophical Free Tract No. 9*, at the time of the Partition of India in August 1947.]

O ye who believe! shun much suspicion; for lo! suspicion is a crime. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Ye abhor that (so abhor the other)! And keep your duty (to Allah). Lo! Allah is Relenting, Merciful. (*Koran*, XLIX, 12)

HISTORY is full of instances of the havoc caused by false sectarian views about religions and prophets. One of the latest of these is the setback caused to human progress in general and India in particular through the exploiting of the religious feeling of the Muslim masses in India in favour of the retrogressive step of dividing the country, wrenching away from India a portion to be named Pakistan. We are not concerned with the military, economic and socio-political aspects involved in this vivisection. We want to show what an irreligious exploitation of Islam as taught by the Prophet of Arabia has taken place.

The correct view of religions and prophets is made available in Theosophy and it is our purpose here to present it in connection with the teachings of the *Koran* and the Prophet.

No great Teacher of Soul Science ever established a separate religion. Every one of them was a religious reformer—a protestant against the prevailing corruption in the moral and mental life of the people among whom he was born. Krishna, who incarnated to open the Kali Yuga, did not establish any new religion. Nor did the great Buddha, born of the Kshatriya caste, a Prince, establish a new creed. He was a reformer, a sage lover of his fellow-men, who protested against the degradation of religious life, enveloped in ignorance and superstition. Lao-Tzu and Confucius in China were reformers, like Jesus, Apollonius and Paul of Christendom, who wanted to purify and elevate corrupted Judaism. And so on everywhere. Muhammad was no exception.

After the passing of the Spiritual Reformer-Teacher, his followers, more zealots than they were zealous, abandoning the path of the prophet assume the role of the priest, and so there have come into existence separative creeds which persist because popes, purohits, mobeds and maulanas are vociferous and active.

He that hath a Gospel,  
 To loose upon Mankind,  
 Though he serve it utterly—  
 Body, soul, and mind—  
 Though he go to Calvary  
 Daily for its gain—  
 It is his disciple  
 Shall make his labour vain.

It is his Disciple  
 Who shall tell us how  
 Much the Master would have scrapped  
 Had he lived till now—  
 What he would have modified  
 Of what he said before—  
 It is his Disciple  
 Shall do this and more....

He that hath a Gospel  
 Whereby Heaven is won  
 (Carpenter, or Cameleer,  
 Or Maya's dreaming son),  
 Many swords shall pierce Him,  
 Mingling blood with gall;  
 But His own Disciple  
 Shall wound him worst of all!

(RUDYARD KIPLING)

To perceive this, it is absolutely necessary to study the origins of a religion with its historical background. From what roots did the tree of that religion grow? How did its original teacher, now revered as prophet, begin his task? The genesis of every religion now existing was an Impulse to set right the then existing course which had become deflected; the prophet labours to bring back the

Impulse to its straight course—unsectarian, impersonal, universal; the priests deflect it again to creedalism. The Faith which the prophet holds up is based on Wisdom which explains and enlightens; that which the priests demand is blind belief which begets ignorance, superstition and bigotry. The beneficent mission of the Prophet of Arabia suffered from this old foe of Pure Sages.

Let us go to the sixth century of our era, to the country where Muhammad was born in 571 A.D. We will quote a Muslim savant, Zaki Ali, author of *Islam in the World*:

The fifth and sixth centuries of the Christian era were centuries of decadence of the ancient cultures and civilizations of the East and West, but in the following century the course of history was violently changed by an unexpected people. Nomad Arabs rode out of the desert and demanded the surrender of Byzantium and Persia. The Iranian monarch was amazed. "Who are you to attack an empire?" he asked. "You of all peoples the poorest, most disunited, most ignorant!" The messenger of the Arabs was unabashed: "All that you say was once true. The Arabs were clothed in the hair garments of beasts, their food was green lizards; they buried their infant daughters alive, they feasted on dead carcasses and drank warm blood; they slew their relatives and boasted of the property they stole; we knew not good from evil, nor could we tell what was lawful and what was unlawful. All this is true no longer. God in his mercy has sent us a holy Prophet who has given us a sacred book which teaches us only true faith."

In such surroundings was born in the tribe of Quraish, the prophet to be. He was left parentless at the age of seven and was brought up by his uncle Abu Taleb, and began a tradesman's career. As a cameleer, he entered the service of the widow Khadijah, herself a capable business woman, whom he later married and who became his first disciple. But, while in his outer life driving camels and bringing good profits to his employer, in the inner life of his Soul he was driving his mind away from bartering with the flesh-pots of the world.

The degrading conditions naturally aroused the reforming spirit,

energizing the few to protest against prevailing irreligious customs and habits. An association sprang into existence and Hanifism was born. The Hunafa, "those who turned away," were disgusted by the quarrels between worshippers of one God and those of another. They became agnostics and set about studying the truth of things. They did not know and did not want to rely on blind belief; but they were tolerant, humble enough to perceive that to speak without knowledge was worse than useless. They were protestants—protesting against the superstitions which passed under the name of religion. Like all thoughtful reformers, they tried to ascertain, with discrimination, what could be retained of the old beliefs and traditions. The Hanifs wanted to purify the ancient religion of Abraham. Removing the corruption which had set in, they wanted to restore the worship of the One God called Allah instead of the worship of his daughters, which worship had become most degraded and immoral.

Muhammad joined the Hanifs and because of his honesty in business, his intellectual integrity and his moral sincerity he was named Al-Amin, the Trustworthy.

The Kabah existed in Mecca. It was established by Abraham for worship of the One God. The edifice is not large but very original—of a cubical form, 23 x 24 cubits in length and breadth and 27 cubits high, with only one aperture on the East side to admit light. In the north-east corner is the "Black Stone" of Kabah, said to have been lowered direct from heaven and to have been as white as snow, but subsequently it became black, owing to the sins of mankind. The "White Stone," the reputed tomb of Ismael, is in the north side and the place of Abraham is to the east. This tradition that it was Abraham and Ismael who were charged by the One to establish the Kabah was accepted by the Hunafa, and therefore by Muhammad. In *Al-Koran* a clear reference to this is to be found. It is written:

And then We made the House (at Mecca) a resort for mankind and a sanctuary, (saying): Take as your place of worship the place where Abraham stood (to pray). And We imposed a duty upon Abraham and Ismael, (saying): Purify My house for those who go around and those who meditate therein

and those who bow down and prostrate themselves (in worship). (*Koran*, II, 125)

It is necessary and highly important that this phase of the Prophet's life as a companion of the Hanifs be kept in mind. It forms the background to his future career and there is continuity of the inner soul life and practice in the efforts of the outer tradesman and cameleer to gain spiritual enlightenment.

It is recorded that it was his practice to retire one month every year to Mount Hira to fast and pray for elevating his mind and communing with his soul. One year, in this month—he was about forty—he fell into a trancelike sleep and in that state he was told to "read." Muhammad, being "illiterate," could not read or write. But he was not ignorant in the matters of mind and soul. His inner eye saw and his inner ear heard, and Muhammad was able to grasp the Message and "the words remained inscribed in his heart." Thus a psychic and occult experience was the beginning of Muhammad's career as a Prophet.

What was the Message? "Proclaim. In the Name of thy Lord—Proclaim." He was humble and could not believe that he was chosen for a reforming mission. He ran to his wife, and Khadijah told him—"You are Al-Amin; God needs a voice to instruct the faithful; and he has selected you." She became his first disciple; Ali, his cousin, and Zeyd, the servant-slave, followed. Thus the three earliest disciples typified and expressed the real democracy—man and woman, employer and employed, old and young. Muhammad was prudent enough to work in silence for some three years with the select few. He and they laboured in secrecy, recording the Messages which came through him. These remained esoteric till the time was ripe to make them public.

The orthodox were strong and though the number of his followers grew, even after three years when he began to preach he was opposed and had to fight his own countrymen and his own co-religionists who would not listen to his message and cleanse the old faith, wiping out corruption and superstition. To these early opponents he was not inimical, though their dislike of him was intense and their disapproval vehemently expressed. His attitude towards

them was one of understanding; he was patient and gentle. In afteryears, he was consistent and towards all warring enemies he had charity and forbearance. This sprang most naturally from what was implicit in the Instructions he received. He named his Message, Islam—"Surrender to the Divine Will."

Lo! religion with Allah (is) the Surrender (to His will and guidance). Those who (formerly) received the Scripture differed only after knowledge came unto them, through transgression among themselves. Whoso disbelieveth the revelations of Allah (will find that) lo! Allah is swift at reckoning. (*Koran*, III, 19)

And again:

The messenger believeth in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. Each one believeth in Allah and His Angels and His scriptures and His messengers. We make no distinction between any of His messengers—and they say: We hear, and we obey. (Grant us) Thy forgiveness, our Lord. Unto Thee is the journeying. (*Koran*, II, 285)

The name of God, Allah, was not invented by the Prophet. It was already in use. Scriptures are Messages of Allah and ancient Messages gain recognition in the above texts. In one form or another, Islam—the Surrender of Man to God—was always the kernel of the Message which through transgression became corrupted; then followed ever a reckoning with Allah and a new proclamation. How closely akin is the philosophy of this verse to the famous shlokas of the *Gita* (IV, 7-8)! Further, there is this:

Revile not those unto whomsoever they pray beside Allah, lest they wrongfully revile Allah through ignorance. Thus unto every nation have We made their deeds seem fair. Then unto their Lord is their return, and He will tell them what they used to do. (*Koran*, VI, 109)

And again in the *Koran* (II, 256) it is recorded that "there is no compulsion in religion." And can there be a clearer statement of religious tolerance than what follows?

Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ismael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered. (*Koran*, II, 136)

The Prophet recognized that "there are as many ways to Allah as there are breaths of the children of men." In his recognition and acceptance of the Ancient Gurus of the Human Race, Muhammad was explicit, for he recorded in the *Koran*:

Mankind were one community, and Allah sent (unto them) Prophets, as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and revealed therewith the Scripture with the truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed. And only those unto whom (the Scripture) was given differed concerning it, after clear proofs had come unto them, through hatred one of another. And Allah by His will guided those who believe unto the truth of that concerning which they differed. Allah guideth whom He will unto a straight path. (*Koran*, II, 213)

The statements of the *Koran* are apposite answers to the modern proselytizer, whatever creed he holds as his own:

And they say: None entereth Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian. These are their own desires. Say: Bring your proof (of what ye state) if ye are truthful. (*Koran*, II, 111)

Who is better in religion than he who surrendereth his purpose to Allah while doing good (to men) and followeth the tradition of Abraham, the Upright? Allah (Himself) chose Abraham for friend. (*Koran*, IV, 125)

It is generally believed that Muhammadanism is a martial religion. This is untrue, as it is of the Christianity of Jesus, though the bigoted followers of both creeds have been responsible for the crimes of ghastly wars and of befouling bloodshed. Not violence but non-violence did Muhammad teach. And, following him, the God-intoxicated Sufis did likewise.

And verily whoso is patient and forgiveth—lo! that, verily, is (of) the steadfast heart of things. (*Koran*, XLII, 43)

The guerdon of an ill-deed is an ill the like thereof. But whosoever pardoneth and amendeth, his wage is the affair of Allah. Lo! he loveth not wrong-doers. (*Koran*, XLII, 40)

The (faithful) slaves of the Beneficent are they who walk upon the earth modestly, and when the foolish ones address them, answer: Peace. (*Koran*, XXV, 63)

Non-Muslims express their feelings in the name of their religions or what are named their "principles." But Muslims who take the name of their Prophet to compete and to kill are not honouring Him who proclaimed the pen to be mightier than the Sword.

In his respect for His Peers of the Ancient World; in His love of Faith, His breadth of Tolerance, His depth of Understanding; in His advocacy of Inner Surrender and living in Peace with all, Muhammad belongs to the long line of Theosophists, to the august company of the Lovers of the Race of Human Souls.

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THERE is a world of true and lasting felicity into which my spirit sometimes strays, and catches glimpses of its soul-enkindling scenery. But there it stays not long. It is beckoned back again by some one of the thousand toils of the present and visible, to resume the little tasks of yesterday and complete what the present calls for. Would that it could remain longer where it so loves to dwell! Light might then be its pervading element, a clear and untroubled vision its constant privilege!

—BRONSON ALCOTT

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

In the long evolutionary march, species have appeared and disappeared, but the patterns of that progression were not noticed by scientists until 35 years ago, when two ecologists, Robert H. MacArthur and Edward O. Wilson, started looking for meaning in life's parade. Their researches in island biogeography—the discipline which studies the geographical distribution of plants and animals in different areas—revolutionized that science. David Quammen's reflections on the MacArthur-Wilson theory appear in the March issue of *Discover* under the title "Life in Equilibrium."

Wilson and MacArthur noticed striking regularities in the welter of data no one had explained—the species-area relationship, for instance. As new species appeared in the islands the scientists studied, old species were going extinct. It seemed to them that some sort of balance or equilibrium existed in nature. Quammen writes:

The two of them brainstormed during 1961 and 1962 over this notion of a biogeographical balance. They scrutinized Wilson's ant data from Melanesia. They looked at patterns of distribution among bird species in the Philippines, Indonesia, and New Guinea. They referred to Darlington's enumeration of beetle and reptile species on the various Antillean islands. They grew convinced that the species *lost* from an island, during a given span of time under ordinary circumstances, are roughly equal in number to the species *gained* by the same island over the same span of time. Unless the island itself is very recent in origin or has undergone a sudden disruption, the rates of losses and gains tend to cancel each other out. The result is a dynamic stability. The *number* of resident species remains steady while, with one species replacing another, the roster of *identities* changes continually....

Just how are species lost from an island? By local extinction. And how are they gained? Two ways: By speciation, when a single old species splits into a pair of new species; and by immigration, when a species arrives and becomes established. MacArthur and Wilson suspected that the second of those two, immigration, is vastly more frequent than the first....

The phenomenon of offsetting increase and decrease—the

change of identities on the roster of species—is known as turnover. One species of butterfly arrives, another dies out, and in the aftermath the island has the same number of butterfly species as before. Equilibrium with turnover....

One theme underlay most of MacArthur's work—the search for patterns. He emphasized patterns and equilibriums and ongoing processes, while de-emphasizing the sort of one-time, contingent events that figure in historical explanations....

For MacArthur, the geographical distribution of animal and plant species was full of deeply interesting questions. Why did such and such a community contain *these* species but not *those*? Why did such and such species live *there* but not *here*? Answers existed, MacArthur knew, and those answers were important, he believed.

The theory of "repeated patterns and equilibriums" in nature has deeper implications for the science of ecology. It is the patterns and similarities among phenomena that reveal the workings of regular processes and give an inkling as to why some species, despite different ancestries and independent histories in different regions of the planet, are yet so similar.

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Over the years, there have been in vogue many systems of healing, other than Western medicine. At one period a particular method is popular; the next, something else. It would be an interesting study to examine the operation of the Law of Cycles under which a particular panacea appears, disappears and reappears.

The craze of the hour, especially in the West, is healing by faith. In fact, in all systems of healing down the centuries the factor of faith plays a prominent role, but this has often not been taken into account. Faith, no matter in what or in whom, *does* cure and the history of medicine from the remotest ages is full of examples of such cures. A feature in *Time* magazine for June 24 focuses on the current revival of interest in the relationship between faith and

healing, not only on the part of a growing number of patients, but even among doctors. Today, many medical men are veering round to the view that there is more to healing than pills and scalpels. *Time* reports:

Indeed, more and more U.S. medical schools are adding courses on holistic and alternative medicine with titles like *Caring for the Soul*.... This change in doctors' attitudes reflects a broader yearning among their patients for a more personal, more spiritual approach to health and healing. As the 20th century draws to an end, there is growing disenchantment with one of its greatest achievements: modern, high-tech medicine.... Chronic illnesses, such as high blood pressure, backaches, cardiovascular disease, arthritis, depression, and acute illnesses that become chronic, such as cancer and AIDS—in most of these, stress and life-style play a part.

"Anywhere from 60% to 90% of visits to doctors are in the mind-body, stress-related realm," asserts Dr. Herbert Benson, president of the Mind/Body Medical Institute of Boston's Deaconess Hospital and Harvard Medical School.... Not only do patients with chronic health problems fail to find relief in a doctor's office, but the endless high-tech scans and tests of modern medicine also often leave them feeling alienated and uncared for. Many seek solace in the offices of alternative therapists and faith healers....

Some scientists are beginning to look seriously at just what benefits patients may derive from spirituality. To their surprise, they are finding plenty of relevant data buried in the medical literature. More than 200 studies that touch on the role of religion have been ferreted out.... Most of these studies offer evidence that religion is good for one's health....

"Most of the history of medicine is the history of the placebo effect," observes Benson in *Timeless Healing*.... "Faith in the medical treatment," he writes, "[is] wonderfully therapeutic.... But if you so believe, faith in an invincible and infallible force carries even more healing power.... It is a supremely potent belief."

Words like "faith," "religion," "meditation" and "spirituality"

are loosely used, without proper understanding of their true implications. In the ultimate analysis, it is the *mind* and *will* of the patient that effects the cure. "The influence of mind over body is so powerful that it has effected miracles at all ages." Says *Isis Unveiled* (I, 216):

*With expectancy supplemented by faith, one can cure himself of almost any morbid condition.* The tomb of a saint; a holy relic; a talisman; a bit of paper or a garment that has been handled by the supposed healer; a nostrum; a penance, or a ceremonial; the laying on of hands, or a few words impressively pronounced—either will do. It is a question of temperament, imagination, self-cure. In thousands of instances, the doctor, the priest, or the relic has had credit for healings that were solely and simply due to the patient's unconscious will.

Right thought and feeling, a calm, courageous attitude to life, a contented, charitable, loving, faithful, sunny disposition, acceptance of whatever comes as opportunity to learn and to grow, these take us far along the road to health. This does not imply that people should not take the necessary steps to cure bodily ailments. "Follow the best practical advice," says H.P.B. But, besides seeking advice and following prescriptions, what would really help is a clearer apprehension of what man is and what causes his suffering of body or of mind. A knowledge of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation would help healer and healee alike.

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With 5.7 billion people now on Earth, and 250 more born every minute, fears about population growth are at the back of many people's minds. Along with the anxiety, there is also a great deal of confusion and misconception, writes Joel E. Cohen in his article in *Discover*, April 1996, based in part on his new book, *How Many People Can the Earth Support?* The author, who has spent 30 years studying the problem and is Professor of Populations at both Rockefeller University and Columbia University in New York City, states that "population problems are entangled with econo-

mics, the environment and culture in such complex ways that few people can resist the temptations of unwarranted simplification. The result is a loose and widely accepted collection of myths." His article is devoted to exploding some of the myths encountered most often.

Indeed, in the underdeveloped countries of the world the problem is not so much that of human overpopulation as of economic and social development. There is no optimum population as such. How many people there are in any particular country or in the world as a whole is less important than what the people decide to do about their problems. On a global scale, food is not a real problem at all, for it is estimated that the world's farmers can theoretically feed a population many times larger than today's. In other words, the essence of the population problem is not that mankind has propagated too many children but that it has failed to organize a world in which they can grow in peace and prosperity. Rich nations and poor alike have grossly misused the world's resources instead of devising the means of sharing them.

The issue of population control diverts nations from facing the real changes and improvements they need to make. The problem is the undone work, not the numbers of people. Family-planning programmes alone will not eliminate the problems that have been allowed to pile up. In underdeveloped countries, the trouble is that the people are not productive enough to provide for their own needs. When India, for instance, had fewer people a generation ago, and still fewer two or three generations ago, it was not correspondingly more prosperous. If India were to have fewer people in the future than it has now, but nothing else were to change radically, the fewer people would continue to be poor and unproductive. Again, population control is an evasion.

What determines growth or decline in birth rates? For students of Theosophy, the controlling factors are simply the Karmic cycles of racial and national incarnation, which are somewhat outside the field of orthodox scientific investigation. Nor are they worried that the Earth will not be able to support its population in time; for, as *The Secret Doctrine* tells us, the number of incarnating Monads of

Earth is limited. "Karma-Nemesis, whose bond-maid is Nature, adjusted everything in the most harmonious manner," she says, "and, therefore, the fresh pouring-in, or arrival of new Monads, had ceased as soon as Humanity had reached its full physical development. No fresh Monads have incarnated since the middle-point of the Atlanteans" (II, 303). So the Monads incarnating on Earth are those who have been here many times before. It must be borne in mind also that they do not reincarnate at the same interval, but come out of the state after death at different rates, and this again depends on several factors.

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