

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THE VALUE OF CYCLES

My friend, the golden age hath passed away,
Only the good have power to bring it back....

—GOETHE

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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IN Nature's calendar, 21st September is marked as the day of the Autumnal Equinox, when day and night are of equal length. It is the day on which the sun, on its southward journey, crosses the equator. Once again on its northward journey when the sun returns from the Tropic of Capricorn, it will cross the equator on 21st March. The Autumnal Equinox is a point or a stage in the cyclic movement of the sun, between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. This is one of the many cycles operating in the universe.

One of the fundamental propositions of Theosophy is that the law of cycles prevails in all departments of life, in all the kingdoms below man as well as in those above man. Cycle means return of that which was before. A cycle is a period of time marked by sequence of stages. In a cycle there is orderly synchronization of quality and quantity. For instance, a cycle of 24 hours—of day and night—includes forenoon, afternoon, dusk, night, etc. After one day and one night is completed, there would start another cycle of 24 hours which also would have all these four stages, but the morning of this day is not exactly like the morning of yesterday. The word cycle is derived from the Greek word *Kuklos*, or a ring. But a cycle is not a circle, so that we come back from where we

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started. It is more like a spring or spiral so that we come back to the same point, but at a higher level.

A universe comes into existence and goes out of existence, periodically, and within the universe there are major and minor cycles—cycle of the seasons, cycle of the four *yugas*, cycle of birth and death, etc. In *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 24*, Mr. Judge writes:

Your having a quarrel last week and denouncing a man, or with a woman and getting very angry, creates an impression in you, and that impression is as much subject to cyclic law as the moon, and the stars, and the world, and is far more important in respect to your development—your personal development or evolution—than all these other great things, for they affect you in mass, whereas these little ones affect you in detail. (p. 7)

Research has been done in the field of bio-rhythmic cycles. Studies with plants, animals and men have indicated that all forms of life have special cycles of behaviour linked to outside forces, *viz.*, fluctuations in barometric pressure, gravitational field, phases of the moon, the electromagnetic field of the earth, cosmic rays, etc. It is believed that human beings have a rhythmic cycle that governs their lives, which begins at the moment of their birth. Research done by collecting data on thousands of people revealed that there are three basic cycles in human nature. A 23-day physical cycle of vitality, strength, resistance; a 28-day emotional cycle of moods, sensitivity and feelings; and a 33-day intellectual cycle of memory, alertness and reasoning power. Each of these cycles can be divided into positive, negative and neutral phases. It has been observed that our bleakest moments are not in the negative phase, but when the cycle crosses the base line from positive to negative phase. Research in this direction has shown that industrial accidents occurred when workers were not emotionally or physically at their best. All these cycles are of different duration, hence they seldom coincide at exactly the same time. That is the reason why we very seldom have absolutely wonderful days or really terrible ones.

Our “blues” or depression comes in cycles. In *U.L.T. Pamphlet*

No. 24, Mr. Judge mentions that if we maintained a diary we would observe that depression occurs at regular intervals of time. When the depressive cycle returns, we must compel ourselves to feel joyous, even against our will—or at least try to feel the joy of others. We may do this next day or even two days later. We would then have implanted joyous impressions, so that when the depression returns, it brings along with it the impressions of joy and they would counteract each other’s momentum. Soon we would succeed in establishing a joyous cycle.

By paying attention to cyclic return of impressions, we can save time and effort in training of mind and body. If we eat at regular times, our digestive system is ready and active so that the food is digested well. If we study at a fixed time every day, then the mind comes ready for work so that more work gets done.

But why stop at moods and feelings? Day-to-day events and circumstances come to us under the great cycles of Karma and Reincarnation. The law of Karma postulates that an impulse, action or thought returns to the sender in the course of time. The law of Reincarnation lays down that man comes into this world, lives a life and then dies to come back in a new body and personality. Is it mere mechanical repetition of birth-death-rebirth stages? In the state between death and rebirth, the soul goes to heaven or Devachan and assimilates the good garnered during earth life so as to come back enriched in the next life. Average stay in Devachan is said to be 1000 to 1500 years.

We have to regard each life as a *rare* cyclic opportunity, which is going to come again only after 1000 to 1500 years. It is only proper to question every action and every aspiration: “Is this the thing I will take with me to Devachan?” In *The Friendly Philosopher*, Mr. Crosbie writes: “Opportunity to understand and apply Theosophy comes under Karma to the very few. . . . This comes from neglect or misuse of opportunities in former lives, in many cases” (p. 379). Those of us fortunate enough to contact Theosophy in this life may ask: “How do I use this opportunity?” We may have an atmosphere conducive to study Theosophy, *i.e.*, no

opposition from home, office, etc. To spend our leisure time in watching television and reading trash books is misuse of the opportunity. As Mr. Crosbie says: “It is the height of unwisdom to neglect the opportunity again, most especially in those cases where it is brought home without effort.” (*Ibid.*)

Spiritual knowledge is given out cyclically. The spiritually wise beings use the knowledge of the law of cycles to decide the appropriate time to give or withdraw knowledge. The Theosophical Movement was launched in 1875 in accordance with the cyclic law. It was launched when many major cycles were in confluence. Many important cycles were ending, indicating the need of the hour.

Depending on the Karmic causes set up by human beings, we have the cycle of four *Yugas*. Golden Age is the period when humanity was in its childhood, still innocent and guided by great teachers. Silver Age was like youth or adolescence, when the spiritual teachers withdrew, but left behind Initiate kings to guide humanity. Bronze Age was like manhood, when humanity was left to itself, but free to seek the help of the adepts. *Kali Yuga* is marked by predominance of materialism, selfishness and spiritual darkness. It is the shortest of the *yugas* in which the rate of cause and effect is much faster. But this does not mean that a few results are skipped or a few stages in the cycles are missed. For instance, winter days are shorter than summer. But each day includes all the four stages—dawn, afternoon, evening and night—which are hurried over in winter, but not missed. In the same way, we can do more, learn more and can make more progress in *Kali Yuga*. Every effort made to stem the tide of selfishness in the world or within us, will have fourfold effect. Mr. Judge observes:

A sincere lover of the race can accomplish more in three incarnations under *Kali Yuga's* reign than he could in much greater number in any other age. Thus by bearing all the manifold troubles of this Age and steadily triumphing, the object of his efforts will be more quickly realized, for, while the obstacles seem great, the powers to be invoked can be reached more quickly. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 132)

Kali Yuga also indicates that we are at the lowest point in the descending cycle of evolution, when matter is at its densest and nature's forces are weak. When the cycle is ascending, nature's forces are powerful. In the yearly cycle, the astral life of the earth is young and strong in the time between Christmas and Easter, so that we get added impetus from nature in keeping the resolutions made during this period. When the cycle is ascending, it is easier to make progress. In *Kali Yuga*, when there is moral darkness everywhere, doing good and being good is difficult, as compared to the Golden Age, when everyone around is moral. We cannot do much *against Kali Yuga*, but we can do much *in* it. For instance, it is tiresome to walk a long distance in the hot sun, and if we did, it would call for more effort. However, the same is accomplished with much less effort in the winter.

But even when the cycle is descending—cycle of civilization, race or *yuga*—an individual can still rise superior. A candle lighted in a dark valley can be seen from the mountain top, so also in the darkness of the present age, one who shows concern for others and aspires for truth, displays the *Tathagata* light, and such a person is noticed and helped by the Great Ones.

A Cycle indicates return of something embodied in new form. Cycles imply that forms die. It is good to remember that even the most wonderful form to which we have got attached will die and be replaced by another form. It is unimaginable to be stuck with the same bodies, ideas or feelings forever. In order to become a mature, intelligent person, the innocent, lovable child must grow up. It is a folly to want to retain one's childhood and repeat and intensify the pleasures of childhood. In fact, the cycle of pleasure shows that the “law of diminishing return” sets in when we try to repeat and intensify the pleasures. As *Through the Gates of Gold* suggests: “When a man drinks his first cup of pleasure, his soul is filled with the unutterable joy that comes with a first, a fresh sensation” (p. 23). But with every attempt to repeat and intensify this pleasure, we seem to add a drop of poison, till at last the whole cup is filled with poison. This is the ignorant desire for repetition

and intensification.

It is important that we recognize and seize the cyclic opportunities presented by life. As Kahlil Gibran says: “He who tries to seize an opportunity after it has passed him by is like one who sees it approach but will not go to meet it.”

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WHAT IS MAGIC?

It was...during the highest point of civilization and knowledge, as also of human intellectuality, of the fourth Atlantean Race—that, owing to the final crisis of physiologico-spiritual adjustment of the races, humanity branched off into its two diametrically opposite paths: the RIGHT- and the LEFT-hand paths of knowledge or of Vidya. “Thus were the germs of the White and Black Magic sown in those days. The seeds lay latent for some time, to sprout only during the early period of the Fifth (our Race).” (Commentary)

—*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 192 fn.

MAGIC is the most ancient and venerable system of true Wisdom and has been on earth as long as man himself, though our so-called “enlightened” civilization rejects the idea as superstition. Modern savants claim that Magic originated among primitive savages. This is disproved by finding the root of this word with an honourable meaning in the two oldest languages known to our civilization, Sanskrit and Avesta. “*Magva*,” from which “Magic” is descended through Greek and Latin, was itself rooted in Avesta. The *Vendidad*, which is an ancient scripture, makes mention of a class known as *Magva*. They were a group of people who remained celibates, practised beneficent magic and taught Wisdom. These were the original Magi. Turning to Sanskrit, there is the word *Magha-van* which has a meaning similar to that in the Avesta; it is also one of the names of Indra, the Celestial Magician. There is also the word *Maga*—a magician, a priest of the Sun; it is also the name of a people who lived in Sakadvipa, and their work is the same as that of the Magi of Persia.

True Magic, then, is Wisdom; and a Magician, a man well versed in this Wisdom or Esoteric Knowledge, the synonym of all that was honourable and reverent, though the term has now come to be wholly perverted and is applied to one who is a pretender and a juggler.

Magic is the science of communicating with and directing

supernal, supramundane Potencies, as well as of commanding those of the lower spheres; it is a practical knowledge of the hidden mysteries of Nature and of man known only to the few, because they are so difficult to acquire without falling into sins against Nature and man. Magic is not something supernatural. It is the study of the *laws* governing man and Nature. This study shows the omnipresence and omnipotence of Life. Knowledge of his intimate relation with Nature gives man the power to use these laws and principles to bring about certain results. That application is the art of magic. If it is misapplied it is black magic or sorcery; if used altruistically, it is true or White Magic. Both exist.

The results obtained from the practice of Magic and the phenomena produced are in no sense miraculous. They occur under laws now hidden from most men, and are produced by the use of the powers latent in all. The two constituent factors of any magical performance are motive and method. If the motive is rooted in purity, harmlessness, altruism, the practice tends towards White Magic. *The Theosophical Glossary* describes White Magic as "Beneficent Magic"; it is "*divine* magic, devoid of selfishness, love of power, of ambition, or lucre, and bent only on doing good to the world in general, and one's neighbour in particular." The slightest attempt to use one's abnormal powers for the gratification of self, makes of these powers sorcery or black magic.

The fact that we are always striving to obtain something for our personal selves shows what kind of magicians we are, and why we have so little power. A vast reservoir of force lies within us, but we cannot use it as we are selfish and want to gain powers without giving anything. The most wonderful phenomena that ever have been performed can be duplicated by any human being. The most wonderful powers that ever have been used can be obtained by any human being. But they cannot be obtained for selfish purposes; they can be obtained only by understanding the Teaching and living the life.

Spiritism, necromancy, is a form of black magic in which poor, diseased mediums are used by harmful invisible beings. One needs

to beware, also, of hypnotism. Animal sacrifices in the name of religion, like all performances connected with blood, are black magic; such sacrifices are corrupting the pure Hindu religion. Many other so-called religious rites and ceremonies, like many scientific practices, also come under the category of black magic.

Who, then, are the White Magicians? Their whole natures, from the inside out, are of one kind. They are all in accord. They never seek anything for themselves. They use all the powers and all the possessions that come their way for the benefit of the rest of the world. In their thought, will and feeling all the time is the ideal progression of Humanity. By these motives, they naturally draw from the Highest, and everything they do has its effects for good, not only upon their fellow men, but upon the kingdoms below them. If we can understand that, then we have some idea as to what true White Magic is.

There are two primary objects in studying about Magic. First, we want to learn to protect ourselves from the dangerous influences in our modern civilization, so that we can maintain our soul integrity. This is not a selfish motive any more than is the maintaining of physical health so as not to be a menace to others. The second object is to use for good such knowledge as is available to us.

The best protection is purity of life, a clear conscience and a firm desire to benefit humanity. Ordinary goodness is not enough. The purity required includes purification of will, of imagination and of magnetism. Will, volition, determination, is the Magician itself; it must be unfolded and developed; its purity is purity of motive. Imagination is the power to create images and pictures in terms of our own choice; the imagination must create pure and radiant pictures. Our mind is made up of images and pictures of our thoughts and ideas. Their quality is determined by our motive; the intensity of will and motive which went into them determines how long they remain in the mind. The mind should be a Temple with the mental images true Idols, made living images by heart energy.

In the astral body is the magnetic fluid which all men possess and constantly radiate, especially through the eyes and finger tips, though generally unconsciously to themselves. Whenever we act, wherever we look, we affect other people and objects with our magnetism, so that we are all practical magicians, whether we know it or not.

True purity is more than physical cleanliness; it is of the magnetic fluid, and it is determined by the quality of our past thoughts and our present moods. All objects have their own magnetic emanations, though only man can direct the magnetic fluid at will and control its quality.

We can take the example of the housewife in the kitchen: her bad mood, impatience or irritability can poison the food she is cooking. Not only has each foodstuff its own magnetic property, but there is also the magnetism of the housewife herself, which affects the food she cooks. Similarly, the clerk in the office, the businessmen who compete with one another, may, unconsciously to themselves, practise a species of black magic.

Not only do the right images have to be formed in our minds, but they must be energized and made living by heart perception.

IN order to really understand Theosophy, all that has been stored up in the way of previous conceptions and prejudices has to be laid aside for the time being, especially during the time of reading or study, in order that the meaning of the Teacher may be fully grasped by the mind. In order to gain knowledge of that Science which is a synthesis of all Life and Nature, the mind must be clear and clean, free from all preconceptions and prejudices, and devoted wholly to the acquisition of the Science, if one would learn and know it. As a preliminary to this study, the Three Fundamental Propositions of Theosophy should be well learned, understood, and applied to the problems of life, as well as to the detailed philosophy which the "Ocean" presents.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

BUDDHA—THE INCOMPARABLE PHYSICIAN

[The following extracts are from the teachings of Lord Buddha, being advice to patients, doctors and nurses.]

Thus spake the Exalted One,

“Brethren, I am a Brahmin given to begging. My hands are ever pure, I am wearing my last body. Incomparable Physician and Surgeon am I.

“Ye are mine own true sons, brethren, born of my mouth, born of the Dhamma, heirs of the Dhamma, not heirs of worldly things.”

—*Iti-vuttaka*, 100.

NOW at one time a certain brother was suffering from dysentery and lay where he had fallen down in his own excrement.

And the Exalted One was going His rounds of the lodgings, with the venerable Ananda in attendance, and came to the lodging of that brother.

Now the Exalted One saw that brother lying where he had fallen in his own excrement, and seeing him He walked towards him, came to him, and said: “Brother, what ails you?”

“I have dysentery, Lord.”

“But is there anyone taking care of you, brother?”

“No, Lord.”

“Why is it, brother, that the brethren do not take care of you?”

“I am useless to the brethren, Lord: therefore the brethren do not care for me.”

Then the Exalted One said to the venerable Ananda: “Go you, Ananda, and fetch water. We will wash this brother.”

“Yes, Lord,” replied the venerable Ananda to the Exalted One. When he had fetched the water, the Exalted One poured it out, while the venerable Ananda washed that brother all over. The Exalted One taking him by the head and the venerable Ananda taking him by the feet, together they laid him on the bed.

Then the Exalted One, in this connection and on this occasion,

gathered the Order of Brethren together, and questioned the brethren, saying:

“Brethren, is there in such and such a lodging a brother who is sick?”

“There is, Lord.”

“And what ails that brother?”

“Lord, that brother has dysentery.”

“But, brethren, is there anyone taking care of him?”

“No, Lord.”

“Why not? Why do not the brethren take care of him?”

“That brother is useless to the brethren, Lord. That is why the brethren do not take care of him.”

“Brethren, ye have no mother and no father to take care of you. If ye will not take care of each other, who else, I ask, will do so? Brethren, he who would wait on me, let him wait on the sick.

“If he have a teacher, let his teacher take care of him so long as he is alive, and wait for his recovery. If he have a tutor or a lodger, a disciple or a fellow-lodger or a fellow-disciple, such should take care of him; if he do not so it shall be reckoned an offence.”

—*Vinaya Mahavagga*, viii, 26.

Thus have I heard:

Once the Exalted One was staying near Rajagaha in Great Grove, at the Squirrels’ Feeding ground.

On that occasion the venerable Vakkali was staying in the Potter’s shed, being sick, afflicted, stricken with a sore disease.

Now the venerable Vakkali called to his attendants, saying: “Come hither, friends! Go ye to the Exalted One, and, in my name worshipping at the feet of the Exalted One, say unto Him:

“Lord, the brother Vakkali is sick, afflicted, stricken with a sore disease. He worships at the feet of the Exalted One. Well were it, Lord, if the Exalted One would visit brother Vakkali, out of compassion for him.”

The Exalted One consented by His silence. Taking bowl and robe, He went to the venerable Vakkali. On arriving the Master said: “I trust, Vakkali, that life is endurable. I trust pain is retreating.”

“Not for me, Revered Sir; life is not endurable; severe pain attacks me; it does not retreat, it will not retreat,” cried Vakkali.

“I trust you are not restless,” said the Buddha.

“On the contrary, Sir, I am restless, very restless.”

“Vakkali, venerable Vakkali, I trust you are not finding the *Dhamma* to be faulty,” said Buddha.

“No indeed, Master; how can there be fault in the *Dhamma* of the Buddha?” replied Vakkali.

“Then why this restlessness and querulousness with what is?”

“For such a long time I have desired to look upon the Exalted One; pain makes me restless and yearning for a sight of you makes me querulous,” said Vakkali.

“Enough, Vakkali, enough!” exclaimed the Enlightened One. “What use is restlessness over your foul body and what querulousness over my foul carcass? Hear this—Whoever sees the *Dhamma* sees the Buddha; whoever sees the Truth sees me. That is the great Healing-Mantra, the Word of Power that heals all ills.”

So saying the Enlightened One left Vakkali meditating.

“There are five characteristics, brethren, possessed of which a sick man is hard to nurse.

“(1) He will not take remedies; (2) He observes no moderation in taking remedies; (3) He does not follow the drugs prescribed; (4) He does not disclose the real nature of his ailment to the nurse who desires his welfare and does not report whether his sickness wanes or waxes or stands still; (5) Lastly, he is impatient of his bodily feelings that arise—painful, sharp, cutting, bitter, grievous, unpleasant, life-destroying.

“Such, brethren, are the five characteristics possessed of which a sick man is hard to nurse.

“And the five characteristics (which make him easy to nurse) are the opposites of these.

“These are five characteristics, brethren, possessed of which one is of no use as a nurse.

“(1) One is incapable of prescribing medicine. (2) One does not know the proper remedies, what is good and what is bad; one administers what is unfit and does not administer what is fit. (3) One nurses the patient out of greed and not out of charity. (4) One is squeamish about the removal of excrement, saliva, or vomit. (5) One is incapable of teaching the patient from time to time with pious talk, incapable of cheering him, of stirring him, and comforting him.

“Such, brethren, are the five characteristics possessed of which one is of no use as a nurse.

“And the five characteristics (which make one a good nurse) are the opposites of these.”

—*Anguttara Nikaya*

As It (the Consciousness which is your Self) never ceases to exist, Its eternal immutability is self-evident and does not depend on any evidence....Just as iron, water, etc., which are not of the nature of light and heat, depend for them on the sun, fire and other things other than themselves, but the sun and fire themselves, always of the nature of light and heat, do not depend for them on anything else; so, being of the nature of pure Knowledge It does not depend on an evidence to prove that It exists or that It is the Knower.

—SRI SANKARACHARYA

MAN’S GOAL IN LIFE

II

MAN seeking pleasure is the third *purushartha*, called *Kama* in Sanskrit. It takes many forms—all kinds of sense pleasures, pleasures of the flesh—lust, which titillates one’s senses—pleasures of the intellect, or pleasure in seeking all kinds of knowledge. Anything that satisfies our senses, pleases our mind, touches our heart leading to appreciation, is *Kama*. It may be a beautiful painting, sunrise or a mountain, or playing with children. These may be called aesthetic pleasures. Even though these are beyond one’s senses and intellect, they are still *Kama*.

In this *Kali Yuga*, importance is given only to *Artha* and *Kama*, as man has become absolutely selfish. Each one tries to get the object of his desire, by foul means or fair, resulting in family feuds, conflict of interest and even war among nations. In *Katha Upanishad* Nachiketas asks Death—Yama—about “immortality.” Yama evades the question by tempting him with all earthly pleasures. There ensues an interesting dialogue between “Death” and Nachiketas:

Death speaks:

Whatever desires are difficult in the mortal world, ask all desires according to thy will. These beauties, with their chariots and lutes—not such as these are to be won by men—be waited on by them, my gifts. Ask me not of death, Nachiketas.

Nachiketas speaks:

Tomorrow these fleeting things wear out the vigour of a mortal’s powers. Even the whole of life is short; thine are chariots and dance and song. Not by wealth can a man be satisfied. Shall we choose wealth if we have seen thee? Shall we desire life while thou art master? But the wish I choose is truly that.

Death speaks:

The better is one thing, the dearer is another thing; these two bind a man in opposite ways. Of these two, it is well for him who takes the better; he fails of his object, who chooses

the dearer. The better and the dearer approach a man; going round them, the sage discerns between them. The sage chooses the better rather than the dearer; the fool chooses the dearer, through lust of possession. (*Selections from the Upanishads*, pp. 36-38)

It is obvious from the above *slokas* that man prefers to remain ignorant by choosing the pleasant things that are evanescent—producers of misery, pain and sorrow. Sex indulgence has affected many with the dreadful fatal disease—“AIDS.” Families have been ruined because of human selfishness which is the chief cause of sorrow. Man lives a life of the personal self—of sensuality, failing to recognize the importance of *Dharma* and its application in daily life, which alone can lead him to attain the “pleasure of greater worth.” Saint Valluvar seems to convey this in the above quoted passage from the article “Living the Higher Life.”

The fourth in the order of *purushartha* is *moksha*, freedom or liberation. *Moksha* is sought only by a few, in any given generation. Though everyone seeks freedom, only a man of mature mind and a certain insight into life and its struggles, can truly understand *moksha*.

The Theosophical Glossary defines *Moksha* as “Liberation”—the same as *Nirvana*. *Nirvana* is explained in the *Glossary* as:

According to the orientalist, the entire “blowing out,” like a flame of a candle, the utter extinction of existence. But in the esoteric explanations it is the state of absolute existence and absolute consciousness, into which the Ego of a man who has reached the highest degree of perfection and holiness during life goes, after the body dies, and occasionally, as in the case of Gautama Buddha and others, during life.

H.P.B. explains the meaning of liberation and *Nirvana*:

When *Buddhi* absorbs our EGO-tism (destroys it) with all its *vikaras*, Avalokiteshvara becomes manifested to us, and *Nirvana* or *Mukti*, is reached, “*Mukti*” being the same as *Nirvana*, *i.e.*, freedom from the trammels of “*Maya*” or *illusion*. (*S.D.*, I, xix)

While mentioning “returning *Nirvanees*” from preceding *Maha-Manvantaras*, H.P.B. points out:

Vedantins might say: “This is not so; *Nirvanees* can never return;” which is true during the *Manvantara* he belongs to, and erroneous where Eternity is concerned. For it is said in the Sacred *Slokas*: “*The Thread of radiance which is imperishable and dissolves only in Nirvana, reemerges from it in its integrity on the day when the Great Law calls all things back into action....*” (*S.D.*, II, 80)

Mr. Judge points out in *Forum Answers*:

Nirvana comes to those who have risen up over all delusions and have realized the supreme unity of all; then it may be taken; but if it is then taken for oneself, leaving others in the mire of life unhelped, it becomes an enormous selfishness which later on must result in the being having to do penance in some other *manvantara*. (p. 97)

“Freedom from what?” is the question. In this *Kali Yuga* no one seeks freedom from what he wants, *i.e.*, from *artha* and *kama*—possessions and pleasures.

From the quotations cited above, it is clear that *Moksha* does not just mean salvation or release from the cycle of births and deaths, but it means something more. It is freedom from the bondage of matter and our desires, from the bondage of personality which is under the sway of desires. It is called by Patanjali “Isolation of the soul.” It is a means by which one realizes the unity of all.

This high state of realizing the ONE while in a body, cannot be obtained unless one lives a chaste, holy, noble and pure life according to the *Dharma* he has inherited, lives a life of a householder, perfecting himself by cultivating nobler qualities and elevating the family, nation and race to higher levels of perception. Such a person will also seek *artha* and *kama* in the sense that “every object of desire is for the sake of the self alone.” Such persons are fit to enter *Nirvana*. Adi Sankara calls its *Atmanubhava*—realization or experience of the Atman or Self. If one reaches the state of that “unity,” can he accept the bliss of *Nirvana* when all

his fellowmen and other creatures suffer on earth? If he does, then it is considered a glorified form of selfishness. H.P.B. has drawn the attention of all sincere students of Theosophy to the path of renunciation—the path shown by the Buddhas of Perfection and Compassion.

This is expressed by Patanjali thus:

The knowledge that springs from this perfection of discriminative power is called “knowledge that saves from rebirth.” It has all things and the nature of all things for its objects, and perceives all that hath been and that is, without limitations of time, place, or circumstance, as if all were in the present and the presence of the contemplator.

Mr. Judge explains:

Such an ascetic...is a *Jivanmukta* and is not subject to reincarnation. He, however, may live yet upon earth but is not in any way subject to his body, the soul being perfectly free at every moment. And such is held to be the state of those beings called, in theosophical literature, Adepts, Mahatmas, Masters. (*Yoga Aphorisms*, p. 60, verse 55 and note.)

(Concluded)

No one is truly free who is still attached to material things, or to places, or to people. We must be able to use things when we need them and then relinquish them without regret when they have outlived their usefulness. We must be able to appreciate and enjoy the places where we tarry, and yet pass on without anguish when we are called elsewhere. We must be able to live in loving association with people without feeling that we possess them and must run their lives. Anything that you strive to hold captive will hold you captive, and if you desire freedom you must give freedom.

—PEACE PILGRIM

TRUE BASIS FOR REFORM

IS social reform necessary? What kind of social reform do we need today? How is it to be achieved? These questions are being asked by all earnest thinkers, for there is no doubt that humanity *en masse* is sick and does need a physician. There are many “physicians” and many “cures.” What can the student of Theosophy offer? Has he been able to make Theosophy practical?

H.P.B.’s article “Le Phare de l’Inconnu” (*The Theosophist*, July, August, September and October 1889; reprinted in *THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT*, May, June, August and September 1947, and in *She Being Dead Yet Speaketh*) contains important ideas. She wrote of the triple aim of the Theosophical Movement, which is the aim of all true reforms: “Full and entire liberty of conscience allowed to all, fraternity reigning between the rich and the poor, equality recognized in theory and practice between the aristocrat and the plebeian.”

Referring to how the great reform is to be achieved, she said: “All this must come about naturally and voluntarily on both sides...without any social shocks, without a drop of blood being spilled.” This will only be possible “by the recognition of the axiomatic truth of Oriental Philosophy, which teaches us that the great diversity of fortune, of social rank and of intellect, is due but to the personal Karma of each human being. We reap only what we have sown.”

This seemingly hard saying, left to stand alone, might breed appalling conceit in thought and action on the part of those who are *not* suffering in this life towards those who are. It should never be interpreted as advocating an attitude of non-interference with the suffering of others, in the belief that it is their Karma to suffer. Such an attitude breeds callousness and numbs our human instincts. Always and ever, whenever and wherever we see human suffering, we have to try to alleviate it. The Great Ones are always helping those who suffer; they do not turn aside, so why should we? We would not if we remembered what H.P.B. goes on to say:

If the *personality* of each physical man differs from that of every other, the immortal *individuality*, or immaterial being in him, emanates from the same divine essence as does that of his neighbours. He who is thoroughly impressed with the philosophic truth that every Ego begins and ends by being the indivisible WHOLE, cannot love his neighbour less than he does himself. But, until this becomes a religious truth, no such reform can take place.

A few centuries ago, the triple aims mentioned above were the rallying cry of the French Revolution—"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." But the true implication of these words was lost sight of. Liberty became licence and came to mean merely freedom of action instead of freedom of conscience. Equality between aristocrat and plebeian became inequality. Fraternity existed only among the poor, and not between the poor and the rich. We have to remember today that the triple basis for reform must be established voluntarily by the rich and the poor, the reformer and the conservative, and not through force.

H.P.B. called the Theosophical Society "the Republic of Conscience," for every Fellow has the right to believe what he likes and how he likes. He is "at liberty to study what he pleases, provided he does not venture into unknown paths which would of a certainty lead him to *black magic*."

How can this freedom be possible when Theosophy is "Divine Wisdom"? "Let us repeat," H.P.B. wrote, "for the hundredth time: The truth is one! 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." This is true in the case of reformers, however sincere they be in their approach. What we should seek, therefore, is to spread abroad the three foundational ideas given above as the basis for all reforms, after we have tried to apply them in our own life and environment.

In reference to liberty of conscience, we must consider religions. Theosophy strives to unite all religions by pointing to their oneness of essence. H.P.B. wrote:

...our greatest ambition would be to reconcile the different religious systems, to help each one to find the truth in his own religion, while obliging him to recognize it in that of his neighbour. What does the name signify if the thing itself is essentially the same?

To fulfil this ambition, each one will have to reject "the parasitic plants of human fabrication, which...are choking all religions and churches in the world. Let him accept but the essence, which is the same in all."

Whereas, says H.P.B., we cannot stop the Christian nations from "cutting each other's throats" and "exterminating in one day in their wars more men than the Caesars killed in a year," it is the duty of Theosophists to

save as many of the survivors as possible. Nucleus of a true Brotherhood, it depends upon them to make their Society a bridge destined in the near future to carry the humanity of the new cycle beyond the muddy waters of the deluge of hopeless materialism. These waters rise continuously, and at this moment are inundating all civilized countries. Shall we leave the good to perish with the bad, terrified by the clamours and mocking cries of the latter, whether against the Theosophical Society or ourselves? Shall we watch them perish one after the other—this one of lassitude, that one unable to obtain a ray of the sun that shines for everyone—without stretching to them a plank of safety?—Never!

What do we mean by fraternity—the second foundation of true reform mentioned by H.P.B.? We are to suppose that fraternity already exists among the "rich" and among the "poor," and it is fraternity between these two classes that has to be the force binding all humanity. This fraternity should not be narrowed down to fellow feeling felt *by* the rich *towards* the poor, but must include that which was so lacking in the French Revolution—brotherliness *from* the poor *to* the rich. This idea should be extended today and made applicable to the conditions between the "rich" nations and the "poor" nations, for the method and basis of giving and the method

and basis of receiving are very important. Charity, *i.e.*, help of any kind, harms the receiver if he does not feel grateful to the giver. Lack of gratitude on the part of the receiver may breed indifference in the giver. It is but natural that those who have should give to those who have not. H.P.B. quotes this beautiful saying: “The poor man is the son of the rich one”; and still more striking is that which tells us: “Give to eat first to him that is hungry, and take that which remains for thyself.”

The third of the aims of true reform is “equality recognized in theory and practice between the aristocrat and the plebeian.” Who is an aristocrat and who a plebeian? And what does equality mean here? The dictionary says that the aristocrat is “one who belongs to the aristocracy, one who behaves like a noble man.” Aristocracy is “government by a privileged upper class; any class having special privileges or considered superior.” With these definitions in mind, we can use the term for anyone who is considered superior, no matter what class he belongs to. So anyone with special knowledge or character is an aristocrat. Who is a plebeian? “One of the common people”; hence, we might say, all those without knowledge or special characteristics. As the presence or absence of knowledge or special characteristics is the result of Karma, self-engendered, there is no place for pride or for jealousy. With reincarnation in mind, let us remember that one born a king “may wander earth in rags for things done and undone.” The reverse is equally true.

Until these fundamental aims are realized, what are we to do? H.P.B. wrote:

What we must try to do in the meantime is to bring a little peace into the world, in the hearts of those who suffer, by raising for them a corner of the veil which hides the divine truth. Let those who are strongest show the road to those who are weaker, and help them to climb the steep hill to life; and let them teach these to fix their eyes on the Beacon which shines on the horizon like a new star of Bethlehem beyond the mysterious and unknown sea of the Theosophical Sciences—and let the disinherited ones of life recover hope.

How shall we endeavour to put these far-reaching and deep-searching ideas into practice? The tendency today is to practise before learning. We must realize that everything starts first as an idea and ends in practice; only then can the practice be successful and bear good fruits. “Theosophy has a hard battle to fight,” H.P.B. wrote elsewhere, and we must fight that battle by impressing on ourselves and then on the world that

that which our enemies look upon as an invention of the nineteenth century, is as old as the world. Our society is the tree of Brotherhood sprung from the seed planted in the world by the angel of Charity and of Justice, on the day when the first Cain killed the first Abel. During the long centuries of the slavery of woman and the misery of the poor, this seed was watered by all the bitter tears shed by the weak and the oppressed. Blessed hands have replanted this seed in one corner of the earth and another, and in different climes, and at epochs far apart. “Do not to another the thing thou wouldst not he should do to thee,” said Confucius to his disciples. “Love one another, and love every living creature,” preached the Lord Buddha to his Arhats. “Love one another,” was repeated like a faithful echo in the streets of Jerusalem.

“The world must move,” H.P.B. wrote, “and advance under penalty of stagnation and death. Mental evolution progresses *pari passu* with physical evolution, and both advance towards the ONE TRUTH—which is the heart of the system of Humanity, as evolution is the blood.” That One Truth we know today as Theosophy.

It is only Theosophy, well understood, that can save the world from despair, by reproducing social and religious reform—a task once before accomplished in history, by Gautama, the Buddha; a peaceful reform, without one drop of blood spilt.

HE who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it.

—MARTIN LUTHER KING

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question: How does one deal with the corruption so rampant in society today? Should one resign to it, taking it to be part of the collective karma?

Answer: World-reform follows self-reform. All the evil we find in society, nation or race, the germs of it are in us too. The first step then is to eradicate the germs of “corruption” in *us*. We may feel that we are not corrupt—may be not in a big way. We must ask ourselves: How would we behave if we had all the advantages of a rich or influential man? What is our desire for wealth like? Do we welcome it no matter how it is earned? Or do we insist upon earning it by honest means—even when we are placed in a difficult financial situation? We are like cells in the body. One unhealthy cell may affect the whole body. H.P.B. suggests that there is no such thing as “separateness.” It is an occult law, “No one can sin, nor suffer the effects of the sin, alone.”

We need not resign to any social evil. Once we find something to be wrong or harmful, we must arouse public opinion in that direction. How does one decide if one’s opinion or judgement is right or wrong? H.P.B. gives one general test: “Will the proposed action tend to promote true brotherhood”? We must *not* attack the person, but attack the system or the fault. In a sense, we have to be *Kshatriyas* or warriors. The etymology of the word *Kshatriya* suggests that he is one who saves people from injury.

We must not be passive. By our negative attitude, such as, “a single individual can make no difference,” we may allow the evil to swell. For instance, many years ago, people used to give black money to builders. As the amount in question was small, no effort was made to check the practice. As a result, now the evil has spread so much that the amount involved runs into lakhs of rupees. Evil must be nipped in the bud.

The only sense in which we can resign is to tell ourselves that we enjoy the benefits coming from collective Karma. For instance, we enjoy amenities like railways, good distribution and mailing system, electrical gadgets, etc., even though we have no direct

hand in building them. In the same way we must not grumble about the discomforts and the evils. We would not be part of such society if we did not have a hand in making the total situation as we find it today. “The sin and shame of the world are your sin and shame; for you are a part of it.”

Question: Why are bad children sometimes born to parents who are of good character?

Answer: Individual Egos make individual Karma. Inasmuch as individuals act together as families, sub-races and nations, bound together by common bonds, there is family, racial and national Karma. As Mr. Judge explains, each Ego comes into the world with certain “mental deposits” that can come to fruition in the given life, which includes the soul’s environment. An Ego seeking birth is drawn to a family for one or more of the following reasons:

(a) Having generated causes for good or ill together as members of a family, justice demands that the same Egos come together again to meet the effects they produced together in the past. In no other way may the effects be worked out and Karmic adjustment effected. (b) The Ego may be attracted to a family because most of its predominant tendencies and character are common to and in harmony with those of the family. Thus, following the avenue of entrance into life that offers least resistance, the Ego is born in such a family. (c) The circumstances obtainable in a particular family may offer the best possible opportunity to the Ego for the gaining of such experiences as would strengthen its character and develop virtues and overcome vices. (d) The Ego’s birth into a family may well be punishment by way of Karmic retribution for past transgressions—the very punishment containing opportunities to restore imbalance created by the Ego in the past, and learn the lessons of life which otherwise would not be learned.

Children with evil disposition may be born to parents of good character because of any one or a combination of the factors mentioned above. It may also be retribution to the parents for past neglect or commission of some sin and now offered the opportunity to make amends.

THE BINDING POWER OF TRUE RELIGION

TWO statements by Madame Blavatsky give us useful hints to help us in distinguishing Religion from Religions. The first of these is taken from *The Key to Theosophy* (p. 4):

The “Wisdom-Religion” was one in antiquity; and the sameness of primitive religious philosophy is proven to us by the identical doctrines taught to the Initiates during the MYSTERIES, an institution once universally diffused. “All the old worships indicate the existence of a single Theosophy anterior to them. The key that is to open one must open all; otherwise it cannot be the right key.” (Eclect. Philo.)

The second extract is from *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 1* (p. 3):

The assertion that “Theosophy is not a Religion” by no means excludes the fact that “Theosophy is Religion” itself. A Religion, in the true and only correct sense, is a bond uniting men together—not a particular set of dogmas and beliefs. Now Religion, *per se*, in its widest meaning is that which binds not only *all* MEN, but also *all* BEINGS and all *things* in the entire Universe into one grand whole.

From this we can gather that Religion in its truest sense tends towards Unity and Wholeness, whereas religions based on sets of dogmas and beliefs tend towards Particularity and Separateness. Religionists following their own particular set of dogmas and beliefs, therefore, cannot know what true Religion is until they learn to transcend these.

Adherence to any particular set of dogmas and beliefs deprives the individual of his spiritual birthright, which may be considered as the right to think and choose for oneself. Dogmas and beliefs demand absolute adherence, not an honest enquiry, and to transcend them we must reclaim the inherent spiritual right of our inner nature to examine them in its light. Once we mentally proclaim this and put it into practice, we no longer remain dependent on any “Revealer” or his “Revelations,” but have assumed the right to seek out the very “Power of Revelation,” not outside us, but within our

own minds and hearts. This “Power of Revelation” which, Krishna says, “arises spontaneously in the minds and hearts of his disciples” has been beautifully expounded by H.P.B. in her translation of some of the “Golden Precepts” given in *The Voice of the Silence*. This “Voice” once recognized within, will lead us from the “region of Asat, the false,” into “the realm of Sat, the true.”

How are we to distinguish the “Voice of the Silence” from that more common and vociferous “Voice of our Hidden Desires,” as these latter are constantly clamouring for fulfilment? One way is to determine whether their dictates are personal or impersonal by nature, and if their fulfilment will help or hinder others. This requires, of course, a specialized type of knowledge and an active desire to be of help to others. In fact, all thoughts, feelings and actions which are conducive to the service of our brother man and are based upon the principle of Universal Brotherhood must, by this inner bond, draw us towards that “Power” which binds together not only all men, but also all beings making up the manifested world.

This binding Power is the very essence of true Religion, and ever tends towards greater harmony and all-embrasciveness, so that the outer barriers of distinctions fall away before its integrating force and light, and the true becomes distinguishable from the false, the real from the unreal.

In Nature, this power becomes Law and is the guiding intelligence behind all its forces, which in turn produce all the multitudinous and variegated forms that constitute its major kingdoms. Krishna expounds this same teaching in the *Gita*, where he says:

All this Universe is pervaded by me in my invisible form; all things exist in me, but I do not exist in them. Nor are all things in me; behold this my divine mystery: myself causing things to exist and supporting them all but dwelling not in them. Understand that all things are in me even as the mighty air which passes everywhere is in space. O son of Kunti, at the end of a kalpa all things return unto my nature, and then again at the beginning of another kalpa I cause them to evolve again.

Taking control of my own nature I emanate again and again this whole assemblage of beings, without their will, by the power of the material essence [*Prakriti*].

How beautifully expressed by all the Great Teachers is this identical doctrine we can see by taking an extract from the sayings of Gautama Buddha, rendered in verse by Edwin Arnold in his famous book, *The Light of Asia*, where in Book the Eighth we find the following:

Before beginning, and without an end,
As space eternal and as surety sure,
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,
Only its laws endure.

Finally, we can consider this short extract from the summing up of the Ten Items of *Isis Unveiled* (II, 590): “One common vital principle pervades all things, and this is controllable by the perfected human will.”

Perhaps if we pursue the study of religions, with the preceding ideas in mind, we shall begin to perceive the unifying bond under their many forms and names, rituals and observances. The benefit of such a study should show itself in a wider and deeper range of thought, capable, when called upon, to penetrate the quagmire of dogmas and beliefs in which our brother men are caught, and to extricate them from it. Such a power comes from true knowledge or Self-Knowledge, and “Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child.”

If there is no Religion Higher than Truth, then we must trace the truths underlying most of the religions of our present day. But we need the key that Theosophy which *is* Religion alone can give us to understand the truths which lie concealed behind the body of dogmas and articles of belief that the undiscerning average religionist considers to be the true faith.

“Seek, and ye shall find” is one of the articles of faith given by all the ancient MYSTERY schools, and once again reiterated by Theosophy. For one so seeking, many worthwhile hints are given in *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 1*: “Is Theosophy a Religion?” Other hints

may be found in *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 2*: “What Theosophy Is”; one such, on pages 1 and 2, quoting from H.P.B.’s monumental work, *The Secret Doctrine*, says:

But it is perhaps desirable to state unequivocally that the teachings, however fragmentary and incomplete, contained in these volumes, belong neither to the Hindu, the Zoroastrian, the Chaldean, nor the Egyptian religion, neither to Buddhism, Islam, Judaism nor Christianity exclusively. The Secret Doctrine is the essence of all these. Sprung from it in their origins, the various religious schemes are now made to merge back into their original element, out of which every mystery and dogma has grown, developed and become materialized.

A study of these pamphlets and of other Theosophical texts will certainly help the student to distinguish between Religion and Religions, as also to understand better what is meant when it is said: “*The true Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect, yet belongs to each and all.*”

THE first step is a quiet mind—silence is a further step; but quietude must be there. By a quiet mind I mean a mental consciousness within, which sees thoughts arrive to it and move about but does not itself feel that it is thinking or identifying itself with the thoughts or call them its own. Thoughts, mental movements may pass through it as wayfarers appear and pass from elsewhere through a silent country—the quiet mind observes them, or does not care to observe them, but in either case, does not become active or lose its quietude. A silence is more than quietude. It can be gained by banishing thought altogether from the inner mind, keeping it voiceless or quiet outside; but more easily it is established by a descent from above,—one feels it coming down, entering and occupying or surrounding the personal consciousness which then tends to merge itself in the vast impersonal silence.

—SRI AUROBINDO

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

We live in a culture of fear and it is necessary that we learn to understand and even utilize this two-sided emotion. If we learn to face fear, it can save our lives. “Living in fear robs us of life,” write Frances Moore Lappé and Jeffrey Perkins (*Utne Reader*, May-June 2004). Human progress so far may be attributed to the fact that by nature man loves to take risk and aspires to get what is beyond his reach. We are unable to follow our dreams for a better life because of our fear of being different and our fear of the unknown. Today, there is a need to *be* different, to *do* something different and be ready to walk into the unknown. Fear can shut us down, but it can also open us up, depending upon our reaction to it. Experience has shown that instead of freezing up in a crisis we can think or even *rethink* our way out.

French philosopher Patrick Viveret describes fear as the “emotional plague of our planet.” Fear is a time-honoured form of control and we are *made* to fear by all sorts of agencies. In the process, we are continually being led away from finding solutions to real threats, *viz.*, global warming, industrialization of key resources, etc. Lappé and Perkins write:

A first step toward freedom is to crack one driver of our fear: the myth of scarcity. The belief that there’s never enough to go around keeps us on a competitive treadmill, afraid to listen to our own hearts. If we see ourselves as isolated egos competing against other egos, we can’t seriously discuss a future that’s good for all.

Thus, the reason many people feel trapped, even despairing, about the state of our world, is *not*...just a shaky economy or suicide bombers or ecological meltdown. It’s that *we’ve been forced to deny who we are*. To reclaim our true natures, we have to be willing to step into the unknown, encounter conflict, and take the chance that we’ll lose standing in the eyes of our peers.

We are required to bring a radical shift in our view of fear. Fear could also mean that we are doing precisely what is true to our

deepest wisdom.

“Fear, O Disciple, kills the will and stays all action,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. Fear belongs to personal consciousness. “‘Fear is the same thing as frigidity on the earth, and always proceeds by the process of freezing.’ Who can say in how many ways that ‘freezing’ prevents what would otherwise be” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 84). Doubt arises from the personal uncertainty and fear of consequences.

Fearlessness is one of the essential qualities for a spiritual aspirant. In walking the spiritual path it is very important to learn to be a nonconformist. A spiritual man has to learn to rely on the judgement based on his own “inner voice” or intuition. As *Light on the Path* states: “The would-be disciple has to arouse himself to the consciousness of it by a fierce and resolute and indomitable effort of will....Only he who is untameable, who cannot be dominated, who knows he has to play the lord over men, over facts, over all things save his own divinity, can arouse this faculty [of intuition]” (p. 49). We must be prepared to take the risk of being isolated and ostracized.

Man fears failure, death, destruction, disease, unemployment or loss of the loved ones. We can overcome fear by developing calmness and detachment. One who has acquired and to an extent realized the “universal ideas” is able to shed all fears. “Neither change nor death, nor things present or to come, can have any effect on that one,” says Mr. Crosbie (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 337). Religion has always made use of fear to make people blindly accept dogmas. The roots of fear lie in the lack of human solidarity. Panic and fear arise out of ignorance. Knowledge—especially of Karma and Reincarnation—is the antidote to fear. But above all, as Mr. Judge says: “No earnest one who feels called to work persistently for the good of humanity, and not for his own, need fear aught that heaven or hell holds.”

Charles Darwin identified some dozen anatomic traits, *viz.*, body

hair, wisdom teeth and the coccyx, and described them as useless and hence no longer subject to natural selection. He argued that these superfluous features prove that man did not descend from “demigods” but from fur-insulated, plant-chewing animals with tails. Today science has identified many more such useless body parts, writes Jocelyn Selim (*Discover*, June 2004). Thus:

Some are vanishing leftovers from our prehuman ancestors, such as muscles useful for walking on all fours or hanging from trees that appear in various atrophied forms.... Nearly a century and a quarter after Darwin’s death, science still can’t offer a full explanation for why one outdated anatomic trait lingers in the gene pool and another goes. Modern genomics research has revealed that our DNA carries broken genes for things that seem as though they might be useful, like odor receptors for a bloodhound’s sense of smell.

H.P.B. explains (*S.D.*, II, 683-85) that the “rudimentary” organs discovered by anatomists in the human form can be explained if we accept that all forms that we now see on our earth were derived by variations on the *basic types* originally thrown off by the MAN of the Third and Fourth Round. Anthropologists were puzzled as to how to account for the presence of gill-clefts and tail in certain human foetuses. “Human type is the repertory of all potential organic forms, and the central point from which these latter radiate.” Human form was astral and ethereal in the far past and possessed these rudimentary organs. These prototypes were *shed* in the course of astral development.

The amphibia, birds, reptiles, fishes, etc., are the resultants of the Third Round, astral fossil forms stored up in the auric envelope of the Earth and projected into physical objectivity [later].... Occultists are thus at no loss to “account for” the birth of children with an actual caudal appendage, or for the fact that the tail in the human foetus is at one period, double the length of the nascent legs. The potentiality of every organ useful to animal life is locked up in Man—the microcosm of the Macrocosm—and abnormal conditions may not unfrequently result in the strange phenomena which Darwinists regard as

“reversion to ancestral features.”

Often our concept of morality is limited and is influenced by our culture and tradition. We pay only lip service to our accepted values and hence the gulf between our espoused and applied values. While making an application it is “a good policy to be flexible when it is a matter of taste, and firm when it is a matter of principle,” writes B. K. Denise Lawrence (*Purity*, July 2004). Removing internal inconsistencies and contradictions is an ongoing process. We may believe in human rights and may yet exploit a subordinate. If we believe in the essential goodness of human nature, why are we always ready to point the finger at others? When we assert that *our* belief or judgement is the only true one and want others to conform to it, we are making value judgements. Our value judgement is often based on culture or tradition. The scientist places value on scientific methodology and believes it to be the only viable method. A tribal with holistic understanding of the environment may value his intuitive knowledge derived from the ancient ways. In such a situation there is a clash of values—not only of one against the other but of a temporal value against a universal value. Lawrence writes regarding value judgement based on tradition thus:

Instead of men and women complementing each other under the dominance of spiritual values, material values transformed the relationship into one of owner and possession, perpetrator and victim, and cruel and disrespectful treatment of women became socially condoned in many societies. The tradition of male dominance is then assigned greater importance than the universal value of non-violence and the legal rights of the individual....

If you make a general and conscious rule always to place universal values above temporal values, you will be better able to make wise judgements and less likely to commit negative acts.

Mr. Crosbie observes that there are many kinds of ideas of morality which change with place and time. Their classification of right and wrong or good and evil keeps changing. People have their own special brand of “morality” and are intolerant of others who do not accept that brand. He writes:

True morality rests in an understanding and in realization of man’s own spiritual nature, and must of necessity flow from it, irrespective of all kinds of conventions. . . . True morality does not depend upon words, phrases, or conventions, but upon a *universal* perception of all things, whereby everything is done for good, every thought and feeling expended for the benefit of others rather than for one’s self. A clear perception of one’s own spiritual nature, and the motive to benefit mankind in every direction in every case, without self-interest, are two essentials for true morality. (*Universal Theosophy*, pp. 120 and 124)

What is Life? Our idea of life is confined to creatures on earth. “Recent findings, however, suggest that life is much larger than what we think it to be, in fact, turning out to be unimaginably smaller,” write Narayani Ganesh and Jug Suraiya (*The Times of India*, May 29). For instance, scientists have discovered the microbes—described as extremophiles—at the bottom of Utah’s Great Salt Lake, in the soil saturated with salt. It was felt that no plant or fish could survive in such “impossible conditions” of extreme heat, cold, acidity, pressure and salinity. Could these anaerobes—organisms that do not need free air or oxygen—be the prototypes of life on earth? These extremophiles release methane. The presence of methane in the atmosphere of Mars suggests the possibility of extraterrestrial life.

What is the origin of life? Since all organisms have DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), could DNA be the fundamental building block of life? Jack Szostak of Harvard Medical School holds that life must have existed before DNA. If so, could life be traced back to RNA (ribonucleic acid) molecules? Ganesh and Suraiya write:

If RNA gave birth to DNA, what gave birth to RNA? Despite ongoing laboratory research with RNA and DNA we have yet to answer the question: Where and when does life become life? In the 1970s, Fred Hoyle and Wickremasinghe propounded that life on earth originated from building blocks transported through meteorite showers raining down from outer space. If so, that makes us literally star-stuff. Our ancestral roots might be anywhere in the cosmos and to trace them would be as daunting a task as looking for a needle in a haystack the size of infinity.

Life is everywhere, and is a universally pervasive principle, teaches Theosophy. We are surrounded by the ocean of life that is pulsating around and through us forever. Mr. Judge explains in *The Ocean of Theosophy* that microbes, bacilli and bacteria are not the ultimate units of life, but they in turn are made of still more minute “lives.” Each cell is made up of these infinitesimal “lives.” “One of the mysteries of physical life is hidden among these lives. Their action forced forward by the Life Energy—called *Prana* or *Jiva*—will explain active existence and physical death” (p. 39). These lives are of two classes: destroyers and preservers, and in the struggle between them the destroyers win and thus it is life that kills.

Every atom and molecule in the Universe is both *life-giving* and *death-giving* to that form, inasmuch as it builds by aggregation universes and the ephemeral vehicles ready to receive the transmigrating soul, and as eternally destroys and changes the *forms* and expels those souls from their temporary abodes. (*S.D.*, I, 261)

H.P.B. observes in *The Secret Doctrine* that science has been unable to solve the mystery of the origin of life on earth. It is absurd to accept that life originated from the Haeckelian *Moneron*—simple globule of protoplasm. The question is bound to arise: What were the prototypes of the *Monera*? Sir W. Thomson seemed to suggest that these *monera* may have fallen in meteorites from other globes already formed. H.P.B. remarks: “If *they have* so fallen; if our Earth got its supply of life-germs from other planets; who, or *what*, had

carried them into those planets?" (*S.D.*, II, 158)

Occultism disposes of the so-called Azoic age of Science, for it shows that there never was a time when the Earth was without life upon it. Wherever there is an atom of matter, a particle or a molecule, even in its most gaseous condition, there is life in it, however latent and unconscious....*Whatsoever quits the Laya State, becomes active life....Spirit is the first differentiation of (and in) SPACE; and Matter the first differentiation of Spirit. That, which is neither Spirit nor matter—that is IT—the Causeless CAUSE of Spirit and Matter, which are the Cause of Kosmos. And THAT we call the ONE LIFE or the Intra-Cosmic Breath.*" (*S.D.*, I, 258)

In other words, One homogeneous, absolute and omnipresent Essence or Absolute LIGHT, becomes in manifestation Absolute *Life*.

DESIRE to sow no seed for your own harvesting; desire only to sow that seed the fruit of which shall feed the world. You are a part of the world; in giving it food you feed yourself. Yet in even this thought there lurks a great danger which starts forward and faces the disciple, who has for long thought himself working for good, while in his inmost soul he has perceived only evil; that is, he has thought himself to be intending great benefit to the world while all the time he has unconsciously embraced the thought of Karma, and the great benefit he works for is for himself. A man may refuse to allow himself to think of reward. But in that very refusal is seen the fact that reward is desired....Be warned, you who are but turning towards the life of occultism. Learn now that there is no cure for desire, no cure for the love of reward, no cure for the misery of longing, save in the fixing of the sight and hearing upon that which is invisible and soundless. Begin even now to practise it, and so a thousand serpents will be kept from your path. Live in the eternal.

—*Light on the Path*