

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 77, No. 10

August 17, 2007

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

REVERENCE FOR ALL LIFE	365
AGNI—ATAR—BAPTISM BY FIRE	371
THE ART OF HEALING—I	377
LAO TZU’S “TAO TE KING”—IV	382
STAGES OF CONSCIOUSNESS	387
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	391
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	395

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REVERENCE FOR ALL LIFE

JANE Goodall is well known for her work for the protection of wildlife, especially the chimpanzees. As she sought consolation in the forest of Gombe, after her husband’s death, she experienced ecstatic mystical moments of oneness with Nature. Recounting that experience she wrote:

There are many windows through which we humans, searching for meaning, can look out into the world around us. There are those carved out by Western science.... Yet there are other windows through which we humans can look out into the world around us, windows through which the mystics and holy men of the East, and the founders of the great world religions, have gazed as they searched for the meaning and purpose of our life on earth.... That afternoon, it had been as though an unseen hand had drawn back a curtain and, for a briefest moment, I had seen through such a window. (*Reason for Hope*, pp. 174-75)

The ancients instinctively felt oneness, harmony and reverence for Nature. They were satisfied with what Mother Nature gave. In fact, they took from Nature only what was needed, and expressed their gratitude by helping her in myriad ways. But *our* wants have become unlimited. How can we rely on the vagaries of Nature? So, we must conquer Nature. The more we succeed in our conquest

of Nature, the more we treat the lower kingdoms as “children of a lesser god.” In fact, science classifies things as organic and inorganic; living and non-living. There is no dead matter, says Theosophy, and Mr. Judge puts it thus:

There are no longer any hard-and-fast lines between the “organic” and the “inorganic”; between the “living” and “dead” matter. Every atom is endowed with and moved by intelligence, and is conscious in its own degree, on its own plane of development....“In reality, as Occult philosophy teaches us, everything which changes is organic; it has the life principle in it, and it has all the potentiality of the higher lives....If, as we say, all in nature is an aspect of the one element, and life is universal, how can there be such a thing as inorganic atom!”
(*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 3*, pp. 13 and 15)

To revere life is to be non-violent at all levels—thought, word and action—and towards human, animal and plant kingdoms. Avoid coming to blows with anyone, when you can make an appeal to his reason or conscience. “The man who strikes first admits that his ideas have given out,” says a Chinese proverb. When it comes to dealing with criminals, H.P.B. suggests that “Human Law may use *restrictive* not punitive measures.” We may classify capital punishment as an extreme punitive measure. No criminal should be executed, no matter how grave the offence, says Mr. Judge. The commandment of Moses is, “Thou shalt not kill,” and it makes no exception. We can divide criminals into two classes: those who are hardened, vicious and murderous in nature, and those who are not so, but who in a fit of passion, fear or anger have killed another. Among the latter, there are those who are extremely penitent, and by executing them we are not giving them a chance to turn over a new leaf. However, the occult reason for abstaining from the execution of even hardened criminals is that although they are physically dead the real man survives and is full of hatred and anger for the people (society, judiciary, etc.), who were instrumental in his execution. The executed criminal is shot out of this world

full of thoughts of hatred and revenge that he injects into the minds of nervous and sensitive people. That is the reason we sometimes hear people say that they were impelled by some unknown force to commit the crime—the suggestion for the crime seemed to come from outside, during unguarded moments. Writes Franz Hartmann:

...but surely the killing of a criminal can teach him nothing; it can only arouse in his soul a spirit of fear, embitterment and revenge, because he instinctively knows that no man has a right to rob him of his life....Humanity, being a unit, the condition of the whole is responsible for the condition of each single individual, and that unit being made of the individuals, each individual is responsible for the conditions which affect the whole....Therefore, instead of killing one another, we ought to aid each other in coming to life, for no one can be said to be truly alive as long as he does not know his own divine Self, and that true Self embraces and includes the whole of creation.

Man is more than his body. No man has a right to put an end to his existence because he is miserable or his life *seems* meaningless and useless. There is that aspect of us which learns from every experience, even in what may appear to us the most hopeless and useless situation. If the law of Karma lets a person live, it is proof that there is some purpose to his living, which may not be apparent to him. As well argue the necessity of killing invalids and cripples, saying that they are a burden to society and family, as certain savage tribes in South Sea Islands put to death their old people with war-like honours, points out H.P.B. “Life is better than death, for death again disappoints the Self....By living as long as one can, one gives the Self that longer chance,” says Mr. Judge. We are being irreverent to life when we resort to foeticide or abortion, that too, only because it happens to be a girl-child or is likely to be born with some congenital defect. Theosophy teaches that life begins at the time of conception.

Man is causing indescribable pain to animals when they are killed for medicine, and worst of all, for sport. Most “poaching” is

killing for money or for mere sport. And the methods used by the poachers are extremely cruel. H.P.B. writes:

Too many forget that the sympathies of those who rule the animate world should extend beyond the limits of their own kind. . . . It is bad to kill any sentient creature for the sake of the savage pleasure of the chase. It is perhaps worse to cause their destruction for the sake of coldly profiting by their slaughter. (*Lucifer*, November 1887)

We justify vivisection and animal experiments, saying that they are for the benefit of humanity. Prof. C. S. Lewis argues that it is not right that one species should suffer for the happiness or comfort of another. If human beings claim their right to torment animals, just because they are higher than animals, by that very superiority they should be better than the beasts and abstain from inflicting pain. If we must torture them in order to improve human life or relieve human pain, it is our grave responsibility to live a life of such superior order as to justify the sacrifice of those animals. Such a justification based on “superiority” could be dangerous, as tomorrow we may feel no qualms in torturing and killing human beings whom we consider inferior! It has happened in the past. The Germans thought they were the only true Aryans and superior to the Jews. The White race considered itself superior to the Black. The civilized man thinks himself superior to a savage. In India, a Brahmin felt justified in ill-treating a Harijan and called him “untouchable.”

The immediate effect of animal experiments would be hardening of the heart. In Shakespeare’s play, *Cymbeline*, when a queen asked the doctor for poisons to experiment on animals, the doctor said: “Your Highness shall from this practice but make hard your heart.” Karmically, of course, we are sowing seeds or causes that may be reaped by us, in subsequent incarnation, in the form of similar *helpless suffering*. If we use the medicines which are directly made from animal extracts or take advantage of techniques, which are evolved as a result of torturing or killing animals, we are party to it

and are giving an indirect consent to killing of animals. Hence, Buddha says, “One should neither slay nor *cause to slay*.”

Ultimately, it is the question of our feelings and attitude towards animals. Do we recognize that animals too have souls, consciousness and emotions? We feel irritated if a pigeon disturbs us by continual cooing. Sir Walter Scott was grieving the loss of his wife, and just as he was struggling to get some sleep in the early hours of the morning, a dog in the street began howling. Instead of feeling irritated, Scott was sympathetic, as he said to himself, “Who knows, perhaps he [the dog] has his own sorrows as I have mine.”

There must be reverence for plant life, too. Sir J. C. Bose demonstrated that the plants, too, have emotions. It has been found that music aids the plants to grow better and faster. We must be extremely reluctant to pluck flowers or cut trees, needlessly. Among some aboriginal tribes, trees were worshipped as conscious, living things, so that when they had to cut a tree for wood, they first carried out a ritual and asked pardon of the tree.

Atmanastu kamaya sarvam priyam bhavati, i.e., everything becomes dear because the SELF shines in all, says *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. Man is responsible for the evolution of the lower kingdoms. As man progresses he has the responsibility of raising the entire mass of manifested matter up to the stature, nature and dignity of conscious godhood. When we kill even a small insect or a plant, we interrupt its progress. Hence the injunction: “Kill not—for pity’s sake—and lest ye slay the meanest [of created] thing upon its upward way” (*The Light of Asia*). We affect the lower kingdoms through our thoughts and feelings. Mr. Judge points out that our angry, greedy, jealous and cunning thoughts have been responsible for making tigers more ferocious and snakes more poisonous. So, too, natural calamities, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, famines and floods, are the result of man’s wrong thinking. Thus:

It is true that the whole of creation waits upon man and

groans that he keeps back the enlightenment of all. What happens when, with intention, you crush out the life of a common croton bug? Well, it is destroyed and you forget it. But you brought it to an untimely end, short though its life would have been. Imagine this being done at hundreds of thousands of places in the State. Each of these little creatures had life and energy; each some degree of intelligence. The sum total of the effects of these deaths must be appreciable. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 3*, pp. 4-5)

Jane Goodall says that her fears of being harmed by a wild animal were non-existent because she truly believed that the animals would sense that she intended them no harm, and therefore, they would leave her alone. That is what generally happened and she says that she has never betrayed their trust. In *Isis Unveiled* H.P.B. mentions a certain lake in India, where, most deadly and enormous alligators could be seen basking in the sun. These alligators became *as harmless as kitten*, so long as a band of fakirs, lost in prayer and contemplation, was in the vicinity. An attitude of harmlessness within us suffuses the atmosphere with similar magnetism. “Thou hast to live and breathe in all, as all that thou perceivest breathes in thee,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. What we need to develop is love, charity and compassion. Gandhiji has this to say:

The Law of Love will work, just as the Law of Gravitation will work, whether we accept it or not....A man who applies the Law of Love with scientific precision can work great wonders. For, the force of Non-violence is infinitely more wonderful and subtle than the forces of Nature....The more I work at this Law, the more I feel the delight in life, the delight in the scheme of this Universe. It gives me a peace and meaning of the mysteries of Nature that I have no power to describe.

THE respect that is paid to the image passes over to its archetype.

—ST. BASIL

AGNI—ATAR—BAPTISM BY FIRE

GATHAS or holy hymns are a collection of great ethical teachings. The whole philosophy of the *Gathas* is the living of the life of righteousness in thought, word and deed, through the instrumentality of the higher Mind (*Vohu Mano*). Both the *Gita* and the *Gathas* teach that the goal of evolution is the merging of the personal consciousness in the all-pervasive divine consciousness. The Ahura-Mazda of the *Gathas* is not Ormazd, the God of the later Zoroastrian Theology, to be sought in a Fire-Temple or elsewhere outside of us. Ahura means Lord and Mazda means wise. Ahura-Mazda, the Wise Lord, is the inner guide, friend and philosopher of Zarathushtra. These *Gathas* are verily like the hymns of the Vedas. There are five *Gathas* of which the Fifth one—*Vahishta-Ishti*—is short but full of spiritual beauty when correctly and fully understood. It is the hymn of Righteous Aspiration and contains the Marriage song, which is as symbolic as it is historic, deeply philosophical in its ethics, and enshrines hints of true psychology. It treats of yoga or union; it sings of the marriage of Pouruchista, the daughter and disciple of Zarathushtra who is a descendant of Spitama, *i.e.*, “purest of the pure.” Elsewhere in the Avesta and Pahlvi commentary, it is mentioned that Jamasp is the husband’s name, “a husband who is assiduous in the righteous service of the Divine Mind.” What is the advice to Pouruchista? “Counsel well together, and act according to the most pure ideation and wise thought.”

Let us turn to the actual words of the Fifth *Gatha*, verses 5 to 7 (*The Gathas of Zarathushtra*, translated by Irach J. S. Taraporewala):

These words I speak to maidens truly wed
And to their comrades young; bear them in mind,
And understand them deep within your Souls—
Bring down Vohu Man’ in your lives on Earth,

Let each one strive the other to surpass
 In Asha's Truth, in Vohu Mano's Love;
 Thus each one surely shall reap rich rewards.

Even in life on Earth these Truths hold good,
 O men and maids, attracted by Untruth,
 You find it pleasanter to go astray;
 But this drags you away from your true Self;
 The Light in earth-bound hearts shines dim and dark,
 Where Rays of Truth can scarcely penetrate,
 And this prevents all growth to Higher Life.

When once you come within our Brotherhood,
 You'll understand the merits of True life,
 Of wedded bliss in its devoted zeal;
 Whether you strive for this life or the next—
 But should you choose to leave this Brotherhood,
 Deluded by the Spirit of Untruth,
 Then grief and words of woe shall be your end.

To whom is it spoken? It is spoken to virgins and celibates, brides and bridegrooms, which is in all esoteric philosophies the name for the purified human souls—*Kumaras*. In the Mystery of Krishna at Brindaban, all devotees, men or women, are *gopis*; in the *Puranas* all mind-born sons of Brahma are *Kumaras*, virgin-youths, and the Marriage of the Soul is a Mystery Rite. It is well that even today, at the Marriage festival of Parsees, this Hymn is remembered, and let us hope its meaning, its import, its significance will be better understood and appreciated in the future than it has been in the past. Today, most people hope for worldly prosperity, for sense-life, and forget all about spiritual prosperity and soul-life. This Hymn becomes the channel for the realization of all hopes and aspirations of the Soul.

The chief, the central symbol of the Zoroastrian Religion is Fire. Nowhere in the ancient world was the Drama of Initiation by fire enacted for public instruction and public benefit better than in old Iran. But among other spiritual cultures also the rite was known,

taught and practised.

Fire is the symbol of the human soul in all religions. A *Rig Vedic* hymn says that Agni, the Fire-Lord, has the power to bestow life, prosperity, speech and wisdom. What does that mean? Can the physical and combustible fire do all this? We know that it cannot. The Zoroastrian concept is identically the same—the name of *Agni*, the Fire Lord, is Atar or Adar. If we apply the Key of the Science of Numbers, the Real Sankhya philosophy, taught by the original Rishi Kapila, and which is now unknown in the public world, we would solve the real meaning of this Sacred Name—Atar or Adar. In the Zoroastrian pantheon he is the ninth *Yazata*, corresponding to Bahman or Vohu Mano, the second Ameshaspenta. Further, it is the presiding deity over the ninth month. Thus, the sacred Number of Atar is 9. This is a key and a clue to students of Esotericism.

There is this prayer, to be found in the *Atas-Nyayis*, which enables us to understand the meaning of this Fire Lord, Atar. Again and again, occurs the sentence: “Athro, Ahure Mazdao, Puthra”. In the Avesta, *Puthra* (which is the Sanskrit *Putra*) means “son”—fire is the Son of Ahura Mazda; it also signifies “Purifying”—Fire which is Ahura Mazda's purifier. Here is a play upon the word, and both ideas must be taken and combined to understand the prayer. To this purifying power, son of Ahura Mazda, this prayer is offered in *Atas-Nyayis* (*The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 23, pp. 357-61):

Fire! Son of Ahura Mazda, thou great Purifier! Burn in “this house,” Blaze in this house; Increase in this house; and that perpetually. Burn, Blaze, Increase in this House till the Day of Restoration and of judgement, which thought brings us courage, good moral courage. (Verse 9)

Give me, O Atar, son of Ahura Mazda! Lively welfare, lively maintenance, lively living; fulness of welfare, fulness of maintenance, fulness of life;

Knowledge of sagacity; quickness of tongue; (holiness of) soul; a good memory; and then the understanding that goes on

growing and the one that is not acquired through learning.
(Verse 10)

Do we think this is addressed to our fire in the kitchen—coal fire or gas fire? “House” referred to is the Temple of the Body. “Fire” is the soul in the body—the Son of Ahura Mazda; the *manasaputra*, the mind-born son of Brahma who is named *Agnishvatta-pitri*—the fire-lord; the Christ in the Heart. John the Baptizer baptized men with “water” and said that Christ would baptize them with “fire.” Read this whole prayer in this light, and how beautiful, how full of sense it becomes; for it is the Soul who gives the gift of speech and fulness of life, which are prayed for.

What is this Fiery Soul within us? Where does it come from? Theosophy teaches that Soul is not the result of bodily evolution. Human soul does not come from the animal kingdom. H.P.B.’s teaching is the same as that of this Fire-Lord conception of Zoroastrianism, also to be found in the *Aitareya Upanishad*.

Our Soul comes from Deity (Universal-Oversoul), and is the Son of Ahura Mazda. It is the Pure Fire and has no smoke. But when it comes down into the body then the smoke of passion and sense-life arises, as is described in the Third Chapter of the *Gita*.

Now note—Fire is the Reincarnating Soul and has two aspects, one stationary, immovable, the other changing and growing. The non-moving is the Divine Ego whose ray is the other. The former sits as the watching spectator—“Upadrashta” of the *Gita*. In the subsequent verses of *Atas-Nyayis* we are told: “What does he, who comes and goes, bring to him who is motionless?” The Divine Ego, the Motionless and Smokeless Fire is described as “the Purifier,” “the maker of prosperity,” “strong and immortal,” the “Warrior.” He is also called “the cook who cooks the day and night meals of mortals,” *i.e.*, he is the supplier of experiences in waking and sleeping conditions, as also in life and death. Wonderful blessings are given by the fire-soul to anyone who brings him “dry wood,” *i.e.*, deeds free from the moisture of passion, “well cleaned with godly intent, well examined by the light of day.” “Sandalwood”

are fragrant acts of unselfishness, of wisdom, of kindly understanding, and without them no amount of sandalwood will avail.

What is the lesson? Our body is the Temple and our Soul is the Fire. Keep out from the Temple of your body evil thoughts, ignoble feelings, crass ignorance and gross superstition. Our kitchen fire should never go out—what does that mean? The fire of attention to lower and mundane things must be unwavering, so that our food or experience may be pure and wholesome. There is the second fire of the *Agiaries* (fire-temples), it is the fire of Duty whereby right deeds are done. There is the conquering fire of Behram, the Great Fire of Mahadeva that burns to ashes all selfishness, all egotism (*ahankara*). Atar is an aspect of Maheshvara or Shiva, “the Lord of the burning ground,” the destroyer of passions, the Creator of Wisdom and Universal Brotherhood.

Immediately following verses 5 to 7, in the Fifth *Gatha*, comes a sentence which may well be taken as the basis of a resolve for each of us—be he a Zoroastrian or non-Zoroastrian: “May defeat attend the evil-doers”!

Who are the evil doers? Those who pollute the Fire; those who crucify the Son of God, Ahura Mazda, those who forget the existence of the Soul in the body. Impurity of earth and water, of body and feelings, pollution by foul air or thoughts, these put out the Eternal and Immortal Fire in the Temple. Thus, our Body is the Temple, from which all evil must be discarded, rejected, kept away, so that the soul-fire may be kept alive.

He is the Mighty One—this god of Fire, Agni, Atar or Adar. It is that Fire which tests the Souls of men; it was into this Fire of the great Mahatmas that Sita Devi, the peerless Queen of Rama, went to prove her divine chastity. So, like Sita, one day we must go through the Baptism of Fire. In the meantime we must prepare ourselves by the advice the great Teacher and good father Zarathushtra gave to his daughter and disciple Pouruchista: “Gain for yourselves the life of the Good Mind through the knowledge of the wise ones” (Fifth *Gatha*). May (His) chastening Blessing

bring us the Peace and the Illumination in the Temple of the Body!
 May the Soul-Fire burn, blaze and increase in each one of us in the
 coming years!

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THE ART OF HEALING

I

HEALTH is defined as absence of disease. It is also defined as a state of being hale, sound or whole in body, mind and soul where soul is meant to be the emotional side of nature. To be healthy means to be in a wholesome state. Body is a temple of god—the divine man within. It is called Solomon’s temple, which was built without hammer or chisel. Perfect physical health is one of the qualifications of discipleship (*chelaship*). The person who wants to walk the spiritual path must have perfect physical health—which includes perfect moral, psychic, mental and spiritual health. When our bodily instrument is in a perfect state, we are able to achieve much. Good health is like a fine tool in the hands of a craftsman; when the tool is perfect, the craftsman is able to focus on his craft, without having to waste his energies in the handling of the tool.

Health is also considered to be a state of homeostasis, an internal balance. Homeostasis is defined thus:

Any self-regulating process by which biological systems tend to maintain stability while adjusting to conditions that are optimal for survival. If homeostasis is successful, life continues; if unsuccessful, disaster or death ensues. The stability attained is actually a dynamic equilibrium, in which continuous change occurs yet relatively uniform conditions prevail.

A familiar example of homeostatic regulation in a mechanical system is the action of a room-temperature regulator, or thermostat. The heart of the thermostat is a bimetallic strip that responds to temperature-changes by completing or disrupting an electric circuit. When the room cools, the circuit is completed, the furnace operates, and the temperature rises. At a preset level the circuit breaks, the furnace stops, and the temperature drops. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

How does it work in our own body? There are certain regulatory mechanisms in the body. These mechanisms are of three types—

physiological mechanism, defence mechanism and internal regulatory mechanism.

Defence mechanism includes body's immune system, which protects us against infection, stress, environmental conditions and so on. When it breaks down, in its worst condition, it leads to Auto-Immune-Disorders or AIDs. There is also internal stress management—physiological as well as psychological. When we pass through stressful situations, certain organs in the body secrete or stop secreting certain hormones by which an adjustment takes place. Thus, there is a natural way in which body tackles disturbance or a stressful state. There are mechanisms by which our body gets rid of toxic matter through kidneys, liver, respiration, perspiration and so on.

Through regulatory mechanisms, our body regulates itself automatically. There is temperature regulation, fluid regulation, regulation of metabolism by which relatively complex molecules are either formed or broken down into living cells. We can see that body has its own intelligence or wisdom. There is also a natural healing process. A wound in the body heals on its own. We apply an antiseptic as a preventive measure to avoid sepsis, but the healing is from within. It is important to keep in mind the ability of our body to heal itself, and avoid over-dependence on external mechanisms and support.

Health is also nature's way of restoring harmony. Whatever happens, body tries to adjust itself to the environment. In this process of adjustment, we sometimes experience pain. If we have overeaten or eaten something toxic, body tries to throw it out through vomit or stool or through other processes. This process of throwing out, we consider as disease or painful situation. If the body's temperature rises, it is body's own way of fighting infection. It is then that white blood corpuscles are able to fight against harmful bacteria. This is a symptom or disorder, which is nothing but body's own effort at healing. Decay and disease of our psycho-physiological instrument is part of our life today. Who should be

blamed for it? A Master of Wisdom writes:

It is not nature that creates diseases, but man. The latter's mission and destiny in the economy of nature is to die his natural death brought by old age; save accident, neither a savage nor a wild (free) animal dies of disease. Food, sexual relations, drink, are all natural necessities of life; yet excess in them brings on disease, misery, suffering, mental and physical, and the latter are transmitted as the greatest evils to future generations, the progeny of the culprits.

We live at a hectic pace, surrounded by gadgets, which eliminate natural and necessary exertions such as washing clothes and utensils, sweeping the floor, mowing the lawn, and so on, which exercise various parts of the body. In early or formative age, there is also inattention to the *kind of food* we eat, the *amount* we eat and the *time* we eat. Bodily ailments also have a close link to man's unhealthy mental and emotional state. There are some diseases which are transmitted from parent to child by heredity. There are congenital diseases, which afflict children. We also have diseases, which have their roots in our imagination. H.P.B. says that half, if not two-thirds, of our diseases are the fruit of our imagination and fears. Thus:

The power of the imagination upon our physical condition, even after we arrive at maturity, is evinced in many familiar ways. In medicine, the intelligent physician does not hesitate to accord to it a curative or morbidic potency greater than his pills and potions. He calls it the *vis medicatrix naturæ*, and his first endeavour is to gain the confidence of his patient so completely, that he can cause nature to extirpate the disease. Fear often kills; and grief has such a power over the subtle fluids of the body as not only to derange the internal organs but even to turn the hair white. Ficinus mentions the *signature* of the foetus with the marks of cherries and various fruits, colours, hairs, and excrescences, and acknowledges that the imagination of the mother may transform it into a resemblance of an ape,

pig, or dog, or any such animal. (*Isis*, I, 385)

The root cause of disease may be there in the present or in the past life. Explaining the rationale, Mr. Judge says:

But regarding it from the theosophical side, we know that the thoughts of the preceding life are the causes for the troubles and the joys of this, and therefore those troubles are now being exhausted here by the proper channel, the body, and are on their way *down and out*. (*W.Q.J. Series No. 22*)

Disease means a state of dis-ease—when a person is not at ease. It is therefore natural to seek remedy, cure, and total eradication of disease. Prolonged illness makes man desperate. It is then that the quacks and false doctors have a field day. Luring them with a promise of cure, they fleece patients and lead them on to increased desperation. Detection of the disease, its cause and proper treatment is very important for restoration of health. Modern science has done much in detection and diagnosis of disease through a host of diagnostic tests and sophisticated equipments. Having identified the disease, medicines have a useful role to play in cure of diseases. There are benefits to be derived from intelligent use of drugs and herbs, says H.P.B. The only trouble is that we often try to find cures through drugs and chemicals—even in those cases where the cause is in our mind and emotions. Moreover, there is an underlying belief that if a medicine has been tested successfully on animals, it is also likely to work well with human beings. Such treatments deal with effects rather than causes themselves.

There are several types of treatment of diseases—Allopathy, Homoeopathy, *Ayurveda*, *Unani* and so on. Cures are also brought about through use of alternative methods such as acupuncture, hypnotism, naturopathy, and so on. So also, magnets and music have been used successfully in cure of diseases. We also have “mind cure,” “mental science,” “Christian science” and “faith-healing.” The simple but important guide in selection of remedy is that it is better to restore health by physical means and leave alone methods

that profess to bring about cures through mind and spirits. Some of the latter are based on total denial of existence of the disease itself. Others use systems of “affirmation and denials”—asserting that there is no matter, that all is spirit; there is no evil but that all is going well—denying thereby the reality of duality and relativity that exists in the world. Good and evil, spirit and matter, light and darkness are the facts of nature and they cannot be simply wished away or denied. Christian Scientists go one step further and state that God is all good, and deny the existence of any evil such as poverty, accidents, storms, etc. Such affirmations and denials, backed by strong faith, often prove to be dangerous. That is because, in a given life, when appropriate environment of body and mind is furnished, the seeds of disease which are primarily in the mind begin to manifest themselves through the agency of the inner vital currents that circulate in our astral body—the model body on which the physical is constructed. These currents carry the appropriate vibrations from the astral plane down to the physical plane in the form of disease, on their way out. When patients opt for practices of mental healing or Christian science, involving affirmations and denials as described above, the downward flowing currents are as it were violently grasped and thrown back upwards to the mind. They must wait again in the mind until opportunity occurs either in this life or in the next birth. This is simply replanting of diseases for future use.

(To be concluded)

THE great task of education is not merely to collect facts but to know man and to make oneself known to man.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE

LAO TZU'S "TAO TE KING"

IV

LIKE all great teachers, Lao Tzu too advises us to refrain from judging others. If we were to put ourselves in the identical physical, mental, moral and spiritual condition of the other whom we are blaming, we might do worse than he. So why not trust the Law of Karma, knowing that, though Karma tarry long, "it grinds exceedingly small." Lao Tzu says:

Supposing that people are afraid of death, and we can seize and kill the unruly. Who would dare to do so? There is always the Great Executioner. And to take the place of executioner is like handling the hatchet for the master carpenter. He who handles the hatchet for the master carpenter seldom escapes injury to his hands.

The verse seems to warn us not to take the Law into our own hands. Can we take the place of the all-seeing Law? We know that the Law of Karma takes into account not just the physical act but various other factors. Karma is action and reaction. However, this reaction is not mechanical but takes into account the motive, the inner state of the person and the weight of his past Karma. The law of Karma also takes into account the person's state of knowledge or ignorance. The Karmic responsibility is in proportion to his knowledge. For instance, when a mother, who wants her child to grow up to be an upright and honest person, is severe with him, the law of Karma takes into account her "good motive," while meting out karmic consequences for her severity. Similarly, the inner state is the deciding factor. For instance, there is a difference in the karmic consequences reaped by a person losing his temper because he was tired or frustrated, and another person, who had no such problem. But the inner state of the person is the sum total of all experiences and circumstances of a given life as well as those of earlier lives. A stingy and unkind person often has the background

of a difficult childhood or has experienced extreme poverty.

So also, our mental, moral and psychic constitution is ours under Karma, brought over from previous lives. A person born with an especially strong tendency towards gossip or sensuality or greed has to fight harder to curb these tendencies than another who is not burdened with the weight of his past Karma. Again the law of Karma is reformative and not punitive. We are unable to take into account a multiplicity of factors, when we hurriedly condemn another. Hence, Lao Tzu suggests that passing judgement on another is as presumptuous as the use of the hatchet of the master carpenter, by someone who has not the knowledge nor the skill to handle it, for he might end up by only cutting his own hand. Then what should we do?

To the good I would be good; to the not good I would also be good, in order to make them good....Even if a man is bad, how can it be right to cast him off? Requite injury with kindness. (*Selections from the Upanishads and the Tao Te King*, pp. 137-38)

Mr. Judge asks: What will you have in the future life, enemies or friends? If we are good to those who are inimical to us now, then one-third of that enmity will be lessened, but if we continue to be inimical then we shall carry on the inimical relations for three more lives. We must take special pains to cultivate the feelings of love and charity for those whom we naturally dislike. Our changed attitude might in a future life result in their helping us and aiding our every effort.

Lowliness and Humility is another grand concept put forward by Lao Tzu, which forms the basis of the paradoxical concept: "One must stoop to conquer." Robert Greenleaf, a retired AT&T executive, writes of *Servant Leadership* in his book under that title. A servant is able to become leader because his motive is to "serve"—first, last and all the time. According to Greenleaf, a servant-leader is *servant* first and hence different from the person

who is *leader* first, who is motivated by the desire for power or material possessions. Greenleaf advocates that the leadership concept must be based on openness, the ability to listen, and humility. Mahatmas—Great Souls—describe themselves as “servants of humanity.” *Tao Te King* teaches that qualities of lowliness and humility are necessary for all great leaders and rulers. Thus:

He who is great must make humility his base. He who is high must make lowliness his foundation....Therefore the Sage, wishing to be above the people, must by his words put himself below them; wishing to be before the people, he must put himself behind them. In this way, though he has his place above them, the people do not feel his weight....Therefore all mankind delight to exalt him, and weary of him not. (*Selections from the Upanishads and the Tao Te King*, pp. 112-14)

To describe certain mystical experiences that transcend the logical mind, most spiritual treatises make use of paradoxes. The very title of the Mahayana Buddhist text, *The Voice of the Silence*, is paradoxical and it contains several paradoxes, such as, “Give up thy life, if thou would'st live.” *Light on the Path* is another mystical book that is described as the book of paradoxes, as it deals with the actual personal experience of the disciple. To an ordinary person the world has always been a place with many contradictions, and when he becomes a disciple he finds that his life is describable as a series of paradoxes. The reason for this is the dual nature of man. Thus:

Man's soul “dwells like a star apart,” even that of the vilest among us; while his consciousness is under the law of vibratory and sensuous life. This alone is enough to cause those complications of character which are the material for the novelist; every man is a mystery, to friend and enemy alike, and to himself....The disciple's effort is that of awakening consciousness in this starry part of himself, where his power and divinity lie sleeping. As this consciousness becomes

awakened, the contradictions in the man himself become more marked than ever; and so do the paradoxes which he lives through. (*Light on the Path*, p. 59)

Sangharakshita observes that a paradox may be defined as a truth standing on its head to attract attention. It shows that a paradox involves a contradiction and, secondly that it contains an element of truth. In case of a paradox in the merely rhetorical sense of the term, the contradiction is only apparent and the truth which it intended to convey is quite capable of being stated logically. Hence, the paradoxical form is only a literary trick to excite attention. The paradoxes of the Buddhist scriptures, however, are what may be termed paradoxes *per se*; the contradictions they involve are real contradictions, and the truths which they try to convey through those contradictions, are truths not susceptible to logical analysis. Buddhist paradox, in other words, is an attempt to express in terms of logical contradiction that which transcends logic. A spiritual experience is three-dimensional, while the intellect is two-dimensional. These statements are not to be understood by mere intellect, but by chastened and sublimated intuition. For this reason do the religious geniuses of all times and ages, attempting to describe the indescribable, speak of the dark light, the dazzling darkness, the nothing which is everything, the voidness which is full. Hence, admonishing the spiritual aspirant, do they urge him to lose his life in order to find it (*Paradox and Poetry in "The Voice of the Silence,"* pp. 4-7). Lao Tzu, too, resorts to paradoxes. Thus:

He who acts, destroys; he who grasps, loses. Therefore, the Sage does not act, and so does not destroy; he does not grasp, and so he does not lose.

There is nothing in the world more soft and weak than water, yet for attacking things that are hard and strong there is nothing that surpasses it, nothing that can take its place. (*Selections from the Upanishads and the Tao Te King*, pp. 129-30)

There is the mention of the Law of Sacrifice in the following verse:

If Kings and barons can keep [this unspoiled nature] the whole world shall yield them lordship of their own accord. The Heaven and earth join and the sweet rain falls. (*Tao Te King*, Dr. Lin Yutang's rendition)

We have to keep revolving the Wheel of Sacrifice, *i.e.*, follow the principle of Brotherhood and Reciprocity. Krishna says, "Beings are nourished by food, food is produced by rain, rain comes from sacrifice, and sacrifice is performed by action." (*Gita*, III)

We are given the description of ancient philosophers:

The skilful philosophers of the olden time were subtle, spiritual, profound and penetrating. They were so deep as to be incomprehensible....Self-effacing, like ice about to melt; simple, like unpolished wood; vacant, like a valley; opaque, like muddy water. (*Selections from the Upanishads and the Tao Te King*, p. 104)

Tao Te King is the blend of Metaphysics, Ethics and above all Mysticism and hence each reader can get out of it as much as his inner development permits.

(Concluded)

WE must come without the will to get or the will to avoid, just as the wayfarer asks the man he meets which of two ways leads anywhere, not wanting the right hand to be the road rather than the left, for he does not wish to go one particular road, but the road which leads to his goal. We ought to approach God as we approach a guide, dealing with Him as we deal with our eyes, not beseeching them to show us one sort of things rather than another, but accepting the impressions of things as they are shown us.

—EPICTETUS

STAGES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

ALTHOUGH it is not apparent at first sight, the subject of instinct, reason and intuition is connected very closely with that of who, where and what God is. Study of these three faculties may indeed help us to answer the question being asked: "Is God dead?" Certainly the idea of God as a personal being, the creator of all, the arbiter of man's destiny, "loving" yet "despotic," has to a great extent died out. But, for many, no other idea has filled the gap thus left in their thinking and in their knowledge of the purpose of life.

The idea of God that Theosophy advances is that of an impersonal, all-pervading Deity lying at the root of all manifestation and extending also beyond it. If we try to seek Deity in the known things of life we shall get some grasp of it, but we have to bear in mind that our idea of Deity will grow as our understanding of life grows, until we arrive at the stage when we realize what is expressed in the following extracts:

The ever-unknowable and incognizable *Karana* alone, the *Causeless Cause* of all causes, should have its shrine and altar on the holy and ever untrodden ground of our heart—invisible, intangible, unmentioned, save through "the still small voice" of our spiritual consciousness. Those who worship before it, ought to do so in the silence and the sanctified solitude of their Souls; making their spirit the sole mediator between them and the *Universal Spirit*, their good actions the only priests, and their sinful intentions the only visible and objective sacrificial victims to the *Presence*. (*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 280)

The "Parent Space" is the eternal, ever present cause of all—the incomprehensible DEITY, whose "invisible robes" are the mystic root of all matter, and of the Universe. (*Ibid.*, I, 35)

What is DEITY but Consciousness, Life, Universal Mind, and all else in manifestation? We are told that Universal Mind is omniscient; Matter is universal; Spirit is all-pervasive.

It seems to complicate matters when we read that

there is no plane in the whole universe with a wider margin, or a wider field of action in its almost endless gradations of perceptive and apperceptive qualities, than this plane [of mentality] which has in its turn an appropriate smaller plane for every “form,” from the “mineral” monad up to the time when that monad blossoms forth by evolution into the DIVINE MONAD. But all the time it is still one and the same Monad, differing only in its incarnations, throughout its ever succeeding cycles of partial or total obscuration of spirit, or the partial or total obscuration of matter—two polar antitheses—as it ascends into the realms of mental spirituality, or descends into the depths of materiality. (*S.D.*, I, 175)

There are stages of instinctual, mental, and purely abstract, or spiritual consciousness. (“Psychic and Noetic Action”: *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

We have therefore to note that there are at least two lines of evolution proceeding simultaneously—one the evolution of physical form with organs, and the other the evolution of consciousness or mentality, or the power to react to life. From the cohesive power of the mineral comes the flexible plant with the power of sensation. From the plant life comes the animal which develops the further power of instinct. And, when we come to man, we find in him the additional power of reason, and later of intuition.

To help us to see the relationship between evolving life and the organism through which it expresses itself, careful reflection on what is said in *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, p. 425, is required. The whole passage is important, but here we shall quote certain sentences which deal with instinct.

Instinct is the universal endowment of nature by the Spirit of Deity itself...Instinct, as a divine spark, lurks in the unconscious nerve-centre of the ascidian mollusk, and manifests itself at the first stage of action of its nervous system as what the physiologists term the reflex action. It exists in the lowest classes of the acephalous animals as well as in those that have

distinct heads; it grows and develops according to the law of the double evolution, physically and spiritually; and entering upon its conscious stage of development and progress in the cephalous species already endowed with a sensorium and symmetrically-arranged ganglia, this reflex action, whether men of science term it *automatic*, as in the lowest species, or *instinctive*, as in the more complex organisms which act under the guidance of the sensorium and the stimulus originating in distinct sensation, is still one and the same thing. It is the *divine instinct* in its ceaseless progress of development.

We have therefore to see animal instinct as a development from cohesion and sensation to the condition where a suitable physical organ has been evolved to respond to the profounder aspects of the Universal Mind, however unconscious it may as yet be. But we must remember that behind all this there must be an intelligence of some sort working.

This instinct of the animals, which act from the moment of their birth each in the confines prescribed to them by nature, and which know how, save in accident proceeding from a higher instinct than their own, to take care of themselves unerringly—this instinct may, for the sake of exact definition, be termed automatic; but it must have either within the animal, which possesses it or *without*, something’s or someone’s *intelligence* to guide it. (*Ibid.*)

The transition from the animal to the animal-man and then to man himself, and finally to the super-man is gradual. In the transition from unself-conscious choice and automatic action to self-conscious decisions and will-inspired action we lose something of the power of instinct and depend on reason. “Reason,” says H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 433), “the outgrowth of the physical brain, develops at the expense of instinct...reason avails only for the consideration of material things; it is incapable of helping its possessor to a knowledge of spirit.” Again, reason is “the product of the reflective faculties—denoting judiciousness and human intellectuality” (*Ibid.*,

I, 432). It is the faculty of understanding gained by analysing and building on premises to reach conclusions. Hence it can never be infallible, for the premises may not be accurate. Reason is “the slow development of our physical constitution, an evolution of our adult material brain.” (p. 425)

Reason alone, even if care is taken to see that our premises are accurate, brings us to a point where we can go no further. We find our conclusions at a dead-end; they differ from the conclusions of others and do not make a united whole. Reason starts with isolated facts. But there are in reality no isolated facts. All is one UNITY.

Great Nature once more steps in and the brain becomes an instrument of a higher power than reason. This is spiritual intuition, “intimately connected with the ‘third eye,’ which mythological tradition ascribes to certain races of men” (*S.D.*, I, 46 fn.). Man is now able to sense the Universal Mind which is omniscient; he understands things as they are; he sees clearly. Now he can reason from these premises and his conclusions will fit in with other conclusions until he sees the Universe as one Whole, every part mathematically arranged and geometrically perfect. When this condition becomes permanent, he reaches the stage of super-man. He is no longer a creature through whom the Universal Mind unconsciously functions, but he is an instrument, not of reason, or instinct, or sensation, but of the DEITY in Nature, the Omniscient Mind. Various verses from *The Voice of the Silence* will arise in the mind and help to give us a glimpse of what this means.

We shall end with a quotation from Plotinus. He taught that

human knowledge had three ascending steps: opinion, science, and *illumination*. He explained it by saying that “the means or instrument of opinion is sense, or perception; of science, dialectics; of illumination, *intuition* (or divine instinct). To the last, *reason is subordinate*; it is absolute knowledge founded on the identification of the mind with the object known. (*Isis*, I, 434)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

Question: Is time measured as it is on earth, in other than physical realms, such as astral, psychic, etc.?

Answer: Generally we reckon time in hours, minutes and seconds, following the rotation of the earth around its own axis and around the sun. But apart from this, there is a sense of time that is subjective. In *Transactions* we are told that besides defining time by the motion of the earth, we can define it in our conception. *Time is something created entirely by ourselves*, says a Master of Wisdom. Time seems to *fly* in happier moments, while it seems to drag on, ever so slowly, during painful experiences. Thus, one moment of intense agony may appear as an eternity to one person, while months and years may seem to flit like one brief moment to a person surrounded by bliss.

“Time is an illusion produced by the succession of our states of consciousness as we travel through eternal duration, and it does not exist where no consciousness exists in which the illusion can be produced; but lies asleep” (*S.D.*, I, 37). H.P.B. implies that time is but a by-product of consciousness. In the experience of the mystic, past, present, and future merge in the Eternal Now. Aldous Huxley writes:

But, alas, when he [the mystic] emerges from his ecstasy, he finds the current still flowing—realizes that it has been flowing even while he imagined that he had altogether abolished it. The flux may be an illusion, but it is an illusion always and inescapably there.

A Master of Wisdom says that “past, present and future” are clumsy words. The subdivisions, which seem natural, are man-made and purely subjective. It is impossible to point out the dividing line between the past and present, or the present and future. Even as we say, “now,” it has moved into the past. Our divisions of time are artificial and relative to the observer’s point of view.

Time is a function of consciousness. If we had no consciousness (for instance, we are unconscious on the physical plane, when we are asleep), we should not be subject to the time process. Similarly, if we had all-consciousness, there could not be a time sense. In *Devachan (Swarga)*, there is no sense of the lapse of time. The concept of time on planet Mercury is not the same as on earth. There is time as conceived by the soul. For instance, often we do not have direct perception of time, but we become aware of the passage of time by certain incidents. As for happy and poignant moments, they seem like yesterday. It is the same for the being in *Devachan (Swarga)*, says Mr. Judge. Though days slip into months and years, on our earth, in *Devachan*, there is no sense of the lapse of time, probably because it is a state of unalloyed bliss. It is not difficult to grasp when we consider that even on earth, sometimes, events, pictures, thoughts, feelings, etc., sweep over us in perfect detail in an instant. For a drowning man, events of his entire lifetime pass in a flash before the eye of the mind. So also, during the dream state, wherein we are on the astral (psychic) plane, events stretching over many hours during waking consciousness, are experienced only in a few seconds. A Guru may test his disciple by letting lose a tiger on him in the astral plane—a purely subjective experience that lasts only a few minutes—but at the end of the test, the disciple feels as if many hours had passed.

Question: What separates duty from love?

Answer: The ethical question seems to suggest that sometimes we may have to make a moral choice and to be clear in our mind whether we are prompted by a strong but noble emotion of love, or

being mindful of stern duty, both being commendable values, worth our consideration.

Ordinarily, a person is moved by emotions rather than the consideration of his whole duty. And especially, if love is the motive force, *i.e.*, the good intention inspired by love for others, the person may ignore the question of duty. He is hardly conscious of how duty is involved in life’s daily choices.

A student of Theosophy must be able to give right value to both love and duty, and choose accordingly, in each situation. There can be no hard-and-fast *rule* to guide the choices.

Earlier, we distinguished between an ordinary man in the market place and a student of Theosophy, and their probable choices commonly made. Their value-judgments vary according to the knowledge held and also the nature and moral stature of the individual. Greater the knowledge, greater is the responsibility.

But, at a still higher level when a student-aspirant is earnest and seeks the higher way, he has to stop at every instance and at every life’s situation to consider well his whole duty. As a seeker and as one committed to the higher and thoughtful life of duty and service, he may be undergoing a period of “probation,” when trials come up to test his moral and spiritual stamina, and thereby he may grow inwardly. At this stage, one is obliged to distinguish the finer shades of love and duty and also the purity of hidden emotions. He surely needs wisdom and foresight to judge the consequences of his choice. In other words, he should know how to separate duty from love when both make claims on his judgment!

The love of a good person for his family and friends is different, in terms of motive and consequences, from love nurtured by one who has concern for the larger “family,” *viz.*, Humanity. A real patriot, for instance, may willingly lay down his life for his motherland even though his action may give suffering to his beloved family and friends. On the other hand, there is the Mahatma, whose concern for universal welfare is so vast that he is willing to let go his love for his motherland, out of the sense of duty towards

humanity as a whole. His motherland may desperately need his practical help, but if the time is not ripe and the premature intervention may do more harm than final good, he may consider it his moral duty to refrain from interfering. We are told that during the “Indian mutiny” of 1857 that aimed to overthrow the British rule, the Mahatmas chose not to interfere, as they could see that the time and conditions were not ripe for gaining political freedom for India. Abounding love for one’s motherland should not blind one’s concern for the wider welfare of humanity to which one owes a higher Duty.

And yet, it is only love as a *personal emotion* that often comes in conflict with duty. “Love” in its higher sense—compassion—is also “Duty” in the real sense, which H.P.B. defines as that which is due to humanity. Compassion is the *all-embracing desire* for universal good; it is that which wishes that the object of love must get experience and grow—and growth involves pain. Parental duty involves inculcating good values and discipline in the child—something which can be accomplished only by laying aside purely personal emotions, and disappointing the child now and then. Thus, the more impersonal we are, the better are we able to strike a balance between duty and love.

Music does not give rise, in the heart, to anything which is not already there: so he whose inner self is attached to anything else than God is stirred by music to sensual desire, but the one who is inwardly attached to the love of God is moved, by hearing music, to do His will....The common folk listen to music according to nature, and the novices listen with desire and awe, while the listening of the saints brings them a vision of the Divine gifts and graces, and these are the gnostics to whom listening means contemplation. But finally, there is the listening of the spiritually perfect, to whom, through music, God reveals Himself unveiled.

—AL-SUHRAWARDI

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Do people sometimes go crazy on full-moon nights? Some United Kingdom police departments have observed that there have been cases of an increase in crime during full-moon nights. Doctors and nurses have claimed, for many years, that full-moon nights are busier, crazier, and more dangerous than other nights. Is the connection merely psychological? Researchers Ivan Kelly, James Rotton and Roger Culver in their study “The Moon was Full and Nothing Happened” (published in the book *The Hundredth Monkey and Other Paradigms of the Paranormal*, 1991) examined more than 100 studies of alleged lunar effects and found no significant correlation between phases of the moon and disasters, homicide rates, etc. Perhaps the influence is related to one’s expectations, as there is no known mechanism that can explain the influence of the moon on a person’s mind to make him more dangerous. (*The Times of India*, June 15, 2007)

The moon acts perniciously upon the mental and bodily constitution of people in more than one way. In the article, “Whence the Name Lunatics?” H.P.B. observes that it has been proved by a series of experiments that even a person of remarkably strong nerves could not sit, lie or sleep for a long time in a room lit by moonlight without injury to health. There does exist a connection between phases of the moon and various plant, animal and human diseases. Lord Bacon used to fall down senseless at the beginning of every lunar eclipse and returned to consciousness only when it was over. Charles the Sixth, in 1399, became a *lunatic* at every new moon and at the beginning of the full moon. An intimate connection has been observed between certain nervous diseases, such as epilepsy and neuralgia, and phases of the moon, and the cure for that is the sun.

The moon is the parent of the earth. For being constantly vampirized by her child, the earth, the moon revenges herself by soaking the earth, through and through, with the nefarious, invisible,

and poisoned influence which emanates from the occult side of her nature. “For she is a *dead*, yet a *living body*. The particles of her decaying corpse are full of active and destructive life.” (*S.D.*, I, 156)

Our astral body, the design body for the physical, is the gift of the lunar pitris, the advanced beings from moon. There is an intimate relation between the moon and astral body, which in turn is connected with Kama and Prana. In cases of incurable insanity, the connection of the lower and higher man is destroyed forever (it is only *paralyzed* in temporary insanity) and the lower mind functions on the *astral plane*. This may perhaps explain (given the intimate connection of the astral with the moon) why during full-moon nights, insane people become more insane.

What is an atom, really, or the particles (electrons, quarks) that compose it? It appears that even modern physicists do not have a definite answer. Two and a half millennia ago, the ancient Greek philosopher Democritus imagined slicing bread into ever-smaller pieces, down to irreducible specks, and the concept of the atom was born. Atoms are building blocks of matter and there are 10^{80} in the universe. Richard Feynman, the modern demigod of quantum theory, wrote in his *Lectures on Physics* that the most important information that could be passed on to posterity is that “*all things are made of atoms*—little particles that move around in perpetual motion, attracting each other when they are a little distance apart, but repelling upon being squeezed into one another.” For a long time, it was extremely difficult to observe atoms and subatomic particles because they do not have a well-defined position. In the late 1960s, using a tool called scanning transmission electron microscopy, or STEM, a point by point picture was built up by passing high-voltage electrons through a sample and observing how the electrons scattered off the nuclei. With advance in

microfabrication and electromagnetic optics, STEM imaging displays greater accuracy.

Currently the smallest atom scientists can see is lithium, number 3 on the periodic table, but they are still unable to view hydrogen and helium atoms. The reason is that in quantum mechanics, every particle carries a minimum iota of energy—the so-called ground state energy, and as a result although cooling the sample at ultralow temperatures slow the atoms, they can never be brought to a standstill. “No matter how much our technology improves, on some level atoms will always remain invisible,” writes Alex Stone. (*Discover*; June 2007)

The concept of atoms in occult philosophy seems to differ from that of physical science. “Occult philosophy teaches that atoms, so called, are not of this earth, but belong to quite a different plane, both of matter and consciousness” (*Lucifer*; January 1891). What physical science calls “atoms,” occultists regard as particles or molecules. “With us ‘atoms’ are the inner principles and the intelligent, spiritual guides of the cells and particles they inform,” says H.P.B. When asked what is an atom? she answered:

An atom may be compared to (and is for the occultist) the seventh principle of a body or rather of a molecule. The physical or chemical molecule is composed of an infinity of finer molecules and these in their turn of innumerable and still finer molecules. Take for instance a molecule of iron and so resolve it that it becomes non-molecular; it is then at once transformed into one of its seven principles, *viz.*, its astral body; the seventh of these is the atom. (*Transactions*, p. 109)

H.P.B. points out that the ever-existing undifferentiated matter is what we call the “Atoms,” which are also described as primordial divine Units. Hence, Matter is destructible in form, while “atoms” are absolutely indestructible, being the quintessence of Substances. (*Transactions*, p. 85)

Even the smallest molecule, composed of millions of indivisible and imponderable atoms, is substance. An atom is an immutable

entity, *a reality within an appearance*. The atom informs the molecule, as life, spirit, soul, mind, inform Man. Hence, atom is all these and force itself. “That which science refers to as Force, conservation of energy, correlation, continuity, etc., etc., is simply the various effects produced by the presence of atoms, which are, in fact, in their collectivity, simply the (spiritual) sparks on the manifested plane...In short, the atom may be described as *a compact or crystallized point of divine Energy and Ideation*,” writes H.P.B. (*Lucifer*, April 1891)

The co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, James Watson, is pioneering personal genome sequencing by having his genome sequenced and made public. A biotech company, 454 Life Sciences, has determined, from a blood sample, every one of the six billion chemical “letters” (designated A, T, C and G) that make up the DNA in his cells. It is being done with the hope that such sequencing can impart information that can help prevent diseases and can make people more compassionate. “We’ll understand why people can’t do certain things. Instead of asking a child to shape up, we’ll stop having unrealistic expectations,” says Watson. Thus, if a child’s genome shows that his awkwardness or limited intelligence has a genetic basis, we will want to help rather than blame him. Many, however, doubt if society would take such a compassionate view and express concern that people may fatalistically accept that what is written in their code of life determines not only their health but also their intelligence, character, talents and personality. “Will our genetic profiles make us self-limiting, and will we allow them to?” asks Elaine Ostrander of the National Human Genome Research Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health. Fatalism, when it comes to traits such as aggression, neuroticism, shyness and intelligence, “could be tragic, making parents give up on kids who struggle academically or resign themselves to sociopathic behaviour

despite reams of evidence showing that DNA is not destiny,” writes Sharon Begley. (*Newsweek*, June 4, 2007)

A full genome sequencing, it is suggested, will be able to predict more accurately than the genetic tests the possibility of developing a particular disease. This is because, the effect of one gene depends upon other genes, and there are “modifier genes” that can weaken the effect of disease genes. A full genome sequence would pick up these modifier genes. However, the success of this method depends on its accuracy. Besides personal genome, there are “biomarkers.” They are proteins in the blood that reveal the presence of disease before it even causes symptoms, offering a good chance for successful treatment.

Heredity provides the Ego with appropriate body and environment. Mr. Judge explains in *The Ocean of Theosophy* that genes or heredity—transmission of trait and tendency by means of parent and body—is the *mode* selected by nature to provide the Ego with the appropriate tenement. The environment, the personality and the limitations imposed on the Ego are exact consequences of that Ego’s actions in prior lives. Can we hold genes responsible for certain mental traits, peculiarities and leanings, which we may have inherited from the father or even great grandfather? Is heredity the cause of crime or virtue? “It is not a cause but only the means or instrument for the production of the effect, the cause being hidden deeper...Heredity is a puzzle and will always remain one so long as the laws of Karma and Reincarnation are not admitted and taken into account” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 9*). Man is a free agent during his stay on earth and can take measures to reverse the tendencies.

Steven Rose, director of the brain and behaviour research group at the Open University, observes that in the passage of time one biomarker (biochemical cause) of a mental disorder has been replaced by another and so also one “scientific method” has been succeeded by a new one. Just as Freudian methods and conclusions are being replaced by new conclusions, so also in a hundred years

from now—or sooner—today’s attempts to locate causes in terms of genes will seem similarly misguided. Rose writes:

I am still not sure whether you would want to argue that, once you have catalogued all your genes of small effect, you would say you have “explained” the “causes” of schizophrenia. The phenotypic effect of any one of your genes will be probabilistic....It may be that your techniques *will* point to new drug prospects, but I fear that “explanation” will still elude simple reductionism. (*Prospect*, October 2005)

It is the Karma of previous lives which “governs the station in life, sex, the conditions of the irresponsible years of childhood, the constitution with the various diseases inherent in it, and in fact all those determining forces of physical existence which are ordinarily classed under the terms, ‘heredity’ and ‘national characteristics.’” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 6*)

THE Quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His scepter shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this scepter'd sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.

—SHAKESPEARE