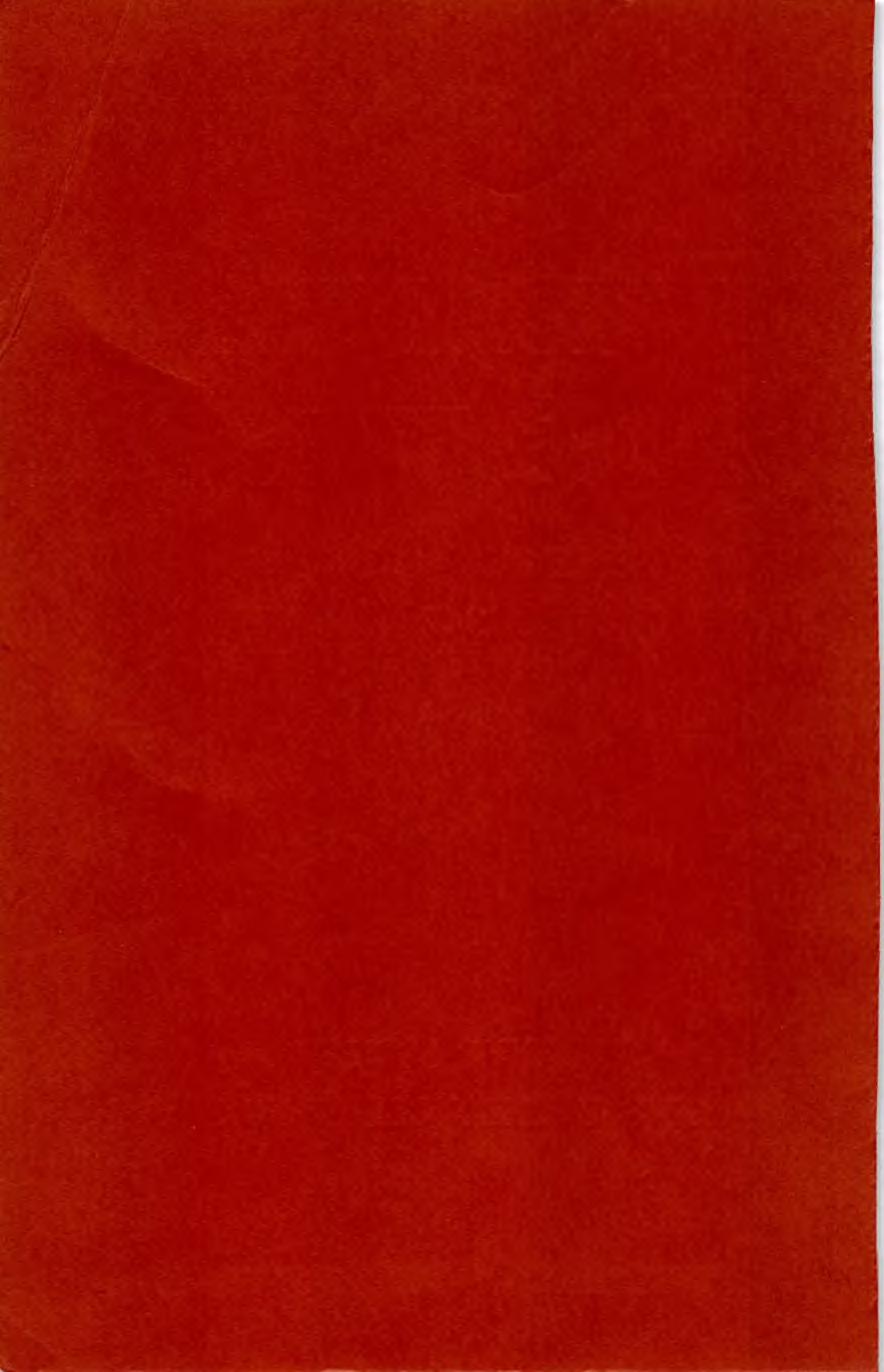


VEDANTA
and the **WEST**

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Spiritual Teachings

Swami Brahmananda

I

Disciple

Maharaj, how did Sri Ramakrishna look upon mankind? Please tell us something about him.

Maharaj

Sri Ramakrishna saw God in all beings. Seeing his great love for his disciples, Swami Vivekananda once said to him: "You love us all so much. Is it not possible that, because of this love, you, too, may meet the same fate that Jada Bharat met?"¹ The master replied: "True, by thinking of matter, one becomes like matter. But you must understand that it is the God within you that I love. If my mind should ever become attached to any one of you as man or woman, I would at once dismiss all thought of you from my mind." Maharaj continued: Because Sri Ramakrishna taught the ideal of renunciation to his young disciples, he was often criticized by the worldly-minded, and to such criticism he would answer: "I have no objection to anyone living in the world. Neither do I teach that every man and woman should renounce lust and greed. I teach renunciation only to those in whom there is already some spiritual awakening. I want these young men to first attain knowledge and discrimination, and then, if they wish, they may enter into worldly life." Indeed, to many who came to him he would say, "First go out into the world. Gather your experiences, and then when you have become sick of the world, come to me for the cure."

When Swami Turiyananda was quite a young lad he asked Sri Ramakrishna how he could give up thoughts of lust. The Master said: "Give up lust? Why should you give up lust? Instead of trying to give up, you should increase your lust!" This advice amazed the young disciple, but he said nothing, and the master continued: "Direct all your thoughts of lust and all your passions toward God." Often he would point to himself and say, "Everything will be

¹Referring to the story in the Bhagavatam (Wisdom of God), which tells of the king who loved his pet deer so intensely that, after his death, he himself was reborn as a deer. The moral of the story is, as you think, so you become; therefore one should not become attached to any object in the world.

achieved if you will love *this*. The more intensely you yearn for God, the greater will be your revelation of Him."

Sri Ramakrishna was many-sided. Whenever he talked about the intuitive knowledge of the Godhead, he would talk as one who was a pure *jnani*, knower of God. And whenever he talked about love and devotion he talked as a pure lover and devotee of God. He impressed upon us very clearly that mere secular knowledge is nothing but vanity, and that one should struggle hard to attain spiritual knowledge, and love and devotion to God alone.

Disciple

Please tell us something about the master's samadhi.

Maharaj

The master used to experience many different kinds of samadhi. In some states his body would become stiff and motionless like a log. It was easy for him to regain his normal consciousness from such a state, but at other times, when the samadhi was deeper it would take him much longer to return to normal consciousness. At such times he would first draw a deep breath, like a drowning man coming up out of deep water. Then, for a while, he would reel and act like a drunken man; even his speech would be thick and incoherent. Gradually, however, he would regain his natural state.

Maharaj (continuing)

Whenever you teach and give lectures, quote the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. His words throw a clearer light on the scriptures, and help to bring home the true import of their meaning.

Insincerity was the one thing Sri Ramakrishna could not stand. He loved those who loved God sincerely. He used to say, "If a man prays to God with a sincere heart, he is quickly freed from all impurities."

Most of the master's nights were spent in samadhi or in chanting the Lord's name or in singing his praises. He seldom slept for more than an hour any night. Often I have seen him completely absorbed in samadhi for more than an hour at a time. Sometimes he would try to speak to us, but no words would come. Later he would say, "You see, I want to talk to you while I am in samadhi, but whenever I try to do so, it seems as if the doors of my speech are locked." Many times as he was coming down to the normal plane he would be muttering, as though talking to an unseen being.

He used to say, "To find God you must yearn for Him," and he

would tell this story. "An aspirant approached his teacher and asked to be shown the way to the attainment of God. The teacher took the disciple by the hand and led him to the river. There, without a word, he held the disciple's head under the water for some time. After a while he let go, and the disciple came up, choking and gasping for breath. He looked at his teacher in astonishment, and the teacher smiled at him and said: 'Well, how did it feel?' The disciple answered 'I felt an intense longing for air!' 'Well,' said the teacher, 'when you can long for God with the same intensity as you longed for that breath of air, you will surely attain Him.' "

When Swami Vivekananda first came to Sri Ramakrishna as a young man, he would often argue with him. At that time Swamiji believed only in the formless aspect of God, and even told Sri Ramakrishna that he considered his visions of God as mere hallucinations of the brain. He would also scold the devotees when they went to bow down to the dieties in the temple. This attitude annoyed many of the master's disciples, but the master himself was not disturbed. He could never be angry with Naren. He would say, 'Naren is unique. There is none to equal him.' Later on he gave Swamiji the vision of God in all His aspects, so that he, too, came to say, 'Devote yourself to God—whether with form or without form—and you will reach Him!'

Disciple

Maharaj, many people are of the opinion that those who met Sri Ramakrishna did not need to struggle to find God. To know him was quite sufficient. Even the great devotee Ram Dutta held this view.

Maharaj

Ram Dutta was unique. He had true faith, a faith which grew in intensity and which lasted all his life. Few have such faith. With the majority it is merely lip faith.

Disciple

Maharaj, many devotees who have seen the Holy Mother and have served holy men think it is not necessary for them to continue their spiritual struggles.

Maharaj

Merely to see the Holy Mother and to serve holy men is not enough. It is most necessary to practice renunciation and discrimination, and to live a contemplative life.

II

A young disciple decided that he would like to go away to some solitary place to practice austerities. With this intention he presented himself before Maharaj and asked his permission. When Maharaj heard of the boy's intention, he became very anxious and said: "Go and ask Swami Shivananda to come here." The Swami came and seated himself beside Maharaj. Anxiously Maharaj said: "Look, Brother, this boy wants to go away from here to practice austerities. I cannot understand why it is their minds work in this way. This place has been made holy by the exemplary life of the late Swami Ramakrishnananda. What a wonderful atmosphere he has created in this monastery. Where else could such a holy atmosphere be found? Why do they have to practice austerities? Have we not done all that for them? The trouble is, they do not know their own minds."

Turning to the disciple Maharaj continued: "As long as you think "God is *there*," you will find no peace. When you know and can feel that he is *here, here*, (pointing to his heart) you will find peace.

What is the use of wandering about from place to place? Have not you seen hundreds of such wandering monks? And what have they achieved? Are you to become like them? Swami Vivekananda founded this monastery toward one great end. Consider that, and try to live your life and mould your character accordingly. The spiritual practices of one single man is sufficient to make a monastery vibrate with holiness.

Oh, what a wonderful spiritual atmosphere there was at the Dakshineswar temple when Sri Ramakrishna was living there! The moment our boat touched the steps of the landing stage we felt as if we had reached heaven itself! And what a wonderful love there existed between us brother disciples. Between you there is no such sweet relationship. A holy man should be sweet in temperament, and should never speak harshly to anyone. Ah! I remember a holy man I once met at Brindavan. He was a regular visitor at the temple. For a few days he did not come, and I missed him. When he came again I asked him the reason for his absence. He explained that he had had a sore foot. One day in the crowd the foot of another devotee had touched his, and temporarily disabled him. I was deeply touched by the way that holy man explained the incident. He did not complain that he had been trampled upon by some careless person. To him

every foot was the Lord's foot, and the Lord had placed his foot upon him!

If only you could all be sweet and have love in your hearts, then there would be great harmony. You have to make the Lord the center of all your affections.

In this monastery you have so many opportunities to do Swamiji's work; you cannot always meditate.

You are young; this is the time to practice spiritual disciplines. What can you do when you are old? Develop love in your heart and you will achieve everything. You have become dry! Where is your early enthusiasm? You seem to be quite satisfied with your present condition, but I tell you, do not remain satisfied with yourself as you are now. Become dissatisfied. Try to move ever onward in your search. Do not stop until you have found the diamond mine!¹

You have taken refuge in Sri Ramakrishna. You are young and pure. What infinite possibilities are before you. Why do you not try hard to follow our advice and learn to love and do the things we ask you to do. Learn to make your heart and your lips one, and let not your mind deceive you. Swamiji's ideal was "Liberation for one's self and service to mankind!" With one hand hold on to the feet of the Lord, and with the other do his work."

¹Referring to a parable of Sri Ramakrishna. A woodcutter, going into the forest to gather wood met a monk who said: "Go deeper into the wood." The woodcutter did as he was told, and soon came to a large group of sandalwood trees. He stayed there for a while, and then he began to think: "The monk told me to go deeper into the wood: he did not tell me to stop here." So he continued his journey, and as he went farther and farther into the wood he discovered first a silver mine, then a gold mine, until at last he came upon a mine filled with diamonds and other precious stones. These riches he claimed for himself, and his life was filled with happiness.

Vivekananda and His Message

Sister Christine

There are times when life flows on in a steady deadly stream of monotony. Eating, sleeping, talking—the same weary round. Commonplace thoughts, stereotyped ideas, the eternal treadmill. Tragedy comes. For a moment it shocks us into stillness. But we cannot keep still. The merry-go-round stops neither for our sorrow nor our happiness. Surely this is not all there is to life. This is not what we are here for. Restlessness comes. What are we waiting for? Then one day it happens, the stupendous thing for which we have been waiting—that which dispels the deadly monotony, which turns the whole of life into a new channel, which eventually takes one to a far away country and sets one among strange people with different customs and a different outlook upon life, to a people with whom from the very first we feel a strange kinship, a wonderful people who know what they are waiting for, who recognise the purpose of life. Our restlessness is forever stilled.

After many incarnations, after untold suffering, struggle and conquest, comes fruition. But this one does not know until long, long after. A tiny seed grows into the mighty banyan. A few feet of elevation on a fairly level plain, determine whether a river shall flow north and eventually reach the icy Arctic Ocean or South, until it finds itself in the warm waters of the Black or Caspian Sea. Little did I think when I reluctantly set out one cold February night in 1894 to attend a lecture at the Unitarian Church in Detroit that I was doing something which would change the whole course of my life and be of such stupendous import that it could not be measured by previous standards I had known. Attending lectures had been part of the deadly monotony. How seldom did one hear anything new or uplifting! The lecturers who had come to Detroit that winter had been unusually dull. So unvarying had been the disillusion, that one had given up hope and with it the desire to hear more. So that I went very unwillingly to this particular lecture to hear one "Vivekananda, a monk from India," and only in response to the pleading of my friend, Mrs. Mary C. Funke. With her beautifully optimistic nature, she had kept her illusions and still believed that some day she would find "That Something." We went to hear this "Man from

India." Surely never in our countless incarnations had we taken a step so momentous! For before we had listened five minutes, we knew that we had found the touchstone for which we had searched so long. In one breath, we exclaimed—"If we had missed this . . . !"

To those who have heard much of the personal appearance of the Swami Vivekananda, it may seem strange that it was not this which made the first outstanding impression. The forceful virile figure which stepped upon the platform was unlike the emaciated, ascetic type which is generally associated with spirituality in the West. A sickly saint everyone understands, but who ever heard of a powerful saint? The power that emanated from this mysterious being was so great that one all but shrank from it. It was overwhelming. It threatened to sweep everything before it. This one sensed even in those first unforgettable moments. Later we were to see this power at work. It was the mind that made the first great appeal, that amazing mind! What can one say that will give even a faint idea of its majesty, its glory, its splendour? It was a mind so far transcending other minds, even of those who rank as geniuses, that it seemed different in its very nature. Its ideas were so clear, so powerful, so transcendental that it seemed incredible that they could have emanated from the intellect of a limited human being. Yet marvelous as the ideas were and wonderful as was that intangible something that flowed out from the mind, it was all strangely familiar. I found myself say, "*I have known that mind before.*" He burst upon us in a blaze of reddish gold, which seemed to have caught and concentrated the sun's rays. He was barely thirty, this preacher from far away India. Young with an ageless youth and yet withal old with the wisdom of ancient times. For the first time we heard the age-old message of India, teaching of the Atman, the true Self.

The audience listened spell-bound while he wove the fabric as glowing and full of colour as a beautiful Kashmere shawl. Now a thread of humour, now one of tragedy, many of serious thought, many of aspiration of lofty idealism, of wisdom. Through it all ran the woof of India's most sacred teaching: the divinity of man, his innate and eternal perfection; that this perfection is not a growth, nor a gradual attainment, but a present reality. "*That thou art.*" You are that now. There is nothing to do but to realize it. The realization may come now in the twinkling of an eye, or in a million years, but "All will reach the sunlit heights." This message has well been called,

“The wondrous Evangel of the Self.” We are not the helpless limited beings which we think ourselves to be, but birthless, deathless, glorious children of immortal bliss. Like the teachers of old he, too, spoke in parables. The theme was always the same—man’s real nature. Not what we seem to be, but what we *are*. We are like men walking over a gold mine thinking we are poor. We are like the lion who was born in a sheepfold and thought he was a sheep. When the wolf came he bleated with fear quite unaware of his nature. Then one day a lion came, and seeing him bleating among the sheep called out to him, “You are not a sheep. You are a lion. You have no fear.” The lion at once became conscious of his nature and let out a mighty roar. He stood on the platform of the Unitarian church pouring forth glorious truths in a voice unlike any voice one had ever heard before, a voice full of cadences, expressing every emotion, now with a pathos that stirred hitherto unknown deeps of tragedy, and then just as the pain was becoming unbearable, that same voice would move one to mirth only to check it in a midcourse with the thunder of an earnestness so intense that it left one awed, a trumpet call to awake. One felt that one never knew what music was until one heard that marvelous voice.

Which of us who heard him then can ever forget what soul memories were stirred within us when we heard the ancient message of India,—“Hear ye, Children of Immortal Bliss, even ye who dwell in higher spheres, I have found the Ancient One, knowing whom alone ye shall be saved from death over again.” Or the story of the lion and the sheep. Blessed Truth! In spite of your bleating, your timidity, your fear, you are not the sheep, you are and always have been the lion, powerful, fearless, the king of beasts. It is only an illusion that is to be overcome. You are *THAT* now. With these words came a subtle force or influence that lifted one into a purer and rarer atmosphere. Was it possible to hear and feel this and ever be the same again? All one’s values were changed. The seed of spirituality was planted to grow and grow throughout the years until it inevitably reached fruition. True, this sublime teaching is hoary with age. It may even be true that every Hindu man and woman knows it, many may be able to formulate it clearly, but Vivekananda spoke with authority. To him, it was not a speculative philosophy but the *living Truth*. All else might be false, this alone was true. He realized it. After his own great realization, life held but one purpose—to give

the message with which he was entrusted, to point out the path and to help others on the road to the same supreme goal. "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached."

All of this one sensed more or less dimly in that first unforgettable hour while our minds were lifted into his own radiant atmosphere. Later, slowly and sometimes painfully, after much effort and devotion, some of us found that our very minds were transformed. Great is the Guru!

Those who came to the first lecture at the Unitarian Church came to the second and to the third, bringing others with them. "Come," they said, "Hear this wonderful man. He is like no one we have ever heard" and they came until there was no place to hold them. They filled the room, stood in the aisles, peered in at the windows. Again and again he gave his message, now in this form, now in that, now illustrated with stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, now from the Puranas and folklore. From the Upanishads he quoted constantly first chanting in the original Sanscrit, then giving a free poetic translation. Great as was the impression which his spoken words made, the chanting produced an even greater effect. Unplumbed deeps were stirred and as the rhythm fell upon the ear, the audience sat rapt and breathless. Our love for India came to birth, I think when we first heard him say the word, "India," in that marvelous voice of his. It seems incredible that so much could have been put into one small word of five letters. There was love, passion, pride, longing, adoration, tragedy, chivalry, *heimweh*, and again love. Whole volumes could not have produced such a feeling in others. It had the magic power of creating love in those who heard it. Ever after, India became the land of heart's desire. Everything concerning her became of interest—became living—her people, her history, architecture, her manners and customs, her rivers, mountains, plains, her culture, her great spiritual concepts, her scriptures. And so began a new life,—a life of study, of meditation. The centre of interest was shifted.

After the Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda was induced to place himself under the direction of Pond's Lecture Bureau and make a lecture tour of the United States. As is the custom, the committee at each new place was offered the choice of several lectures,—“The Divinity of Man,” “Manners and Customs of India,” “The Women of India,” “Our Heritage.” . . . Invariably, when the

place was a mining town with no intellectual life whatever, the most abstruse subjects were selected. He told us the difficulty of speaking to an audience when he could see no ray of intelligence in response. After some weeks of this, lecturing every evening and travelling all night, the bondage became too irksome to bear any longer. In Detroit, he had friends who had known him in Chicago and who loved and admired him. To them he went, and begged, "Make me free! Make me free!" Being influential they were able to get him released from his contract, though at a financial loss which seemed unfair. He had hoped to begin his work in India with the money earned in this way, but this was not the only reason for engaging in this public work. The impulse which was urging him on and which was never entirely absent from his mind was the mission with which his Master had entrusted him. He had a work to do, a message to give. It was a sacred message. How was he to give it? By the time he reached Detroit, he knew that a lecture tour was not the way, and not an hour longer would he waste his time on what did not lead towards his object. For six weeks he remained in Detroit, his mind intent upon his purpose, and he would give an occasional lecture. We missed no opportunity of hearing him. Again and again we heard the "wondrous Evangel of the Self." Again and again we heard the story of India, now from this angle, now from that. We knew we had found our Teacher. The word *Guru* we did not know then. Nor did we meet him personally, but what matter? It would take years to assimilate what we had already learned. And then the Master would somehow, somewhere, teach us again!

It happened sooner than we expected, for in a little more than a year, we found ourselves in Thousand Island Park in the very house with him. It must have been the 6th of July 1895, that we had the temerity to seek him out. We heard he was living with a group of students. The word "disciple" is not used very freely in these days. It implies more than the average person is willing to give. We thought there would be some public teaching which we might attend. We dared not hope for more. Mrs. Funke has told of our quest in her preface to the "Inspired Talks of Swami Vivekananda."

Of the wonderful weeks that followed, it is difficult to write. Only if one's mind were lifted to that high state of consciousness in which we lived for the time, could we hope to recapture the experience. We were filled with joy. We did not know at that time that

we were living in his radiance. On the wings of inspiration, he carried us to the height which was his natural abode. He himself, speaking of it later, said that he was at his best in Thousand Islands. Then he felt that he had found the channel through which his message might be spread, the way to fulfil his mission, for the Guru had found his own disciples. His first overwhelming desire was to show us the path to *Mukti*, to set us free. "Ah," he said with touching pathos, "If I could only set you free with a touch!" His second object, not so apparent perhaps, but always in the undercurrent, was to train this group to carry on the work in America. "This message must be preached by Indians in India, and by Americans in America," he said. On his own little veranda, overlooking the tree tops and the beautiful St. Lawrence, he often called upon us to make speeches. His object was, as he said, to teach us to think upon our feet. Did he know that if we could conquer our self-consciousness in his presence, could speak before him who was considered one of the great orators of the world, no audience anywhere would dismay us? It was a trying ordeal. Each in turn was called upon to make an attempt. There was no escape. Perhaps that was why certain of our group failed to make an appearance at these intimate evening gatherings, although they knew that often he soared to the greatest heights as the night advanced. What if it was two o'clock in the morning? What if we had watched the moon rise and set? Time and space had vanished for us.

There was nothing set or formal about these nights on the upper veranda. He sat in his large chair at the end, near his door. Sometimes he went into a deep meditation. At such times we too meditated or sat in profound silence. Often it lasted for hours and one after the other slipped away. For we knew that after this he would not feel inclined to speak. Or again the meditation would be short and he would encourage us to ask questions afterwards, often calling on one of us to answer. No matter how far wrong these answers were, he let us flounder about until we were near the truth and then in a few words, he would clear up the difficulty. This was his invariable method in teaching. He knew how to stimulate the mind of the learner and make it do its own thinking. Did we go to him for confirmation of a new idea or point of view and begin, "I see it is thus and so," his "Yes?" with an upper inflection always sent us back for further thought. Again we would come with a more

clarified understanding and again the "Yes?" stimulated us to further thought. Perhaps after the third time when the capacity for further thought along that particular line was reached, he would point out the error—an error usually due to something in our Western mode of thought.

And so he trained us with such patience, such benignity. It was like a benediction. Later, after his return to India, he hoped to have a place in the Himalayas for further training of Eastern and Western disciples together.

It was a strange group—these people whom he had gathered around him that summer at Thousand Islands. No wonder the shopkeeper to whom we went for direction upon our arrival, said, "Yes," there are some queer people living up on the hill, among whom is a foreign-looking gentleman." There were three friends who had come to the Swami's New York classes together,—Miss S. E. Waldo, Miss Ruth Ellis, and Doctor Wight. For thirty years, they had attended every lecture on philosophy that they had heard of, but had never found anything that even remotely approached this. So Doctor Wight gravely assured us, the newcomers. Miss Waldo had during these long years of attendance at lectures acquired the gift of summarizing a whole lecture in a few words. It is to her that we owe, "Inspired Talks." When Swami Vivekananda went to England that same year, he gave her charge of some of the classes and on his return she made herself invaluable. It was to her that he dictated his commentary on the Patanjali Aphorisms. She assisted too, in bringing out the different books on Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga. Her logical trained mind and her complete devotion made her an ideal assistant. Ruth Ellis was on the staff of one of the New York newspapers. She was gentle and retiring and seldom spoke, yet one knew that her love and devotion were unbounded. She was like a daughter to "little old Docky Wright," as we all called him. He was well over seventy but as enthusiastic and full of interest as a boy. At the end of each class there was usually a pause and the little old "Docky" would stoop down and rub his bald head and say, with the most pronounced nasal twang, 'Well, Swami, then it all amounts to this, I *am* the Absolute!' We always waited for that, and Swamiji would smile his most fatherly smile and agree. At times like this, the Swami's thirty years in the presence of seventy seemed older by countless years—ancient but not aged, rather ageless

and wise with the wisdom of all times. Sometimes he said, "I feel three hundred years old." This, with a sigh.

In a room below lived Stella. It was several days before we saw her, for she seldom came up to the classes, being, as we were given to understand, too deeply engrossed in ascetic practices to break in upon them. Naturally our curiosity was excited. Later we came to understand much. She had been an actress. Past *samskaras* are not so easily wiped out. Was this only another play which would restore her fast fading beauty and bring back her lost youth? For strange as it may seem, the demonstration of youth, beauty, health, prosperity is considered the test of spirituality in America in these benighted days. How could Swami Vivekananda understand that anyone could put such an interpretation upon his lofty teaching? How much did he understand, we wondered? And then one day he said, "I like that Baby. She is so artless." This met with a dead silence. Instantly his whole manner changed and he said very gravely, "I call her Baby hoping that it will make her childlike, free from art and guile." Perhaps for the same reason, for her *Ishtam*, he gave her Gopal, the baby Krishna. When we separated for the summer, she went to live on a small island in Orchard Lake. There she built a tiny one-roomed house and lived alone. Strange stories began to be circulated about her. She wore a turban; she practised uncanny rites, called Yoga. No one knew the meaning of Yoga. It was a strange foreign word that had to do with India,—the mysterious, and with occultism. Newspaper men came to interview her. One well-known writer tells the story of his first success. He was a lad engaged in running an elevator (lift) for his living. He wrote the story of this young woman practising Yoga on an island not far away. He sent it to the *Detroit Free Press* and to his astonishment it was accepted. Long afterwards when his position was assured, he said, "After that I expected that everything I wrote would be accepted at once." Alas, the road to fame is not so easy. It was a long uphill struggle, and it was years before his name became so well known, that his manuscripts received respectful attention. Since then he had learned the true meaning of "Yoga," and India has become for him the "Holy Land" to which one goes, not as a tourist but as a pilgrim. The scene of his first novel was laid largely in India. With what feeling and what rare insight he depicted the Indian village to which his hero comes at dusk! The homesick wanderer who reads

the book lives in India again for a few hours. Who shall say that this career was not inspired in part at least by Swami Vivekananda, especially since the writer came to know him personally? It was he who said, "There is a glow about everyone who was in any way associated with Vivekananda." Stella went back to live the ordinary human life and none of us knew anything of her afterwards until news came of her death a few months ago. What life had held for her during those thirty years in which she voluntarily cut herself off from all connection with us, even from him who had planted and watered the seed, who can say? One can only believe that the seed so planted bore fruit worthy of the planting.

Of Mrs. Funke Swamiji said, "She gives me freedom." He was seldom more spontaneous than in her presence. "She is naive," he said on another occasion. This amused her, for she did not spare herself in her efforts to meet his moods. Perhaps more than any of us she realized how much he needed rest and relaxation. The body and mind should not be kept at so great a tension all the time. While others were afraid of losing even a word, she thought how she could amuse him. She would tell funny stories, often at her own expense, and talk lightly and entertainingly. "She rests me," he said to one. To the same one, she said, "I know he thinks I am a fool, but I don't care as long as it amuses him." Is it because of her attitude of not wanting to gather anything from one who had so much to give, that she most of all retains the impress of his personality undistorted? Her sunny disposition, her optimism, her enthusiasm, were refreshing. Nor was she less attractive in other ways, possessing beauty, grace, and charm to an unusual degree. Even to-day, in spite of her physical disability, the old charm is there. Nothing rekindles the flame and brings the fire of enthusiasm to such a glow as conversation about the Swami. He lives. One actually feels his presence. It is a blessed experience. Who can doubt that when the time comes for her to drop the body which has now become such a burden, she will find the darkness illumined and in that luminous atmosphere a radiant presence who will give her that great gift—*Freedom*.

The Swami's choice of two others grew out of the theory which he then held that fanaticism is power gone astray. If this force can be transmuted and turned into a higher channel, it becomes a great power for good. There must be power. That is essential. In Marie Louise and Leon Lansberg, he saw that there was fanaticism to a

marked degree and he believed that here was material which would be invaluable. Marie Louise was, in some respects, the outstanding personality in this small community. A tall, angular woman, about fifty years of age, so masculine in appearance that one looked twice before one could tell whether she was a man or a woman. The short, wiry hair, in the days before bobbed hair was in vogue, the masculine features, the large bones, the heavy voice and the robe, not unlike that worn by men in India, made one doubtful. Her path was the highest, she announced, that of philosophy—Jnana. She had been the spokesman for ultraradical groups and had learning and some degree of eloquence. "I have magnetism of the platform," she used to say. Her vanity and personal ambition made her unfit for discipleship, and useless as a worker in Swami Vivekananda's movement. She left Thousand Islands before any of us, and soon after organized an independent centre of Vedanta in California, and later, one in Washington.

One of the most interesting, as well as the most learned of the group was Leon Lansberg, an American by citizenship and a Russian Jew by birth. He had all the great qualities of his race—emotion, imagination, a passion for learning and a worship of genius. For three years, he was Swami Vivekananda's inseparable companion, friend, secretary, attendant. His intimate knowledge of Europe, its philosophies, its languages, its culture, gave him a profundity and depth of mind which are rare. He was fiery and picturesque. His indifference to his personal appearance, his fanaticism, his pity for the poor, which amounted to a passion, drew Swamiji to him. He often gave his last penny to a beggar, and always he gave not out of his abundance, but out of a poverty almost as great as the recipient's. He had as well a position on a New York paper which required but little of his time and gave him a small income. While he and Swamiji lived together in 33rd Street in New York, they shared what they had. Sometimes there was sufficient for both and sometimes there was nothing. After the classes were over at night, they would go out for a walk, ending with a light meal which was inexpensive, as the common purse was often empty. This did not trouble either of them. They knew that when it was needed money would find its way into the purse again.

Lansberg was an epitome of Europe, its philosophies, its literature, its art. Swamiji found greater delight in reading a man, than a

book. Then, too, he was a revelation of the Jewish race—its glory, its tragedy. In this companionship, two ancient races met and found a common basis.

Lansberg was one of the first to come to Thousand Islands and to be initiated. He was given a new name as was customary at that time. Because of his great compassion, he was named Kripananda. His path was Bhakti,, worship, devotion. In this his fiery emotional nature could most easily find its true expression. He was the first to be sent out to teach.

A Holy Man Speaks

A door of instruction, inspiration and experience swings open to the seeker who pauses to hear and reflect upon the words spoken by the holy soul, Swami Saradananda. Let us have ears to hear, and hearts to understand and do. Come draw near his spirit while he speaks.

On the repetition of the Lord's name:

“The Master (Sri Ramakrishna) came to make religion easy, for earnest seekers were being burdened unnecessarily with the weight of so many rules and regulations. It is his teaching that no special times or places are necessary for the repeating of the name of the Lord and the worship of Him in the heart. Regardless of circumstances or surroundings the name of the Lord can be chanted audibly or within secretly. The Master did not stress or give much importance to external observances. With regard to the means of worship he allowed much freedom. Choose for yourself that which suits you best. If you like to think of God with form, you will reach the goal; if you like better to think of God without form, that is well also, for you will attain the same goal. Whichever is your choice, be steady, unwavering, persistent. Progress will be yours without fail.

Concerning the changing of clothes, the taking of baths, and other external observances before chanting the name of the Lord and worshipping Him in the heart, do so if it is possible; if you are unable to observe these externalities, mere observances of

tradition, go on calling on Him unmindful of ought else save Him. The Master once sang a song to me and told me, 'Assimilate any one of these ideas and you will reach the goal.' The song which He sang went thus:

'O Lord, Thou art my everything, the sole support of my life, the quintessence of reality. There is none else beside Thee in this world whom I can call as my own.

Thou art happiness, peace, help, wealth, knowledge, intellect, and strength; Thou art the dwelling house and the pleasure garden; Thou art the friend and relative.

Thou art this present life, the sole refuge; Thou art the life hereafter and the heaven; Thou art the injunction of the scriptures, the Guru full of blessings, and the store of infinite bliss.

Thou art the way and the goal; Thou art the creator and preserver and the worshipped; Thou art the father that punishest Thy child, the loving mother and the storehouse of infinite bliss art Thou.'"

On doubting the existence of God:

"If there is doubt in your mind concerning the existence of God, then question Him thus: 'I do not know whether Thou existeth or not, whether Thou art formless or with form. Do Thou make known to me Thy real nature.' You will not remain long in wonderment."

On the way of selfless work, or Karma Yoga:

"Through selfless work one's mind becomes purified, then arises Knowledge and true devotion. Knowledge is the true nature of the Self which, being covered with ignorance, remains unmanifest. By the performance of selfless work, the covering of ignorance is removed. As the mind becomes increasingly pure true Knowledge begins to unfold; in purity Knowledge and the knower become one. There is a story in the Mahabharata of a chaste lady who attained Knowledge through service to her husband and through performing other household duties. In the Gita there is the teaching, 'By work alone Janaka and others attained perfection'."

On spiritual practices which sometimes seem mechanical, and lifeless:

"If one follows the same routine every day it is quite natural that sometimes spiritual practices seem to be automatic. If there seems to be any particular portion of the Sadhana on such days which appeals more than another, devote yourself to that specific portion with earnestness. Several days may follow in which certain

other practices may be neglected. It matters little, for when the practices are again resumed you will find new delight in their performance.

Before you meditate think of the Master. In so doing good results will be assured. Sometimes think that He is in everything and everywhere; that you are, as it were, immersed in Him even as a pot is immersed in the ocean. Let your thoughts be centered on that Supreme State of the all-pervading Deity whom the sages realize for all time like the sky extending farther than sight can reach. He knows everything about you. From Him there can be no hiding for He knows even your inmost thoughts.

Benefit and progress can only be known through regular practice, therefore it becomes part of the necessary discipline to have and keep regular periods of time for the practice of spiritual exercises. These practices if performed regularly each day give to the practicer inner strength and inner joy in peace. Practice, and you will begin to feel, to experience for yourself. Why engage in idle talk, speculation, and pointless discussion? It is fruitless and leads to waste. Everyone talks, but no one does anything. Go to Japa and meditation. Labour hard and you will know everything in time. Exertion brings its own reward. Why not practice as you have been instructed? See for yourself."

On the finding of pleasure in thinking of the Master's life:

"To find pleasure in anything both the brain and the heart must unite. Through mere intellectualism one does not obtain pleasure. Intellectualism alone leads to lifelessness. If what you have read about the Master appeals also to your heart then alone you will obtain delight by thinking on His life and He then will seem to be alive, truly living."

On outward circumstances and adjustment:

"The scriptures say that one can attain Knowledge by practicing spiritual exercises while being engaged in work. It is not necessary then to refrain from work. If the mind is drawn towards Him then where is the need for change of environment? When nothing is possible without His will, then what is the use of planning? Is it not better to depend on Him and do as He wills. Moreover, if one changes one's environment it requires great effort to make adjustments to the new conditions. Therefore let the environment remain as it is and continue calling on the Lord. Overcome all circumstances

and environment through Him. When His will bids circumstances and environment change, then accept the change, not before."

On the question: "Does renouncing every undertaking" (Gita) mean the renunciation of all work or the performance of work without the idea of Ego?

"Do the work in hand to the best of your abilities. It is necessary for you to plan and use various means for the fulfilment of your work. Plan well and choose the best means. That work which is assigned or which becomes your share, do it excellently, do it supremely well, not for honor or praise, or notice, but because it is your offering to the Lord. It is not good to take up work aggressively, to take on more tasks. One soon finds that one cannot perform any of them well and the result is a disturbed mind clouded by worry and anxiety. This hinders spiritual progress."

On realizing God:

"After one realizes God, the world seems to be a mere appearance like a mirage. One knows well that there is no water in a mirage. Even so though there seems to appear a world with names and forms it is but an illusion, it is Maya and remains a nothing. One must first attain Knowledge, then one returns to this world of diversity seeing everything as before surely, but no longer being attached or attracted to anything in it. Prior to realizing that a mirage is an illusion, one expects water, but when one has the knowledge of its nature one no longer expects to find water in it. So it is also with the one who has attained Knowledge. Though the world of diversity is experienced after Knowledge, one no longer understands that diversity to be real and therefore ceases to have any attachment in it seeing only the unity and oneness.

Science has reduced our attachment for many things. Take for instance, the phenomenon of color. In reality no object has any color of its own. Solar light is composed of seven different colors. Every object absorbs different colors of light and reflects the rest of the spectral colors. The reflected colors become the color of the objects we see. We are attracted by the beauty of colored objects, when in reality the beauty is dependent upon the light of the sun. That which is beautiful to us now, may, due to a change of conditions, lose its beauty, even becoming ugly. To remember these things will aid one to become less attracted to things and objects."

On making the thought tally with speech:

“Be sincere. Your inner life must tally with the outer. We utter the name of the Lord superficially, too superficially so much of the time. We say, ‘I am Thy servant; Thou art my Master; Thou art my Lord; I have renounced all for Thee; I call Thee, Lord, come unto me.’ But we harbor withal all sorts of evil thoughts in the mind. This must not be so. As you speak, so you must think. This means that while you take the name of the Lord think of Him alone. Sri Chaitanya used to say, ‘That is verily That,’ which is to say, Name is verily God Himself. They are inseparable.”

On the difference between a Jiva and an Isvara:

An ordinary Jiva has to attain everything through tremendous exertion. When he reaches the highest state of Knowledge he can no longer return to the ordinary plane of existence. But Isvaras are born as Incarnations for the good of the world, having Maya's veil outside but perfect Knowledge within. They can return to normal consciousness from the Supreme State of consciousness. An Incarnation is always established in perfect Knowledge. But according to His sweet will, He occasionally puts on the veil of Maya. In thus choosing to put on Maya He feels wants like ordinary mortals do. Their difference lies in power (Sakti). The Master used to tell this story: Three men took a walk. Suddenly they heard sweet sounds of music coming from an enclosure nearby. Finding no door, one of them found a ladder and with great difficulty climbed to the top of the wall. To his amazement he saw a wonderful performance of dance, music, and the like. Overwhelmed with delight, he at once jumped inside saying nothing to his companions concerning what he saw. The second man also climbed to the top, and in his joy likewise jumped in. But the third behaved differently. Standing on the wall, he also saw what was going on inside. But he considered, ‘Should I be so selfish as to enjoy this alone? No. Let me call others. Let them come and see and enjoy.’ Thinking thusly, he descended, called many people together and told them what he had seen within the walls. Incarnations are like this last man. Their difference lies in the manifestation of Sakti. It is a great heart alone which can share with others what it acquires after great struggle. What a renunciation! What a patience!”

Walt Whitman on Karma Yoga

Dorothy F. Mercer

“(As some perennial tree, out of its roots, the present on the past:)

With time and space I him dilate—and fuse the immortal laws,
To make himself, by them, the law unto himself.”

But even though love is the easiest and most natural path to salvation, still it is not taken by all: some remain unawakened to its almost universal appeal; some prostitute its high demands. These unawakened and utilitarian need not wholly despair, however, since, according to Hindu doctrine, salvation may be attained through enlightened action. *The Bhagavad Gita*, as well as other Vedantic treatises, adapts its teaching to fit various dispositions. And Krishna makes quite clear that there are many paths to the same goal, all of which are equally efficacious. *Karma yoga*, “the endeavor to reach Divine realization through unselfish work,” is one of the most honored of all yogas although the one most often misunderstood by the western reader. For much more is meant by *karma yoga* than our good works. The analysis of right action in the *Gita* is subtle; so subtle, in fact, that many western readers see only sophistry in its profundity. Because of the emphasis laid upon this *yoga* by the Hindu scripture and because *Leaves of Grass* presents a similar attitude toward action, Whitman’s treatment of conduct is of particular significance.

That Whitman did not advance a conventional ethics in *Leaves of Grass* is obvious; indeed, he seems to have an illogical abhorrence of conventional morality. As already stated, “conformity to ordinary standards” is precisely what must be renounced if his ideal man is “to rise with his inebriate Soul.” His glorified American is “wicked, rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear.” The fragrance of the indoors is rejected, shunned, for the freer, more odorless taste of the atmosphere; as a matter of fact, the more refined aspects of civilization are avoided so consistently that the reader wonders whether Whitman was not rather afraid of succumbing to social criteria.

Per contra, a more moral life than one spent in nursing the sick, purely because of humanitarian impulse, can hardly be conceived,

that is, by the altruistic American. And Whitman nursed the sick; his boast that he "devoted his income and labor to others" is no idle one; for he did. In his own life with "cheerful willingness" he performed deeds for "others' sake" so consistently that he ruined his health; his whole individual life was a service to humanity, unostentatiously and tellingly.

There seems, therefore, some discrepancy between the man and his ideas: on the one hand, he lived a moral life; on the other hand, he denounced conventional morality. But the discrepancy is only seeming, for Whitman was, as we have seen, what the Hindu would term a liberated man: he had realized the significance of his self, that it is, in reality, identical with the universal self or absolute. Thereby he had no personal inclination, and having no personal inclination involuntarily acted in accordance with ethical standard. But at the same time he preached revolt; for he was not only a liberated man conforming to the dictates of a liberated conscience, he was also an evangelist, trying to teach man the way toward a realization of the liberation he had achieved. And one means of salvation is through an analysis of action, a questioning of moral conduct. Whitman may, therefore, be judged from various points of view.

If the self is denied that another may benefit without any reward in view, the golden rule is being obeyed; man is doing to others as he would be done by; he is being, as we would say, moral. And quite simply we may judge, in fact, should judge; for many false prophets have gone into the world. And although the moral life of prophets does not guarantee the authenticity of their prescience, no illuminated soul lives immorally: by their works are they known. But this judgment by works is far from adequate; that Whitman did not depart from ethical dicta, that he lived in accordance with America's SERVICE divinity, does not make him Whitman. As we have indicated, he had an uncommon antipathy for the ordinary standards of respectability even though he, himself, lived a moral life. (There is, of course, no documentary evidence to support the various luridly romantic tales written of his New Orleans sojourn; nor is there any evidence to support an easy acquaintance with houses of ill-repute as some of his critics suggest.) Yet, living a moral life, he nevertheless shouts:

"What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?"

Evil propels me, and reform of evil propels me—
 I stand indifferent;
 My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait;
 I moisten the roots of all that has grown."

Why he should have lived morally, "devoted his income and labor to others," supported an incompetent brother, contributed to the support of a failing mother, served the cause of humanity by a sacrifice of his entire vitality; why he should have so conducted himself and yet have questioned the difference between right and wrong action is an apparent contradiction that is only explained, it seems to me, by the Vedantic concepts of *dharma*.

To the Hindu, over and above the conventional duty imposed by society there is a transcendent, eternal, universal action. That is, conventionally man has certain duties he must perform. He must, for instance, defend his country in time of need and "on fit occasion, kill his own kinsmen." And even though he may see the emptiness of patriotism, the desolation that attends on war, he has no choice according to *The Bhagavad Gita*; he must do his duty. "The ascetic solution is no solution, for man is driven to work, whether he will or no." He must find in the bondage itself, therefore, a means to liberation. Performing all duty without hope of reward, being unattached to the fruits of action, is the solution offered by Krishna. Duty performed for its own sake does not, of course, give freedom, but it does purify the mind so that action may constitute no hindrance to salvation. For beyond the exoteric teaching and action of service, beyond mental purification and ordinary unselfish endeavor, there is the more profound action that depends upon a knowledge of identity, a mystic experience.

And having had this experience, which, as has been indicated, is an apprehension of unity, man's ideas and action may seem contradictory; for now he realizes his oneness with eternal action and, therefore, acts universally. That is, he comes to the realization that he is the power that performs all action, himself (his ordinary self) not acting at all. "He moistens the roots of all that has grown—virtue and vice," says Whitman, speaking as a liberated man. He acts cosmically; he realizes that he himself is the law, the eternal *dharma*, through which all lesser, conventional rules of conduct exist. And only when man comes to this realization can he be said to act in reality, according to the Vedanta; all other action is

impelled by cosmic force. So acting as conventional man (the Whitman who says "goodness and evil are no delusion"), he acts not at all; but acting as the universe (the Whitman who says "evil propels me and reform of evil propels me"), he acts in truth without seeming to move. As Krishna says,

"True Work, perverted work, non-work
Must all be understood:
For this mysterious path of work
Winds through a tangled wood.
"Who sees non-working lurk in work,
Working in non-work lurk,
Is wise, is disciplined, a man
Successful in all work."

As a consequence, the move of the liberated man cannot be anticipated either by himself or others since it is not prompted by personal inclination. "The limitations of popular ethics have no restraint for him, the inducements of definite motives have no charm for him." His action cannot be judged, for it is universal. And who may judge universal action short of the universe? The larger self acts, not the individual self. As Jean Catel says in analyzing Whitman's action, "L'action est an elle-meme un symbole du Moi. Chez Whitman, il ne s'agit pas, bien entendu, de l'action comprise an sense social du mot." Not in the ordinary meaning of the word does Whitman really act but in the universal; and unless we also have universal vision, we are powerless to understand as Whitman knows.

"—I am willing to wait to be understood by the growth
of the taste of myself,
I reject none, I permit all."

William Law

Aldous Huxley

The world in its concrete reality is complex and multitudinous almost to infinity. In order to understand it, we are compelled to abstract and generalize—in other words, to omit what we choose at the moment to regard as irrelevant and to reduce such diversity as still remains to some form of homogeneity. What we understand is never concrete reality as it is in itself, or even as it appears to be to our immediate experience of it; what we understand is our own arbitrary simplification of that reality. Thus, the worker in natural science abstracts from the concrete reality of actual experience only those aspects which are measurable, uniform and average; in this way he is able (at the price of neglecting qualities, values and the unique individual case) to achieve a limited but, for certain purposes, extremely useful understanding of the world. In the same way the historian achieves his much more limited and questionable understanding of man's past and present by selecting, more or less arbitrarily, from the chaotic mass of recorded facts precisely those which exhibit the kind of homogeneity that happens to appeal to a man of his particular time, temperament and upbringing. This homogeneity is then generalized as a principle, or even hypostatized as a *Zeitgeist*; and these in turn are used to explain events and elucidate their meanings. Such facts as do not suffer themselves to be explained in this way are either explained away as exceptional, anomalous and irrelevant, or else completely ignored. I may perhaps be permitted, in this context, to quote a passage from an essay, which I wrote some years ago on Mr. Christopher Dawson's historical study, "The Making of Europe."

Occasionally, it is true, Mr. Dawson makes a generalization with which I find myself (with all the diffidence of the unlearned dilettante) disagreeing. For example, "the modern European," he says, "is accustomed to look on society as essentially concerned with the present life, and with material needs, and on religion as an influence on the moral life of the individual. But to the Byzantine

*Selected Mystical Writings of William Law, Edited with notes and twenty-four studies in the Mystical Theology of William Law and Jacob Boehme by Stephen Hobhouse, M.A., London, The C. V. Daniel Co.

and indeed to medieval man in general, the primary society was the religious one, and economic and secular affairs were a secondary consideration." In confirmation of this, Mr. Dawson quotes, among other documents, a passage from the writings of St. Gregory Nazienzus on the interest displayed by his fourth-century contemporaries in theology. "The money-changers will talk about the Begotten and the Unbegotten, instead of giving you your money; and if you want a bath, the bath-keeper assures you that the Son surely proceeds from nothing." What Mr. Dawson does not mention is that this same Gregory reproaches the people of Constantinople with an excessive interest in chariot-racing, an interest which, in the time of Justinian, a century and a half later, had become so maniacally passionate that Greens and Blues were murdering one another by hundreds and even thousands. Again we must apply the behaviourist test. If men behave as though they took a passionate interest in something—and it is difficult to prove your devotion to a cause more effectively than by killing and being killed for it—then we must presume that the interest is genuine, a primary rather than a secondary consideration. The actual facts seem to demonstrate that some Byzantines were passionately interested in religion, others (or perhaps they were the same) were no less passionately interested in sport. At any rate, they behaved about both in the same way and were as ready to undergo martyrdom for their favorite jockey as for their favourite article in the Athanasian Creed. The trouble with such generalizations as that of Mr. Dawson is that they ignore the fact that society is never homogenous and that human beings belong to many different mental species. This seems to be true even of primitive societies displaying the maximum of "co-consciousness" on the part of their members. Thus the anthropologist, Paul Radin, well known for his work among the Red Indians, has come to the conclusion that monotheistic beliefs are correlated with a specific temperament and so may be expected to crop up with a certain specific frequency irrespective of culture. If this is true . . . what becomes of a generalization like Mr. Dawson's? Obviously, it falls to the ground. You can no more indict an age than you can a nation.

We see then, that there is no reason to believe in the homogeneity of the Dark Ages or the Middle Ages. Still less is there any reason for believing in the homogeneity of more recent periods, such as the eighteenth-century "Age of Enlightenment." And, in effect,

we find that the age of Gibbon is also the age of Cagliastro and the Conte de Saint-Germain; that the age of Bentham and Goodwin is also the age of Blake and Mozart; that the age of Hume and Voltaire is also the age of Swedenborg and the Wesleys and John Sebastian Bach. And this same Age of Enlightenment produced even stranger sons than these visionaries and magicians, these indefatigable revivalists, these lyrical poets and musicians. It produced the first systematic historian of mysticism, Gottfried Arnold; it produced one of the greatest writers of spiritual letters for the guidance of practising mystics, J. P. de Caussade. It produced, in Louis Grou, the author of a book of mystical devotion, worthy to take its place among the classics of the spiritual life. And finally, in William Law, it produced a great philosopher and theologian of mysticism.

The notion that any given historical period is homogeneous and uniform is based upon the tacit assumption that nurture is everything and nature nothing at all. By nature, as the most casual observation suffices to convince us, human beings are not all of the same kind; physically, intellectually, emotionally, they vary in the most astonishing manner. Historical generalizations can be valid only if the unifying force of social heredity is always much stronger than the diversifying force of individual heredity. But there is no reason to suppose that it always is much stronger. On the contrary it is manifest that, whatever the nature of the social and cultural environment, individual physique and temperament remain what the chromosomes made them. Nurture and social heredity cannot change the psychophysical facts of the individual heredity. They merely condition the overt expression of physique and temperament and provide the individual with the philosophy in terms of which he may rationalize his actions. Thus, in an age of faith, the findings of the born empirics and sceptics must be in accord with what is locally regarded as divine revelation and religious authority; for only in this way can they be made to seem intellectually plausible and morally respectable. In a postivistic age the findings of those who are naturally religious must be shown to be in accord with the latest scientific hypothesis; for only on this condition will they have a chance of being taken seriously by those who are not congenitally devout. Individuals, whose native bent is in a direction opposed to that prescribed by the prevailing social patterns and cultural traditions, have to make one of four possible choices—to force themselves into

a reluctant but (consciously, at any rate) sincere conformity; to pretend to conform hypocritically, with an eye to the main chance; to dissent, while rationalizing and justifying their non-conformity in terms of the currently orthodox philosophy, which they reinterpret to suit their own purposes; to adopt an attitude of open and unqualified rebellion, rejecting the orthodox rationalizations no less completely than the orthodox behaviour patterns. Any kind of individual can be born into any kind of social heredity. It follows that, at any given period, the prevailing social heredity will be unfavourable to the full development of certain kinds of individuals. But some of these non-conforming individuals will succeed, none the less, in breaking through the restrictions imposed upon them by the time-spirit—in being, let us say, romantics in an age of classicism, or mystics in defiance of a social heredity that favours born positivists and natural materialists.

In the days when men still did their thinking along theological rather than scientific lines, when they sought to find the primary rather than the secondary causes of events, the facts of individual heredity were explained by a theory of predestination. For our ancestors, Augustinism provided a plausible and intellectually satisfying explanation of human diversity; to us, Augustinism seems thoroughly inadequate explanation and it is through Mendelism that we seek to understand the observable facts. The earlier hypothesis attributed the phenomena to the good pleasure of God; the latter leaves God out of account and concentrates on the mechanism whereby differences are brought about, preserved and modified. They agree, however, in regarding individual differences in physique and temperament as things foreordained and, to a considerable extent unmodifiable by environment.

All the evidence points to the fact that there are born mystics and that these born mystics can pursue their vocation in the teeth of an anti-mystical environment. Shall we then conclude that the practice of mystical contemplation is reserved exclusively for those whose psycho-physical make-up in some sort predestines them for the mystical life? The general consensus of those best qualified to preach on this subject is that this is not the case. The mystical life is possible for all—for the congenitally active and devotional no less than for the congenitally contemplative. Self-transcendence can be achieved by anyone, whatever his or her hereditary constitution

and whatever the nature of the cultural environment; and in all cases self-transcendence ends in the unitive knowledge of God. That self-transcendence is harder for certain individuals in certain surroundings is, of course, obvious. But though for many the road to the unitive knowledge of God may be horribly difficult, it seems impious to believe with Calvin and his predecessors and followers that the divine good pleasure has predestined the greater number of men and women to inevitable and irremediable failure. If few are chosen it is because, consciously or unconsciously, few choose to be chosen. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done" is the one will and the one hunger that feeds the soul with the life-giving bread of Heaven. "This will," Law continues, "is always fulfilled; it cannot possibly be sent away empty; for God's kingdom must manifest itself with all its riches in that soul which wills nothing else; it never was nor can be lost but by the will that seeks something else. Hence you may know with the utmost certainty that, if you have no inward peace, if religious comfort is still wanting, it is because you have more wills than one. For the multiplicity of wills is the very essence of fallen nature, and all its evil, misery and separation from God lies in it; and as soon as you return to and allow only this one will, you are returned to God and must find the blessedness of his kingdom within you."

To the practising mystic *Tat twam asi* is an axiom, as self-evident in Europe as in India, as much a matter of immediate experience to an Eckhart, a Ruysbroeck or a Law as it was to a Shankara or a Ramakrishna. What follows is Law's commentary on the precept to "love God with all your heart and soul and strength."

"To what purpose could this precept of such a love be given to man, unless he essentially partook of the divine nature? For to be in heart, and soul, and spirit all love of God and yet have nothing of the nature of God within you, is surely too absurd for anyone to believe. So sure, therefore, as this precept came from the Truth itself, so sure is it that every man (however loath to hear of anything but pleasure and enjoyment in this vain shadow of a life) has yet a divine nature concealed within him, which, when suffered to hear the calls of God, will hear the voice of its heavenly Father and long to do His will on earth as it is done in Heaven. Again, to see the divinity of man's original, you need only read these words: 'Be ye perfect as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.' For what

could man have to do with the perfection of God as the rule of his life, unless the truth and reality of the divine nature was in him? Could there be any reasonableness in the precept or any fitness to call us to be good as God is good, unless there was that in us which is in God? Lastly, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' is another full proof that God is in us of a truth, and that the Holy Spirit hath as certainly an essential birth within us as the spirit of this world hath. For this precept might as well be given to a fox as to a man, if man had not something quite supernatural in him. For mere nature and natural creature is nothing but mere self and can work nothing but to and for itself. And this not through any corruption or depravity of nature, but because it is nature's best state, and it can be nothing else either in man or beast."

For the mystic, I repeat, *Tat tvam asi* is an axiom ;but for those who have not had the immediate experience that "thou art That," he tries to find arguments in support of this (to him) self-evident truth—arguments based upon other immediate experiences more widely shared than the mystical realization that Atman and Brahman are one. Law's arguments in the preceding passage are based in part upon the words of Christ, accepted as revelation, in part upon the observable fact of disinterested love for God and for men for God's sake. Another line of argument is to be found in the final chapter of "*What is Life?*", the book in which an eminent mathematical physicist, Professor Erwin Shrodinger, examines the problems of heredity in terms of quantum mechanics. "Immediate experiences in themselves," writes Dr. Schrodinger, "however various and disparate they be, are logically incapable of contradicting each other. So let us see whether we cannot draw the correct, non-contradictory conclusion from the following two premises:

(1) My body functions as a pure mechanism according to the Laws of Nature.

(2) Yet I know, by incontrovertible direct experience, that I am directing its motions, of which I foresee the effects, that may be fateful and all-important, in which case I feel and take full responsibility for them.

The only possible inference from these two facts is, I think, that I—I in the widest meaning of the word, that is to say, every conscious mind that has ever said or felt "I"—am the person, if any, who controls the "motion of the atoms," according to the Laws of

Nature. In itself the insight is not new. From the early great Upanishads the cognition ATMAN-BRAHMAN was, in Indian thought, far from being blasphemous, to represent the quintessence of deepest thought into the happenings of the world. The striving of all the scholars of Vedanta was, after having learned to pronounce with their lips, really to assimilate in their minds the grandest of all thoughts.*

Space does not permit me to cite Dr. Schrodinger's interesting comments on the fact that "consciousness is never expressed in the plural, only in the singular" and his hypothesis that the "pluralization of consciousness" is the consequence of its connection with "a plurality of similar bodies." Enough, however, has been quoted to make it clear that, while it is impossible that the fact of any immediate experience should be proved by argument, it is none the less possible to argue from the premises of other immediate experiences in such a way as to make the existence of the first experience a plausible and probable matter—so plausible and probable that it becomes worth while to fulfill the conditions upon which, and upon which alone, that experience can enter one's life as a fact of consciousness.

**What is Life*, by Erwin Schrodinger. Cambridge University Press.

