

# PRACTICAL THEOSOPHY

A PLAIN STATEMENT OF ITS TENETS

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## INTRODUCTION

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A PRACTICAL handbook upon the subject of Theosophy may seem superfluous, when one considers the vast array of literature upon this subject published by the Theosophical Society, of which I am not, and never have been, a member.

Perhaps I am not claiming too much, from a public that has been very kind and indulgent to me over a good many years now, when I say that I have the power to put very complex matters in very simple terms, and a very practical and concise statement of the teaching of the Theosophical Philosophy containing not more than six Sanscrit words from cover to cover, couched in plain language, shorn of metaphor and rhetoric, will, I believe, be a practical help to a good many people who are quite anxious and ready to study the subject, but more than half afraid to tackle the formidable array of terminology employed even by the most simple and explicit of writers on this subject.

In this present work, which I might with propriety

call the ABC of Theosophy, I have not touched at all upon the deeper mysteries, but have just given as clear and practical an outline as lies in my power.

That my readers may get the same help and comfort out of this beautiful religion I have obtained myself, is the sincere wish of

O HASHNU HARA.

*August, 1911.*

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## I

### WHAT IS THEOSOPHY?

I THINK that if one asked the "ordinary person" or "the man in the street" for a definition of Theosophy, he would either say, "Oh, they are the people who believe in Mahatmas," or else possibly he would associate it with a string of unintelligible and unpronounceable Sanscrit terms, which wrap round and obscure anything tangible and get-at-able connected with the subject.

Perhaps it is because I am just a plain common-sense sort of individual, but to me the teachings of Theosophy seem dreadfully spoiled by the Sanscrit side, by the mystery and elusiveness of terminology so liberally employed.

I do not admire elaborate philosophies, and really Theosophy is capable of being presented in as simple and understandable a form as Christianity, and I can see no radical reason why Theosophy and Christianity should be considered *two*, at any rate so far as the main issues go.

Personally, I believe there is but one God, and if another man prefers to call my God Buddha, I still understand that it is the same Deity, and I see no cause for quarrel. It is a different language giving forth a different expression concerning the same Being.

It is perhaps entering into a controversial subject when I say that Christ Himself shadowed forth the idea of Re-incarnation, "Except a man be born again!"

However, I am not writing this book to argue upon that subject, but to teach Theosophy to the uninitiated as plainly as I am able.

Theosophy, as a matter of fact, is the one philosophy that really gives a *reason* for things being as they are. It levels up the injustices of this earth life, and gives an adequate and understandable cause for the whys and wherefores that beset us daily.

Why *should* one man be wealthy and another poor? Why should one be beautiful and another ugly? Why should one be happy and another miserable?

Why give one man the instincts of a brute beast and another those of a poet?

Where is the justice of it all?

If there is only this life between ourselves and Eternity why should a man be given the attributes

of evil, the soul of a wolf or hyæne, or some other beast of prey, where he has no chance or opportunity to right himself and grow near to perfection? If we believe that this life is the only school we can enter, then is life a cruel and hideous nightmare of injustice, in which sin and suffering are useless because there is no time to learn their lesson, no time to grow better. And who can deny that they are intended to teach? or else why *are* they?

I am quite well aware that certain fanatics may argue that there *is* time.

But they are wrong, absolutely wrong, because it is impossible for such development to take place in one short life; this earth may be a school, but it is most assuredly not a forcing house for undeveloped souls or egos.

The undeveloped cannot possibly hope to win through as can the developed ego, and so his outlook upon eternity, as his outlook upon life, is drab and hopeless. He is born without a chance, born to destruction, sent through a life of torture to endure an after life of worse torture. It is unthinkable!

Now, on the other hand, Theosophy teaches us that life here on earth is a school in which we learn through our mistakes. We do not come to school for one short day (or life), but return again and again until we are perfect.

Neither does it teach us that we escape the consequences of our sins or mistakes, for, on the contrary, most of us are paying for these all the time, because the ills that befall us here on earth are, as a rule, punishment for past mistakes, past crimes and misdeeds, and the good that befalls us the just rewards for evils endured, for harm wrought against us by others, and for good deeds we may have perpetrated ourselves.

The balance is so true, the effects of our actions so inevitably just, that to the knowing, seeing man there can be no shadow of doubt as to the reasonableness of these theories.

Man actually creates his own fate according to the extent he understands and masters the lessons each successive earth life brings to him.

Then when at last perfection is attained and he is freed from desire, and consequently from sin—since desire is always the cause and root of all sin—free from sorrow and misery, he becomes reabsorbed into the state of Bliss, which is known as Heaven by the Jewish and Christian Religions, and is called Nirvana by Buddhists and Theosophists.

It is a very common error to suppose that Nirvana means a state of extinction.

It does not, but rather it symbolizes the end of struggle and sorrow, the end of suffering, the return

of the spirit, purified and developed to the source of its existence, the place from which it issued in crude and undeveloped form thousands of years before.

But it does not, and it never *can* mean extinction.

Summed up in a few words, the teachings of Theosophy are that the imperfect or undeveloped ego (the word ego stands for individuality in this sense) is launched upon the sea of life, to begin with, in the very crudest forms, where it merely exists as an animal entity. At the close of each period of existence, when death claims the physical body, this ego returns to a state of Rest or Bliss upon a higher plane of existence altogether than this, where it waits patiently, until, having assimilated the essence of the experiences gained during the previous sojourn upon earth, the desire for physical activity and a physical body re-awakens, and it is again projected into this world, through the medium of earthly parents, when it starts life where it left off, possibly in the form of quite a different personality (although the *individuality* is preserved from one incarnation to the next, intact.) Perhaps I can explain the difference between personality and individuality better if I liken the former to the different characters an actor may assume, and the individuality to his own *true self*, which is preserved

underneath the guise of the various people he may portray—I'm not sure if this simile is original or not, but I don't know where I got it from anyway—but it is very necessary to recognize that the individuality is the incarnating ego, unchanged, though progressing from one life to another, whilst the *personality* may be anything from a king to a 'bus conductor), where it will gain fresh experiences, work out the fate acquired in the last incarnation, unfolding just a little further, learning yet some other lesson.

This process is repeated again and yet again, until the soul has gained complete mastery over the flesh and its weaknesses, and become lord over desire.

Such a soul will not feel envy, hatred, nor malice. Will suffer no passion, express no sin, but be able to command obedience from all those desires and impulses which sway the undeveloped man, as the wind sways a reed.

We learn that the evils we commit in this life will surely be avenged upon us in the next—sometimes indeed this happens in the present one, that those things we now suffer will become joy for us when we again return to life on earth.

That experience is alike our college and our penitentiary, and that the soul undeveloped can only learn through sin and suffering, is the main point upon which the Theosophical teachings are

based. That the Fate which punishes us so liberally according to our deserts, is also a generous master to reward when we deserve such reward, is equally the case.

Such a philosophy at once supplies that keynote of *justice* which man as man ever craves for and reaches upward to. How can the poor ignorant savage be held accountable for his instincts of savagery and brutality, which are as much a part of his individuality as his dark skin.

It is not a choice between good and evil with him, because to his blind eyes the things we stigmatize as *evil are good!*

He sees no harm in bloodshed, in murder, in cannibalism even, in fact, if we take some of the most savage tribes of red men and black, it will be found that the greater the shedder of innocent blood the greater the man.

The most hideous practices and superstitions prevail in parts uncivilized, and in some parts civilized. This man, then, is as a brute beast, wild, ignorant, seeking only to destroy and to support his own.

Yet even there we find the glimmer of the spiritual soul, for they have their gods, their deity, the something beyond themselves which they supplicate, and in many, many ways they are nearer nature, and therefore God, than some of our so-called

civilized men (for the civilized savage seldom has a god of any kind or description), all the same they are evil and brutal. If, then, God made the savage black, red, yellow or white, as the case may be, in such an evil guise, with so much potentiality for evil, and so little, apparently, for spiritual good, only to condemn him to everlasting torment for sins he does not recognize as sins, which are in fact very much on a level with the potentialities of a tiger, if such an animal is to be put into the world with all these attributes, and *yet* given no chance of redemption, then I ask, WHY? It is surely more logical for us to suppose that he is merely a diamond in the rough, that some day, under the process of evolution, his development will proceed to that point where he can eventually rise above the degradation of his surroundings to a purer, finer, and more spiritual condition.

To me these men seem more like some rough stones which, swept here and there by the tireless effort of the sea, are ground out of their ruggedness to the smooth beauty of the rounded pebble.

Or perhaps like a gem fresh from the mine, which gains a million added beauties when at last it leaves the lapidaries' hands, cut, ready for setting.

Often we find so-called "civilized" men who are far more brutal and degraded than the primitive specimen alluded to here.

They are white, but their hearts are black; they are cruel, gross and ignorant, or worse still, blind and bigoted in their own narrow limited conception of right and wrong.

Such people frequently do more harm than the "untutored savage," because they have the saving grace of an education which is presumed to have softened the savage in them, even if not to have entirely eliminated it.

Yet consider, for an instant, the frightful cruelties that have been perpetrated in the name of religion, and under the cloak of righteousness, yes, even in the very name of God and gentle Jesus.

But these fanatics are all learning, all groping their way like the blind worm, seeking for light, truth and the knowledge born of experience alone.

They are blind and ignorant.

Are they, then, to have no chance? Are they also to be condemned, unheard—unknowing that they sin—to the everlasting "Hell fires?"

I have talked with men who sin and glory in the sinning as something clever, something worthy of emulation. They have some special moral kink which prevents them from seeing clearly. That kink has to be smoothed out by the lesson taught them by the law of retribution—Karma.

They have the means of learning otherwise at

their door, practically, but it is no use preparing an elaborately cooked meal for a dyspeptic who is incapable of digesting such food.

It would be just as feasible to expect such an invalid to dine off a chunk of salt pork and cold suet pudding, as for the "civilized" savage to understand the spiritual and moral truths that may be hurled at his head by those more advanced in thought, morals and evolution than he.

He simply cannot digest them, but he is not to be blamed for that, surely?

Since it is so very necessary for his well-being that these things *should* be acquired and digested, then by all means let us be charitable and admit that in time he will gain the requisite knowledge. The little child who has just commenced to grasp the intricacies of A and B, cannot understand a simple problem in Euclid. How *much* more difficult for the raw human material to realize the splendid moral truths, which, in his own undeveloped person, are all perverted.

The baby sees the fire, it is pretty, he wants to put his hand into the midst of it and to play with the dancing flames. The baby mind does not understand what mother means when she snatches him out of harm's way, and tries to instil into him a wholesome dread of the fiery element. But once let

him burn his little fingers, and for ever afterwards he knows that fire is good to look at but a mighty bad play-fellow. He has learnt his lesson by experience.

*That* is an easy lesson.

The savage, of any sort, does not always get hurt by gratifying his instincts. More often he benefits for a time, so how can he learn the lesson in just one short life? Is he to have no chance because no chance is given him?

A thousand times NO.

Theosophy provides the chance. Theosophy, a system possibly relentless in its method of rubbing in the necessary lesson, is *just*.

It is simply a question of evolution, the monad evolves as all other things evolve in the processes of time, repeated trials and slow growth upwards.

As the seed germinates in the cold earth and reaches up to the light and warmth of the sun, so does the soul grow in darkness and blind obedience to crude instinct, until at length it reaches the light of understanding, and from thence to the beautiful fruition of spiritual perfection.

From the tiny acorn springs the splendid giant oak, from the savage will at length evolve the perfect man, radiant in his hard won divinity.

This philosophy provides the reason for all things being as they are; makes clear to us the injustices

which seemingly bestrew our daily path; enables us to understand why Brown, a seemingly worthless individual, may wallow in the good things of life and his path be roses, roses all the way—and Jones, poor soul, who is as good as they make them, gathers only the thorns, and very large and prickly thorns at that. Theosophy is undoubtedly the link between justice and reasons for the various planes of social life here upon earth.

Its very name signifies the wisdom of God, and as such, I have absolute belief in its teachings, which are comforting to the weary and heavy-laden, and which hold forth the promise of Eternal Bliss to *all*, savage and saint alike.

In some respect it may appear a stern religion, because of the inevitableness of the law of retribution, but I do not think, personally, it can matter a scrap how much we suffer if we feel our sufferings are justly earned, and that there is reward for us beyond.

If we know that it rests in our own hands *here*, and *now*, how far we merit joy or woe in the ages to come, that we are here and *now* weaving our own future.

This simple outline is the skeleton of Theosophy, and this is the part we should try to remember.

For the rest I will endeavour to teach the details as plainly as may be, and to avoid the pitfalls of Sanscrit as far as I can possibly manage.

## II

### THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES

THE word Theosophy literally means Divine knowledge or wisdom—the wisdom of the gods—a term many thousands of years old.

Theosophy is usually supposed to have first seen light about the Third Century, but it is really a great deal older, and, according to one authority, is supposed to have originated through an Egyptian priest, one Pot-amun by name, in the days of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

Theosophy inculcates belief in one Supreme Deity (as indeed do most forms of Religion). It also believes that the soul of man is itself immortal, and, being a part of soul of the universe, is of necessity of the same substance with it.

Then again, we come to the mystic and magical side of Theosophical teachings, and find here the same ideas which prompt men to become Yogis, or Sufees, or any other kind of adept. The idea that by becoming pure and overcoming desire, they

can read the Divine secrets and mysteries, and even come into contact with Divine Beings.

Such was Bulwer Lytton's mythical "Zanoni," such indeed have been the adepts through all ages.

The law of the Eternal is that of evolution, for man as spirit passes from the lowest to the highest, literally unfolding from plane to plane, from lower to higher consciousness, and from that to still more exalted states, until he attains perfection and is re-absorbed in the Divine love, the Infinite.

The Infinite is Unity, and as Unity means one, the Infinite stands for one.

All worlds are formed from one substance, and in that substance is contained all universal elements, as all numbers are contained in the Unity—one.

The Unity or God, the universal substance from which all other substances are born, is like a great central sun, towards which all other suns and their systems turn in a spiral.

Human souls are like separate suns or fires, they are distinct from the Universal fire, or substances which permeates Infinity, interpenetrating everything in the Universe, yet joined to it and ever moving towards it.

These souls are guided by a purifying process from one experience to another, from one incarnation to another, and the life of man is really an effort, often

puny and futile, but still a distinctive effort to show forth on earth at least some of the Glory and Divine effulgence of the beauty and truth which permeate the universe and constitute its harmony.

The education of the soul is a slow and painful process, just as the earth was born in travail, or a woman gives birth to a child, so is the same purified, born in the spiritual, and re-born in the material world, amidst sufferings, pain, sorrow and upheavals.

Through such experiences man gradually becomes freed from the gross and material, his soul becomes drawn nearer and nearer to the spiritual centre of all.

But, like a silver streak running through each life, is the Divine fire centred in every heart. Veiled by the flesh, unknown, often unrecognised, God dwells within each individual soul, guides it, protects it, advises it, and finally draws it back to the centre.

Imagine a huge maypole from which, instead of ribbons, proceeds shafts of light.

Each shaft finds its centre in the heart of an individual, and moving as the individual moves, is yet never separated from the pole, from which the light proceeds.

The body is the instrument of the soul; the soul, as I have described, is linked to the Eternal Substance — God, it is one with the Unity.

When man dies the soul draws around it a new body, and with each new envelope the Divine Spark becomes more and more in evidence.

It is essential to understand how Theosophy looks upon man as an individual before we go any further in the philosophy.

The physical body which scientists and others generally regard as the man is but the envelope, the dress of gross material which encases the real being.

So that Theosophy regards the interior or spiritual man as the real man, and the body merely as an instrument of expression, by means of which the spiritual man becomes manifest.

It is, in fact, a medium which enables the spiritual forces and essences to play and inter-play in such a manner that a definite and self-centred individual is evolved from the monad, or spiritual atom.

To the gross materialist this idea may be assimilated with difficulty, but it is really not so *very* difficult after all.

There is the flesh body, composed of bones and sinews, of flesh and blood—it lives and breathes and has its being at the instance of some force over which it has no control. At death that force is removed, and the hitherto animated flesh lies still and cold.

So with a lamp of oil—the vessel containing the

oil is dull and cold, the oil itself has no life, but light a match and place it to the wick, and pouf! your lamp is alive, alight, a living dancing flame. Again, a breath of wind and your lamp is out again, dead for the time being, yet can it be re-lighted once again.

The number seven has always been associated with occult matters from very early days, and it certainly plays a considerable part in these teachings.

There are the seven principles, the seven planes of existence, seven races, seven Buddhas, and so forth.

In this chapter, however, I will consider the seven principles first, because by understanding them properly we have a much clearer insight into the nature of man and the reason why he goes through the various phases of evolution, which are necessary to his salvation and ultimate absorption in Nirvana, or the return to spirit, which is the aim and object of his existence here on earth, and of the many incarnations through which he passes as he endeavours to learn the lesson of his Being.

These seven principles may be looked upon as seven bodies, which go to express the composite Unity we know as man.

These bodies are not like shells or envelopes as one might imagine, but blend and merge into one

another as might the tints of a water-colour painting, which, although of one colour apparently, is yet composed of several washes of different tints, which, though unlike, are absolutely blended—and one.

This sounds a little complicated, but I am anxious that you should get this idea clearly focussed, because you cannot possibly have a truthful conception of these principles unless you can realize what I mean.

These seven principles are again divided into a higher and a lower state of Being. Of the higher state we are taught to consider three bodies or principles, of the lower state there are four.

Again, there is no hard and fast line of demarcation between the higher and lower principles, they are all interwoven, like the web and the woof of a piece of tapestry, the higher cannot manifest without the lower, the lower can exist only for a very limited time without the higher. But in the living breathing body of man they are blended according to the state of his spiritual evolution.

In the lower stages of existence the lower principles are strongest, and become more manifest than the higher. Indeed, in some forms of life, even human life, the higher principles are so remote it is not at all easy to understand or believe in their presence at all.

Although the wise know that they exist just the same, even if such existence is not easily apparent.

We will take the four lower principles first, they are divided as follows:—

First, we have the natural man, that is to say, the physical, material body, which unthinking people invariably regard as the real man.

Secondly, we get the life principle, or the vital part of man, his breath, called Prana by Eastern philosophers.

Thirdly, there is the astral body.

Fourthly, the principle of desire, the passions and desires which draw man back to earth from the “dwelling of the Gods,” and which is responsible for his sins and downfalls—the *animal* man, in fact.

Passing to the side of the higher and more spiritual attributes we come first of all to the mind, or intellectual man, which forms the first principle of the spiritual triad.

This is that attribute which constitutes the real man, the real ego that incarnates from one earth life to another.

Next we get the spiritual soul, or the second spiritual principle.

And thirdly, the pure spirit, the ego.

To take these vehicles in the order in which I have written them, it is easy to understand that the

material body exists as a medium to contain and express all the other principles during the earth life.

The natural and spiritual man are so interwoven and co-associated the one with the other, that while the natural or physical man is a temporary manifestation of the spiritual principle, the spiritual principle in its turn is a permanent form of realization of the natural attributes we call the man.

Always remember that in life there is no actual division, although in death, when certain of the physical and lower principles are shed, as a snake might shed its skin, the higher principles retiring to the "Dwelling of the Gods," of which more later on, until they are ready to take on a new skin—a truly wonderful process.

Spirit cannot express itself in form without seeking material deposits with which to form a garment to clothe itself, and this garment, which we know as the natural man, is necessary to the development and education of the ego.

Without it there could be no experience gained, no battles fought and won, and, as in all things that exist, the subjective or invisible, and the objective or visible, are so closely linked that they cannot be the one without the other, in the lower phases of expression at any rate.

The life principle is literally the breath that enters

our lungs at the moment of birth, and which forsakes them at the moment of death. Without breath, no life.

At the close of life, when the higher principles pass to the state of Bliss in order to rest from the toil of this earth life, and assimilate the lessons they have learned whilst here, the breath passes away, and instantly. Of it, nothing remains at all, it is not like the physical or natural body which takes a certain time to decay, nor like the astral body which fades as the physical decays.

Nor like the desire or animal soul, which can be drawn back to earth through mediumship. In fact, it is the most wonderful of things, pouf! A breath and man lives! Again a breath—and he is dead!

Without it the body cannot live, but it is not necessary in any way to the three higher principles which exist without the body.

The third form, which is one probably as familiar, at any rate in theory, with many of us as the natural body, is the ethereal double of the man which is known as the "Astral Body," or principle. Even people who are quite ignorant of occultism and metaphysics talk glibly about "Astrals," and even of travelling in the astral, which of course they do when they dream during sleep.

This astral double is a counterpart of the physical

man, only like a ghost it is made of ethereal essence which is intangible, and, though not by any means always invisible, is still not often seen, except in cases of so-called thought transference, and the sudden appearances of some form of spiritual manifestation of the nature and exact appearance of the deceased person, so frequently seen by those near and dear to him, even at a distance of many thousands of miles.

Such instances are too numerous to be doubted even by the sceptical, cases occur every day.

Some people ascribe it to a telepathic communication between the brain of the dying person and that of the living.

Some ascribe it to a spirit, some few call it pure imagination, or something they cannot understand, but the Theosophist and those who understand the true laws of the occult know that it is the projection of the astral body which passes through space to the scenes to which it is drawn by desire or love.

It is possible also, in life, during the sound sleep of the physical body, to send the astral double travelling through the planes of space, or indeed upon the earth plane.

On the astral plane, as it is called, this etheric double gains experience, encounters often also some of the strange and terrible denizens of those realms.

Better still, it can help and assist those dear ones

or others who are in trouble or danger, leading them to safety and protecting them from the most extraordinary perils. Somewhere Mrs. Besant has written some most interesting accounts of such instances, but I forget the exact text and descriptions.

Enough it is that we can learn through our astral, if we desire to do so, much that might be otherwise difficult.

The physical and earthly body is visible and tangible, the astral body cannot be seen excepting by clairvoyant eyes which have the power to perceive the delicate vibrations of the astral form.

It often happens that the astral body is not of the same sex as the physical body, and then we have that phenomena so frequently seen of the womanly man and the manly woman.

In such instances the polarization of the sex magnetism is uneven, and creates the contradictory conditions which so frequently make these people who are thus afflicted more or less scorned by their fellows. No man likes a manly woman, and women despise womanly men!

The fourth principle is the seat of our passions and desires, the animal soul of man.

Theosophists call this Kama-Rupa, but I prefer to call it the animal soul because it is so much more simple for the uninitiated.

This fourth principle is the seat of desire and passion, of all our objective and subjective thoughts and feelings with regard to material matters and affairs.

In some cases it is intensely evil, and it remains, like the astral body, on earth after the parting of the higher principles from the physical body at death for their period of rest in that intermediate state into which every ego enters between one incarnation and the next.

This is where the ego resides in the "Dwelling of the Gods," known as Devachan, in a state of blissful rest until again drawn back to the earth life by the unfulfilled Kama made in the last existence. Kama, as I will explain later, means the law of retribution; it is in fact the fate we make for ourselves by our thoughts and actions, each of which must bear fruit in a later existence.

To return to the animal soul, this remains on earth, a ghostly replica of its former owner, for a period entirely dependent upon the life and habits of the defunct person to whom it was attached.

Those who were of a material nature, loving the good things of this life, clinging desperately to their surroundings and to those who were with them here on earth, will not lose this animal soul so rapidly as those who seek for spiritual things. People who die

suddenly by accident or murder also cling for a long time to their old haunts, especially if there is any unfinished task or something they wished to complete but were prevented from so doing by the sudden parting of the spirit.

But when the individual has lived a pure existence, or even an ordinary life, without any special demonstration of good or evil principles, this animal soul melts as the mist disappears before the morning sun.

But when he has lived badly, and his desires have been towards sin rather than the things which are normal, then will the animal soul turn back and haunt the scenes of life. In the case of a very evil and material personality it may remain for quite a long time on earth before becoming finally dispensed and disintegrated—sometimes, indeed, for many hundreds of years, when it will haunt the scenes of its desires, such as buried treasures, the place where it met a violent death, slaughter-houses, battlefields, or wherever the stench of blood is found, or the haunts of evil or debauched men and women, wherever evil abounds and good is not.

This state is specially prolonged when the animal soul is used for the purposes of a medium, such purposes serving to continually draw it back to its former state.

More than this, for it actually exists, vampire-like, upon those bodies it is thus enabled to inhabit.

The animal soul under such circumstances frequently becomes a very evil and mischievous entity, and ultimately forms one of those objects of the lower world with which all occultists are familiar. I allude, of course, to elementaries, the most mischievous and harmful denizens of the unseen.

Occultists teach that where the four elements—earth, air, fire and water—prevail, there will be found certain corresponding spheres governed by angels of the planets, and these angels bear name according to the substance over which they rule, and the elementals which obey their dictates.

It is taught that under each of these exalted intelligences there are seven orders, and under them yet again another seven, and so on *ad infinitum* through cosmos into chaos.

The elementals simply swarm in the element they represent, and they attend each individual according to their office and strength in that individual's psychic composition. For a man or woman is spiritual or material not so much according to the standard of morals, as to the standard of the soul.

When these elementals are in a peaceful frame of mind they do very little harm, or indeed none, and often good. When they are disturbed, however,

and in a malevolent frame of mind, they are like swiftly moving flames or atoms swishing through their element under immense dynamic pressure.

These infuriated elementals when they come into contact with human beings work havoc with their victims, causing disease, disaster, and all kinds of trouble.

These spirits of the sub-human kingdom are governed by natural law and also by human will, they can be controlled by their superiors, yet even there under certain conditions they can work mischief and harm.

These elementaries are imperfect and usually *vicious humans*, they can take on flesh but only in animal form. They people thickly certain planes of the unseen astral spheres, they are preserved in the astral fluid, as we might preserve a severed finger in methylated spirit.

They are not the elementals of which I have spoken, the denizens of the four elements—air, earth, fire and water—but they are, so to say, the servants of these elementals.

The magician can and does evoke them at will, the medium uses and is used by them, yet they are evil and mischievous, and in these forms can live through the medium, and become positively dangerous in a purely physical sense.

In some cases, also, it will prey upon the unsuspecting medium, sapping his vitality, acting as a vampire, until, pale and wan, he is neither dead nor yet truly alive, owing to the unfortunate alliance with this spirit, which is yet no spirit, but just an evil force, a thing which could not exist of itself, and which is one day doomed to utter extinction.

This animal soul possesses also a certain amount of active intelligence, and may gain for itself a spurious reputation for knowledge which it does not possess.

These things, as I have already said, frequent evil places, and there is an atmosphere peculiarly happy to them; they will sometimes seize upon some weak debauché, making him or her an instrument for the attainment of its own evil desires. So it happens that weak men, weak so far as character goes and moral strength, may become possessed of almost demoniacal attributes when under the influence of drink, and one of these wandering animal souls.

At such a time the incentive to lust, to murder even, is given by the creature with which he is obsessed—he runs amok, and tragedy follows upon what to begin with was merely a drunken spree.

From this it is easily apparent that the danger of obsession by these wandering elementals is not only to those who become mediumistic, but that they are equally liable to prey upon those who are

merely weak and foolish, without being occult, and under favourable conditions convert a man, who, under normal conditions, would be kind, gentle and harmless, into a demon of lust and passion.

Of course everybody is not open to such forms of obsession, it is only the very weak and sensual individual who can thus become a slave. The man or woman who leads a wholesome, God-fearing existence will suffer no such terrors to come near them. I am sometimes inclined to think that one form of nerve weakness I frequently encounter in my practice, those people (usually women) who, by a constant and very persistent course of auto-suggestion, delude themselves into the belief that an evil-minded person is hypnotizing them, and so forcing them to do things, and suffer experiences which are quite unnecessary, may be, after all, obsession by some such soul-form.

Nor do I think there is very much doubt but that madmen and lunatics generally are dominated by some similar force.

This deals so much with the unpleasant side of the unseen world, that some of my readers may be inclined to think too much of the subject.

I strongly advise them not to do so, some things are best left unconsidered. Be just content to take it for granted and then leave it. To you no such

experiences need come, and you do not want to invite the possibility by allowing your mind to dwell upon the thought.

I will now pass over to the higher soul Trinity, which, grouped together as one entity, will pass thus to that state of bliss, the "dwelling of the gods," of which I have already spoken.

It is only in cases of the greatest wickedness this procedure is deviated from, but when a man has been irreclaimably wicked through several incarnations, he is barred this period of rest in Devachan enjoyed by the ordinary ego.

In such a case the personal soul, or the mind body, which is the real man, the individual incarnating from one time to another, is absolutely annihilated. He becomes as nothing, dissolves into space, loses all the knowledge gained in former sojourns upon the earth plane, all the experiences thus gained become as nothing.

The spiritual soul cannot be touched however, it simply loses the state of evolution which it had attained, the period of rest it should have enjoyed, and starts all over again, after a very short period as a planetary spirit.

However, to return to the mind-soul, which forms the first of the higher group of principles.

This is really the intellectual faculty which raises

man above the level of the animal, which enables him to distinguish between right and wrong, to plan, judge, originate and execute his ideas, to realize the existence of spirit, and to aspire to higher things.

This mind-soul is really the power of thought, for which mental scientists claim all power. When they say that all knowledge lies within us, they speak correctly only in part. The knowledge of past conditions certainly lies there, sometimes dormant, sometimes active, but *all knowledge* does not lie there, or our object in re-incarnating would be lost.

When we have gained all knowledge of things, temporal and spiritual, we shall no longer need to incarnate, but will become absorbed in Nirvana.

All the knowledge, consciously and unconsciously gained in previous incarnations is most certainly with us, but that must not be confused with the absolute wisdom which brings conscious knowledge with it, which is erroneously claimed as a product of thought by scientists.

This mind-man is, then, the real man, just embodied consciousness, the man who endures through all time, acquiring experience, assimilating the knowledge gained, drawing the higher principles back to earth again when the previous earth experience has been digested, and the time has come for a new body to be taken on, and fresh knowledge attained.

In the "Key to Theosophy," Madame Blavatsky describes this mind-soul in the following words:—

"Try to imagine a spirit, a celestial Being, whether we call it by one name or another, divine in its essential nature, yet not pure enough to be one with the ALL, and having in order to achieve this, to so purify its nature as finally to gain that goal.

"It can only do so by passing *individually* and *personally*—*i.e.*, spiritually and physically—through every experience and feeling that exists in the manifold or differentiated Universe.

"It has, therefore, after having gained such experience in the lower kingdoms, and having ascended higher and still higher with every rung on the ladder of Being, to pass through every experience on the human planes. In its very essence it is THOUGHT, and is therefore called in its plurality, Manasaputra, 'the sons of Universal Mind.'

"This individualized thought is what we Theosophists call the *real* human EGO, the thinking entity imprisoned in a case of flesh and bones."

Theosophically, then, it stands for the higher sentient principle in man, the permanent incarnating individual.

In Theosophy proper, this mind-soul or ego, is given so many names, that much unnecessary doubt arises in the mind of the student, as to what it

really consists of. But if he will bear in mind the simple English names and definitions I give here in this book, there is no need for any confusion at all.

Bear in mind simply that it is the ego, the individual, the part that does not die, that, whether it is called Manas or Manasaputra, or any other special name, it is all one thing, and just simply the mind-soul—or the ego—one principle, not a dozen, and one ego, not four or five different mind forms, or egos, as might quite easily be supposed after a brief study of almost any book upon the subject.

Next in order comes the spiritual soul of man, which, in turn, forms the vehicle for the presence of the Divine soul, known as Atma in Theosophy.

This spiritual soul is closely connected with the mind-soul, and is absolutely the link which connects the latter with Atma or the *Divine* soul.

Atma, the Divine soul, which is the seventh and last principle, does not dwell actually in the material body. We are taught rather that it sheds a radiance upon the other principles, running through them like a streak of living light.

From this it is easily seen that the six principles exist dependent upon the holy and vivifying radiance of the soul Divine, which soul or principle is above and beyond man, mental and spiritual man, I *should* say, rather than physical, since the spiritual soul

becomes the medium through which the Divine principle is manifested; it has been likened to a thread of silver, vivifying and joining the Divine and mental principles, running through them as a string may run through a necklace of beads. Indeed, this simile is not an unhappy one, since the string, like the Divine principle, is a part of the beads in a way, yet all the time it is of itself entirely individual, and depends not upon the beads at all, although they depend entirely upon it for their unity.

This synopsis of the seven principles of man, to which I shall have occasion to refer frequently from time to time, although brief, is still sufficiently well defined to give the student a clear idea of the subject for working purposes.

Of course this theory of the seven principles is not confined to Theosophical teachings, but is shared by the philosophers, Quabbalists, and Rosicrucians, out of many other occult philosophies.

If you will remember that the physical body, the life principle or breath, and the Astral body, all vanish at death; that the Desire form lingers according to the links and chains which bind it to earth, but that it is *still* like the three higher principles or "state of consciousness;" and that the real man, the part which endures from incarnation to incarnation is the *mind* body, or the mind principle, I

think you will have the whole thing clearly defined and understandable.

Other occult teachings, such as the Rosicrucian, contend that the Divine principle is enshrined in the heart, and actually dwells within the physical body. Theosophy, however, teaches that it falls upon man as the sunshine falls upon the earth, saturating the whole, but not actually dwelling within. I hope I have made this clear, it is a difficult subject to present, especially when it is necessary to disentangle the true meanings from the maze of Sanscrit terminology, which enfolds all Theosophical teachings and records.

Of course, this number of seven is potent throughout the universe.

We have the seven planets, for instance, of the ancients, before Uranus and Neptune were discovered.

But in any case, the seven-fold planetary correspondence of the seven-fold principles of man is at least remarkable.

The planet Saturn corresponds to the physical body.

The sun to the vital principle.

The moon to the astral body.

Mars corresponds to the desire principle—the animal soul.

Mercury corresponds to the intellectual principle.

Jupiter to the spiritual soul.

And Venus to the pure spirit—Atma.

Of course, I do not regard these as arbitrary, and it is merely to show how such things in nature are linked together by this sacred and mystic number, that I give this example of planetary correspondence.

A man may again come under the seven divisions, if we consider him as first:—

The Natural man.

The Reasoning man.

The Will man.

The Intellectual man.

The Heart man.

The Intentive man, and the Spiritual man.

This division is, of course, more readily understood than the ordinary seven principles of Theosophy, and yet, in a way, they all stand for the same thing. The heart is the link between the natural, reasoning man, and the spiritual, in the same way that the "mind body" is the link between the lower and higher principles.

So does Mercury (the messenger of the gods) form the mediator between the planets.

### III

## RE-INCARNATION

OF all the doctrines with reference to the teachings of Theosophy which have held me fascinated and enthralled, the belief in re-incarnation is possibly first and most powerful.

There is something in the very idea even which helps to make things easier for us all round. It is a question upon which we never tire of speculating, and there are few people who do not believe in it, more or less.

Those of my readers who are not familiar with the teaching are still aware that re-incarnation means re-birth, the coming back to earth-life again and again.

If we can regard this earth-life as a waking period, and our existence after death as sleep, with a time immediately following death as that of drowsy slumber, during which the earth-life still figures quite clearly previous to that deeper slumber, into which we subsequently fall when we live in our dreams upon another plane of consciousness. If we can imagine again, that, having had sufficient slumber we are again

rousing ourselves towards earth-life before re-birth into the physical form through earthly parents, then, I think, we can have a fairly tangible, if somewhat crude, idea of the process we undergo between one incarnation and another.

The length of time spent away from earth in the realm of bliss depends upon the earth-life of the incarnating ego; it is usually about fifteen hundred years.

The advanced and spiritualized ego will spend a very much longer period in the "Dwelling of the gods," or Devachan, than will the undeveloped and immature ego.

If we look upon re-incarnation as synonymous with *evolution*, we shall not go far wrong. It is the evolution of the Divine Monad—the spiritual-divine souls linked—which makes re-incarnation a necessity.

This evolution of the soul begins with the lowest forms of inanimate life.

At one time you and I were as the stone we kick aside idly when we walk. Inanimate, with no conscious life, yet all the time saturated with the Divine Monad—please understand by this word, the spiritual-Divine souls in combination, since the double-barrelled word is rather tiresome to use. Then, possibly after long ages, the stone came to life, vegetable life, in the lowest form maybe, but still, a

growing living thing. Then by degrees it passed through the vegetable kingdom, slowly evolving until one day it became a denizen of the animal kingdom. Again very low down, some crawling creeping thing such as we daily pass with unseeing eyes.

Still slowly it evolved into the higher forms of animal life, until it began to achieve a certain amount of conscious intelligence, as opposed to the pure instinct which rules the lower forms of the animal kingdom.

At last came the day when it was ready to become human, when the conscious intelligence was slightly increased, and very low down in the human scale it entered the form in which it is, so far as we know at present, destined to qualify for the perfectly evolved being.

I do not think it is quite clear how far the mind soul governs the purely animal race. I may clash very much with Theosophists when I say that I cannot believe it to be entirely absent.

It is necessary to realize that the Monad, or Divine spiritual soul, is the imperishable vital spark, which, travelling from the infinite, is sent out to evolve by the processes I have so briefly named, until it is educated and ready to return to the centre from which it came.

In the crudest forms it just exists, such as in the

stone—in fact, it interpenetrates every atom of matter here on earth, if your imagination can conjure up such a picture, just as the sun, when shining, pours its radiant light on all things—good, bad and indifferent alike.

Matter is composed of atoms and molecules. A molecule is the smallest portion of matter that can exist without changing its nature. An atom is an indivisible portion of matter. Atoms unite to form molecules, and a collection of molecules form a mass or body.

“Electrons, or ions, are the smallest bodies known. There was a time when the atom felt small; it is not big, it is true, but it is getting to feel quite a large thing beside the electron. They illustrate the difference between the atom and the electron. Imagine an electron to be the size of a full-stop, as here printed, and an atom, a church, one hundred and sixty feet long, eighty feet broad and forty feet high. In an atom of hydrogen there are one thousand electrons. Imagine these thousand full-stops thrown into that church and some idea will be obtained of the relative size of the atom and the electron . . . the electrons give the atom its properties and enable it to act chemically—the electrons are revolving around each other at a tremendous speed.

“They are not in the least crowded. It has been

suggested that solar systems may be atoms of a still larger universe. Thus the earth, the moon, and the rest of our planetary bodies would be electrons.

“Atoms, of course, continue so small as to be far below the power of the best microscope; and when the physicists scoop out the inside of this infinitesimal speck, and put into it 100,000 smaller specks, and still have room for the 100,000 to chase each other round at the rate of several miles a second, and only rarely bumping, it is not perhaps to be wondered at that the layman finds it somewhat difficult to follow him.

“Science has at last discovered the mysterious forces which move the universe, which hold the stars in leash, which give the sun its light and the earth its life, and which, according to the most profound thinkers, will revolutionize all economic conditions of human existence.

“These newly revealed forces, which are yet as old as the eternal ages, are called ions.

“Hitherto, the smallest known particle of matter has been the atom and the molecule—a particle so minute that the most powerful microscopes in the world are unable to bring it to light. Yet within that atom, there is a universe of revolving ions, whirling in their separate orbits, obeying their own

laws, clashing in ruin, or flying off on a tangent into space.

“They are tiny earths, and moons, and stars, and all the phenomena of our giant solar system repeated on a scale so inconceivably small, that the mind reels in the attempts to conceive the fact.

“And science has discovered that these ions are life. We eat universes and solar systems for our daily food. They give us power, and sight, and intelligence, and all our thoughts and emotions.

“They continue to whirl and buzz in our veins and throughout our physical being. As the tiny systems clash and explode and rush together or apart, they revivify the blood by atomic radiation.

“There can be no life or death, or matter itself, where there are no ions.

“Therefore ions, in varying numbers, form everything in nature. A combination of 700 ions to the atom produces hydrogen. An atom with 11,200 ions is an atom of oxygen. An atom containing 137,000 ions is an atom of gold. A planetary system, represented by 36,853 ions, is an atom of the human brain.”

This is from an article by Professor Oliver Lodge, in the *New York World* some few years ago. I quote it because it will help you to understand better how spirit can interpenetrate matter. When,

as I believe, all these ions are themselves penetrated by the spirit which gives them life.

If we consider, then, that an atom of gold has 137,200 living, moving particles or ions, it becomes very much easier to comprehend the gradual evolution of that atom, because we know it is not inert, as might very reasonably be supposed at a casual glance. Time, as we reckon it, is not recognized in the Infinite. During the æons of time gone past the evolution of the human race has been accomplished, but what length of years those æons represent we cannot even blindly guess.

For instance, the periods known as Brahmâ's Day and Brahmâ's Night, are supposed to represent a little space of 2,160,000,000 years each!

During the "day," Brahmâ is said to have come forth and built up the material and natural world, and during the "night" he sleeps.

Brahmâ represents, not a god or deity, as might be supposed, but the vivifying and creative force which is found throughout nature.

This force, which is positive and masculine, becomes periodically active, and in the same way passes into a subjective or sleeping state, much as the sap sleeps in the trees during winter.

There are said to be alternate days and nights of Brahmâ, which last for 2,160,000 years each.

When we try to realize what these figures mean, which is not easy from our tiny outlook of nineteen hundred years, it is easy to understand, however, the possibility of passing gradually from the mineral to the human kingdom. Easy to believe that within our ego, all the experience we have acquired through those long and varying stages is stored up, at our service, if we have but the faith to call forth that knowledge from our sub-conscious mind.

The knowledge we have not, and cannot obtain until ready to receive it, is that pertaining to the Bliss Eternal which is ours when we have learnt the lessons set for us here on earth, and gone through all the experiences which go to fit us for that glorious future.

It is easier to understand if we realize that, literally, *there is no dead matter*. Science has triumphantly corroborated the truths known to occultists for countless ages, at *last*.

Then, so far as the monad is concerned, it is necessary to enlarge somewhat on this point, for an erroneous idea may very easily be acquired.

The monad in its lowest form of existence is *not individual, but general*. That means, of course, that the spiritual-divine essence penetrating the mineral and vegetable kingdom is not as yet divided into individual egos or essences, but interpenetrates all

such matter collectively. It means that you, personally, or I, personally, did not begin life with our ego encased in solitary grandeur in a nugget of gold, or an agate pebble, and from that became similarly encased in a moss, or some other form of vegetable life, until at length we took to ourselves the seven principles of man.

On the contrary we were simply a manifestation of an aggregate of similar spiritual-divine atoms, all a part of the whole—as water makes a whole, though divisible into atoms and ions—and without any individual consciousness whatever.

That comes later as the monad ascends the scale of evolution, when it gradually withdraws from the condition of being just a cosmic force and begins to acquire an individuality of its own.

I think I am right in saying that it is the first dawning consciousness which marks the taking on of the "Mind Body," however crude in its manifestation that marks the hour of differentiation, when the cosmic monad becomes an individual monad. Even though that individuality is roughly expressed, as a baby's drawing of a man—two circles for head and body, with lines sticking out at right angles for hands and feet—may be in comparison to the finished painting of an R.A.

If we remember all this it makes the conception

of the impenetration of matter in the spirit, a great deal easier to understand. It is only when the monad reaches the animal stage that this crude individualizing first dawns. Very faintly, hardly perceptible, and not in every species, but I cannot believe it possible that some of the beasties who have been my friends through life, have *not* that dawning. Their mental outfit is something more than instinct. I have known horses, dogs and cats that were more intelligent, more human, and more loving and far, far more honourable, than many of the humans who are supposed to be *quite* advanced.

However, that point is open to controversy I know, so I will leave it, and the student may believe as I do, that the first glimmer of individuality the monad knows is in the more advanced forms of animal life, or, as an orthodox Theosophist would hold, it begins in human form only, and then in its lowest aspect.

But even when thus individualized, the Divine-spiritual soul of us, the monad, is still cosmic, still one, the same Divine flood that illuminates your soul, illuminates mine, we only express it in a different way, through the acquired individuality we call the ego.

The brotherhood of the world would be better realized if we could only clearly grasp the relationship

between the cosmic monad and the individualized monad. If we could only realize that it is one force differently expressed, I think very much of the troubles of this world would vanish, and for ever.

Anyhow, apart from that, the individualized monad, as soon as it takes on the mental or mind soul, and begins to exist apart from the cosmic entity, also begins to dress itself in the various bodies, which, as I have already explained, it sheds at the time of death.

The evolution, or state of evolution, in which the ego has arrived at the moment of death, of course determines the length of time spent by the higher principles in the "dwelling of the gods," or Devachan.

It is not, of course, possible for the cosmic monad to retire for the rest in the "dwelling of the gods." Up to the time the individuality is acquired, they simply evolve; it is the individuality reaches the land of Bliss and Rest, remaining for a period of fifteen hundred years or so in an ordinary way, although the advanced and spiritualised soul will spend a very much longer period of rest than will the immature and undeveloped ego.

In the case of criminals and very wicked people, the re-incarnation takes place very rapidly, and it is held doubtful if they have the chance of entering the state of Bliss at all.

This, I think, applies specially to such egos as continue in wickedness from one incarnation to another, refusing to acquire the lesson they are sent there to learn.

If you will endeavour to remember that the *individuality* of the ego remains the same during each incarnation, simply unfolding as a rose may unfold as it grasps and assimilates the experiences which befall it, and strives to climb upward towards spirit, if you will understand that the period in the state of Bliss is both a *rest* from the toils and struggles here on earth, and a reward for effort made towards *right* unfoldment, it becomes easy to understand how the crude and evil spirits re-enter rapidly upon this earth-life, and how the higher and more spiritual ego spends a greater period in the "dwelling of the gods."

The physical form, the sex, the social standing, vary from one incarnation to the other. The individuality which re-incarnates is sexless, formless. It gains sex and form as it becomes clothed with the lower principles, which give it material form and figure.

It takes up the new life where it left off the old, only having gained so much experience as was passed through and assimilated in the previous life, and in the new life drawing to itself just so much of the gross or ethereal as belong to it.

Without attempting to enter into any explanation of the seven planes of existence, a subject far beyond this A B C of Theosophy, it may be a help if we consider the various forms of existence here as planes.

A plane in this sense may be explained as a level, a *degree* of consciousness, esoterically, which marks the stage of progress or development towards spiritual perfection.

For instance, the poet, Browning, and the murderer, Crippen, would be on different planes. When we are awake here on earth, we are in one state of consciousness or on one plane, and when we sleep and dream we are on another.

When we come to analyse these conditions it will be found that the majority of people on this planet at the present time are on the first four planes of consciousness, which represent the animal, material, and purely intellectual, for comparatively few have reached the higher spiritual planes.

The starting-point, of course, as I have already explained, is the Divine essence, the monad which, groping through the dark stages of the first plane of existence, gradually evolves into the lowest manifestation of human consciousness; when the ego only functions on the purely physical side, with no spark of spiritual consciousness—unless a certain form of blind superstition be taken to represent this—and

very little intellectual, a body made up with the first four principles only in manifestation, the remaining three clouded and undeveloped.

An ego may be born again and again into this plane of being, before growing sufficiently conscious of development and desire to push forward and out of it to the next *plane* where it would again be under slightly more advanced conditions, but still more physical than mental.

*(According to Mrs. Annie Besant, and to Madame Blavatsky, new entries from the animal into the human kingdom are cycle in origin and are permitted periodically. Thus the inflow of the monad from the animal to the human kingdom was continuous through the third race, and, during part of the fourth, when it ceased for that cycle, and we do not know when "the door" will again be opened. At the present time most of the people incarnating here on earth belong to the fifth race.)*

Gradually the intellect would develope, the individuality or the mind body become more pronounced, and the ego grow intellectually, and, having passed through the fourth plane of existence, will begin to reach out towards the spiritual on the fifth, growing in this sphere, until, having passed through the sixth and seventh plane, it becomes no longer necessary for him to re-incarnate, and he is free at last from

earth-life and experiences, and becomes re-absorbed into the Divine effulgence.

The point of greatest interest to many students is the status of the soul, or ego, during the period between one incarnation and the next.

At the time of death, the dis-incarnating ego, if I may use such a term, is clothed in an astral robe of colours which clearly indicate the state of advancement he has reached, and which clearly represents his earthly life and characteristics, such astral form is on exactly the same plane as during earth-life, knows no more and no less.

As I have already explained, this astral dress or body gradually fades away, as the body physically fades and decomposes, and the ego loses its memories of earth-life and associations also by degrees. H. P. Blavatsky calls it a "fool's paradise" somewhere in her works, but it is still a paradise.

Our Hell is here on earth, perhaps our Heaven also, but be that as it may, Theosophy teaches of a period of rest and oblivion to evil and its consequences. A period like unto a dream, between one earth-life and another.

As the astral body loses form and becomes gradually extinct, it loses the memory of earth-life, as already stated above, and the individuality acquired by that incarnation becomes a part of the ego.

Gradually, as memory fails, the ego awakens to the state of Bliss, and becomes conscious of the perfection of its expression.

The ego remains in this condition until all trace of the material has vanished and it possesses only the *essence* of its earth memories, much as the precious metal becomes separated from the rough ore in the crucible. It is now ready to enter the state known as Divine love and wisdom. Here it remains for a varying length of time, dependent, as I have already pointed out, upon the stage of evolution it has reached. Gradually however, it again, by desire, projects itself towards consciousness; memory becomes quickened as it reaches the mental plane, although these memories are only such as refer to unfulfilled conditions and the limitations of a previous life.

The ego now is keenly desirous of taking on earth form, of being able to fight and battle against those conditions of limitation, and to overcome them.

Slowly, in the case of an advanced ego, more rapidly in the undeveloped spirit, the astral dress is re-assumed, and through the medium of earthly parents, the ego becomes re-incarnated, taking up the battle of life where it was laid down, such as we might leave our task unfinished before retiring to rest, and continue with it when we awaken in the morning.

The egos now incarnating on the first four or five planes of existence do not have memories of past births, in all probability the spiritual planes would be passed through too rapidly for such knowledge as was acquired to be properly digested. The few individuals who have reached the higher states of consciousness can remember such previous existences, and, even to the very undeveloped, the feeling that such and such people are not strangers, and the curious feeling of intimacy with strange places, makes it certain that the fleeting memory lies dormant in many of us, and is to be aroused by some chance meeting, or some new scene with which nevertheless we are perfectly familiar.

To me, this theory of re-incarnation is the only logical and possible reason for the apparent injustice of so many things which happen here day by day.

Through the entire realm of nature what is known as the cycle law reigns supreme. That is to say, everything we know of passes from birth stage to maturity, and from maturity to decay, only to repeat the process at some later period when the various causes come together and so enable it to manifest.

From the tiny acorn, cast haphazard to the earth, so the oak tree grows and decays. Every winter it loses its leaves, every spring the sap rises, the tree puts forth new leaves, flowers and fruit are produced,

another ring is added to the bark, and again it sinks to slumber, until the sun and showers of another spring again, with magic touch, rouse it to life.

Each year of spring and summer is a positive period of growth—a day.

Each winter is a night period of negative assimilation and rest.

So the tree may be looked upon as symbolical of the ego, the summers as incarnations in the flesh, the winters the period of rest in the wisdom of the gods, a preparation for the next summer or incarnation.

With each incarnation something is gained, the ego, like the tree, grows, not in actual size, but in assimilated knowledge and experience. It unfolds, and the ratio of its unfoldment is as to the extent to which it has been able to grasp and digest the teachings brought to its mind body, by the battle with life and circumstances through which it has just passed.

Nor can its growth be forced. Take a half-blown rose bud, and try to press it open with your finger—alas, poor rose!

So it is with the ego, we cannot take the undeveloped and force them into an appreciation of spiritual truths. They must wait their turn, grope in the darkness until their eyes can bear the light, and

*then*, when the time comes, they need no forcing, they open gloriously from within!

So it is that re-incarnation enables the ego to grow in light, to expand by degrees, to correct the blind and unconscious errors it may have piled up against it in the past, and to acquire new power and purity with each successive incarnation, until at length it obtains freedom from the earth body altogether, and enjoys perpetually the glories of Nirvana.

Too many people labour under the idea that Nirvana means extinction, a kind of snuffing out of the candle, in which process the individual becomes swallowed up in Infinity.

Difficult as it is to explain such matters which we do not know, for the incarnated ego cannot know truly what Nirvana really stands for, nevertheless, it is only reasonable to suppose that the crude spirit which set forth so many thousands of years ago to seek for that perfection which it may have acquired so painfully, would hardly return to a sphere of unconscious absorption in the Universal.

The purified individuality has been obtained with so much trouble, must rather experience a state of highest consciousness and extreme bliss, a state, indeed, we can only dimly conceive, because it is not in us to properly comprehend as yet.

At any rate, it is something beyond and infinitely

above the absurd ideas of Heaven contained in, say, some of the Hymns Ancient and Modern.

I never can think of the hymn,

“Holy, holy, holy,  
All the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns  
Before the glassy sea”—

without picturing a group of white-clad angelic forms playing skittles with cumbersome golden crowns, which they chuck about aimlessly (unless it is to rest their heads), as a variation from continual chanting of praise. I do not think the writer of that hymn had a sense of humour, or he must have eliminated those lines.

Certainly the Theosophical idea of Nirvana is something more sublime and dignified, something so infinitely great that the idea of Heaven cultivated by the singularly unimaginative Catholic clergy seems too trivial for comment in comparison.

Our powers of conception may be limited, but at least they can rise superior to that. Heaven is bliss eternal. To stand round all the time singing praises and throwing golden crowns about, does not appeal to my sense of the fitness of things, nor does it even seem reverent, but on the contrary. I know, as a child, my mother used to picture Heaven to me as a very gorgeous golden palace, with precious stones and jewels studding the walls, floors, and streets.

I used to picture arch-angels filling the position of the Guardsmen at Whitehall, and doing a kind of glorified "sentry go" with huge golden trumpets to keep them company.

I used to picture a great golden gate, and St. Peter, in very voluminous garments, holding the keys of Heaven, passing the "sheep" in through the golden doors, and sending the "goats" to the infernal regions.

And all this was somewhere up in the sky, I am not sure (when I was very, very young) that I did not also believe the stars to be some of the golden nails coming through the floor of Heaven.

As for Hell, I was too frightened to think of it at all; but if ever a vision did arise, I know it was always as a fiery furnace where man was always burning—yet never burnt. I often wondered how it was managed.

These ideas and conceptions appear so trivial and wanting in thought and reverence that it is beyond me how people can accept them.

To me, now, Heaven is an intangible something, too great, too holy, too mysterious for my true conception, but I know also that some day my eyes will be opened to the reality, and until then I am content to wait and trust.

## IV

### “KARMA”

A CRITIC reviewing a recent book upon Eastern Religion stigmatized this law of Karma as a “terrible belief,” in which there was no hope, no forgiveness, and, incidentally, no shifting the burden of our sins upon another’s shoulders.

No redemption beyond that which we make for ourselves by atonement and the weaving of “good Karma” in place of bad.

Attainment only by virtue of ceaseless self-effort may not be a very enticing standpoint for the average man to start from when it comes to considering his fitness for Eternity, according to *his* way of thinking, or, according to Theosophical teachings, the use he has made of this incarnation to grasp and assimilate experiences, and by helping others and mastering his own evil tendencies, acquire good Karma and reward instead of punishment for his next sojourn here on earth.

In fact, the man in the street in common with the reviewer does not care very much for anything that

so pointedly casts the blame for his own shortcomings upon his own shoulders, because he has made himself believe that he can pile it all up upon Another, and that so long as he is reasonably repentant, his sins will be forgiven him, and that he will be more or less on a level with the man who has run straight all his life.

This same man in the street does not like it when he is down on his luck, and he usually grows extremely blatant when the fates favour him, which is extremely illogical and unworthy of his mental outlook.

In Stevenson's letters, recently published—I quote from memory—he writes in one place, "We were not sent on this earth to be good, but to do the best we can. When we get a stroke of good luck say 'Thank God!' And when things go against us and bad luck befalls, say 'Well hit.'"

I am aware my quotation is incorrect, but that is the gist of it. And surely that is a more heroic point of view than the shrinking from taking the consequences of our own ill deeds?

I cannot find an English word to replace Karma, so I must perforce use the Sanscrit term. Besides that, nearly every educated person in the English-speaking world has a fairly clear idea of what Karma stands for.

### What IS Karma?

It is the law of fate—that fate which men weave for themselves upon the loom of life—the law, stern and inevitable as it may be, which is really the only theory which enables us to even dimly understand the reason for things being as they are upon this little planet of ours, as opposed to things as (we think) they ought to be.

Karma is destiny, a man-made destiny too, when we can understand it properly; it is the great leveller, the law of cause and effect, of retribution, and the mandates of that law are as inevitable as death itself. Karma may be looked upon as the essence of what we have done and what we have been, and it is this essence we carry over with us from one incarnation to the next.

An ill deed or a good deed cannot die, we reap the punishment for the one or the reward for the other as surely as we go to sleep at night and awake in the morning.

The necessity for the fulfilment of the Karma we have earned is what speeds the ego from the realm of bliss to again take on the physical body, in order that it may work out what it has merited in the past, to again reap the harvest of good and evil, again fight and lose, love and hate, and make fresh Karma as it wipes out the old.

It is the law of Karma which provides our joys and our successes, it is the same law which gives to us the dark tear-stained hours of sorrow, remorse and suffering.

Karma which wipes out our best efforts as a child may wipe a sum off its slate, and which oftentimes crowns the seemingly undeserving with glory and rewards. Karma it is which exalts the meek and humbles the mighty, which orders the coming and going of our days.

This mighty, inevitable law, which knows no mercy, which never forgives, which exacts its toll unstintingly from all—tramp and king alike bow to the stern mandate—which bestows as freely as it takes away, is, possibly, a dreadful and “terrible belief,” yet to me it is the one belief that makes everything right, that assigns a cause for all I cannot understand, that gives me the heart to say “well hit,” where those less fortunate in their belief than I, whine and cringe, and bemoan their “bad luck.” Bad luck justly earned is not bad luck—it is Karma.

Karma may be rubbed into us with salt and we can take it smiling, *then* we have learned our lesson truly, and it has done us some good. It is the law of Karma which permits one man's child to be clad in silk, and another wee baby to crawl ragged and hungry in the gutter.

The law that gives to one man or woman love and wealth and power, and to another an empty, loveless, almost useless life.

It is this law which permits genius to sometimes wilt and waste, hungry, unappreciated and unknown, until the world wakes up, too late, to the knowledge of those priceless gifts, and lauds the works of a dead man to the skies, a man who would have given his hope of heaven itself almost for a tithe of that laudation in his wretched life.

It is all fate, all this great unswerving law of right, which rewards so liberally, and punishes so remorselessly according to our deserts. It is no use whining, no use praying for a lighter burden. When we have expiated our fault and learned our lesson the punishment will cease, and not before. In the same way, when we have enjoyed a reward and obtained all we deserve on that side of the question, so may we hark back to further bad luck.

This is often the case with certain people, who more or less fulfil the old doggerel—

“One day we rides in chaises,  
Next day we walks like blazes.”

These are people who get their good and bad Karma in streaks (I'm one of them), and who have probably attained a certain measure of good from a kindly nature, or battles fought with self, or

through some evil wrought upon them by others in a past existence. They are neither all good nor all bad.

Again, others seem to have nothing but troubles and "bad luck," which they have undeniably earned, and some will have nothing but good for the best part of their lives, only to be laid low by some great stroke of misfortune at the end.

Some, again, begin in want and misery, and rise high to success and happiness. Some few have "roses, roses, all the way," but they are very few.

Woe unto those who are smiled upon by fortune and who yet forbear to make good use of the gifts bestowed upon them. Whose life is sunshine, but who make no suns to shine for those less blessed than they.

Who have wealth and do not help the poor, or who do so only for the sake of seeing their name appear on the list of contributions. Who give, not for the sake of giving or for helping the helpless, but so that they may obtain glory, which is indeed ephemeral.

For such as these, Karma brings no reward, for it is lip service and there is no heart or goodness in it, no self-sacrifice, no personal note.

This law of the inevitable takes queer turns, and brings strange forms of joy or sorrow. We may not

know its workings (though the student of Astrology can get very near to it), but we can certainly see the results on every side of us.

It is to me the "law of explanation" quite as much as the law of retribution, because it enables me to understand why things happen, and, *now*, I can realize the justice of such happenings.

I'll admit it is a stern and possibly terrible law, because it is so absolutely inevitable. There is no question of mercy, no possible hope of forgiveness, a veritable Nemesis Karma, the consequences of evil deeds committed, follows us from incarnation to incarnation until we have atoned.

Every word, every deed, every thought, bears fruit, and we reap our own harvests, be they good or evil, for "can a man sow tares and reap wheat?"

This stern philosophy is not meat for babes and sucklings, may be, but to me it seems the most perfect justice.

As the usual teachings go, nothing is accounted for, nothing can help us; but here we get the law of cause and effect, we get absolute and unbiassed justice, the justice which rigorously bestows upon every man the reward of good or evil he has earned. Deeds of darkness may be committed in ignorance, but the growing ego must learn. I don't think we can any of us continue to grizzle against circum-

stances when we realize that any injustice is but seeming.

That however decent we may have been in this life, however little deserving of hard luck, we *have* earned it justly and of our own free will, and that we are only getting paid back in our own coin.

In the same way, if we stop to think of good fortune and happiness that comes to us, be sure, also, that it is ours by right. I have found this theory so helpful and so comforting, that when things go wrong I can whistle and sing as cheerfully as I used to when my father had given me a good hiding (out of defiance then, and at a safe distance from the paternal hand). I find it is so very much easier to get through if I can feel it is a punishment justly merited. Moreover, I know by now fairly well, what my sins must have been, from the nature of my punishment, for Karma has a way of "making the punishment fit the crime," that is very thorough; but with Stevenson I can say, "well hit!"

Very well, this law of Karma is, then, simply that of retribution. If we do good now, we are rewarded hereafter, and *vice versa*.

The struggling ego which desires to live for a future incarnation will be careful to store up as little bad Karma as possible.

It is not by any means the advanced ego which

experiences the happiness and joy here, because the more advanced the soul, the greater the evil of a bad deed. If my conscience says such and such a thing is wrong and still I do it, then I deserve and get a greater punishment than some poor ignorant soul who knows nothing.

Often we find the crudest development, both spiritually and mentally, in very high places. Why?

Simply because they have suffered and been abused in a former life, and it is their turn to rule now.

Often the highly advanced, spiritually and mentally, have the hardest times, and suffer much in worldly troubles where the undeveloped ego is free.

So this is the law of Karma, that "as a man sows so shall he reap."

It is not for us to take the law into our own hands, it is not for us to seek revenge. Rather we must leave these things to fate, lest by interference we create bad Karma for ourselves. If a man wrongs me and I kill him, I am the sufferer, not he, for I shall get the punishment and he the reward.

I am by no means sure that it is right for judges to condemn a man to death, I do not know, of course, but it seems to me wrong, because, whatever punishment may be given, capital punishment should not be in the hands of man, even if we choose to regard such a man as the instrument of justice. One thing

I am sure, I should not like to earn the Karma of an executioner, yet I also believe that such an experience is necessary for him, or it would not fall to his lot.

The position of a man who sins in ignorance and as a natural sequence of his evolutionary process is punishable in the ordinary course by this law of cause and effect; but when a man sins deliberately, knowing that he sins, and that it is wrong, his punishment is more severe, and in the cases where deliberate crimes are continually perpetrated after many chances, and from one incarnation to another, then this persistence in evil doing results in the annihilation of the individuality or the ego.

In spite of this fact these fiend forms can incarnate again and again, when, bereft of all human principles and feeling, they pursue the path of blind desire and black evil, until at length they reach the end of their tether, and they become re-absorbed in the cosmic essence, with the prospect of again creeping up through the countless ages until at some future date, so remote as to be unthinkable, the door is again opened to let the animal monad invade the human kingdom, and acquire fresh experience and possibly a happier existence.

I do not know how far Theosophists agree with me, but I am strangely clairvoyant at times (not

always), but it has seemed to me that the old, long-lost continent of Atlantis covered a civilization that had reached the seventh race. There are stories of the wickedness of those times; I believe it was not all wicked, I think that certain of the race reached the goal of Nirvana, certain others, perhaps unworthy, simply met with annihilation.

I do not feel, and I never can feel, that we, of the fifth race, represent the toll of the ages. I believe that before us there were others who passed through the same school, and in the countless years before us there will be others to follow, who have to tread the same path and undergo the same process of evolution when we are unknown and forgotten.

In fact, it is something more than belief I possess in this matter, it is a *strong conviction*, which, possibly, I cannot prove, but of which I am nevertheless sure. Else all that is evolving below the human stage now is lost. In the Infinite nothing is lost, the smallest ion has its use and place.

When those who are now struggling through the fifth race reach the sixth, then again will there be a fresh influx from the below world, and a new *uncivilization* crop up.

Of course the uncivilized at the present time are many, but their advancement as a body belongs

to the advancement of nations, for such nations do advance in this way, since the same law applies to nations as to individuals.

The swing of the pendulum inevitably rewards and punishes, exalts or throws down.

Sometimes nature is the medium through which punishment falls, sometimes man. But it is always present in one form or another.

This is called distributive Karma—that is to say, the Karma which causes a number of people to suffer at once, or to rejoice at once for some common cause.

Of this nature would be epidemics, whether of plague or poverty; earthquakes and wars, times of peace and of plenty, the rise and fall of nations, and so on.

The law of Karma is not exactly that of pre-destination, however.

Man is free to do as he pleases, but he has to suffer when that pleasure leads him to wrong-doing, when he creates inharmony, and goes back on his higher self. Live up to your higher self as far as you can possibly do so.

Remember that your thoughts and actions count.

Try to help others, to do good to others; above all, try to teach others that their path towards salvation lies in doing good.

*All* religion teaches this, but let them realize that their future depends upon them *now*, that they cannot sin with impunity and gain no reward, they cannot shift the burden of consequences; teach them to face the consequences that come to us in this incarnation cheerfully, to say "well hit" when those consequences are unpleasant, teach them that they are the creators of "their own future."

Man creates, Karma follows as the logical result of his creation.

One thing is certain, Karma is our school-master. We perform our task, and learn our lessons through the faults we make. Neither is it a very gentle master, because the punishment is never remitted, the offence never condoned.

I may have dwelt too heavily upon the punishment side of Karma, but that is because most of us are more keenly aware of that aspect than the other. We are ready enough to take our joys and pleasures as a matter of course, and to give undue prominence to the troubles that befall us.

If we stop to realize that we are only getting what we deserve on either side, and that even now we are making fresh Karma for ourselves at some future date, that each thought and word and deed carries with it at some future time its mete reward,

surely we should be more careful than if such was not the case.

However the argument may turn, however great the conviction against Re-incarnation and the Karmic law, it is, and always *will* be the only logical solution of the problem as to what *causes* all the darkness and suffering in the world; why should it be permitted, and, above all, what is the use of it?

I have had an ardent so-called Christian argue with me for hours, a bigoted man who would not allow anybody to have knowledge but himself. He was "saved" (we all know that term) and I was to go straight to the everlasting pit if I didn't think as he thought. He slurred over everything that was beautiful and hopeful in the Christian religion, emphasized the horrors of hell and eternal damnation. I believe he thought I was blasphemous when I suggested that we probably carried the only hell we should ever know *with* us, here on earth.

I asked him how the poor ignorant savage who had never been given a chance, never even *heard* of Christ could be condemned to eternal damnation. But it was no use, the nigger had to burn whether he knew or not, and so on.

Finally, when he found he could do no good with me he departed, and consoled himself by dropping

scraps of very dirty paper into the letter-box, covered with texts.

This law of eternal damnation is impossible. How can a man who sins in ignorance be cut off from any possible chance of gaining knowledge? Why create only to torture?

No, I would far sooner feel that such punishment as befalls me is justly earned, that such rewards as may come my way are mine by right, not by just the hypocritical claim to be "saved" when I have done nothing to merit the rescue. I would sooner feel that I am working and toiling to some end, that of perfection.

And what is more I can do it without losing sight of the God my mother taught me to worship, to Whom I turn when I am in trouble as a little child.

Finally, to sum up this chapter on Karma, I do not think I can do better than quote a few lines from Mabel Collins' book, "Light on the Path," this description being singularly apt and beautiful:—

"Consider with me that the individual existence is a rope which stretches from the finite to the infinite, and has no end and no commencement, neither is it capable of being broken. This rope is formed of innumerable fine threads, which, lying closely together, form its thickness. These threads are colourless, are

perfect in their qualities of straightness, strength and levelness.

“This rope, passing as it does through all places, suffers strange accidents. Very often a thread is caught, or becomes attached, or perhaps is only pulled violently from its even way. Then for a great time it is disordered, and it disorders the whole. Sometimes one is stained with dirt, with colour, and . . . it discolours other threads.

“And remember that the threads are living—are like electric wires; more are like quivering nerves . . .

“But eventually the long strands, the living threads, which in their unbroken continuity form the individual, pass out of the shadow into the shine. Then the threads are no longer colourless but golden; once more they lie together, level; once more harmony is established between them, and from that harmony within, the greater harmony is perceived.”

## V

### AURAS AND THE ASTRAL BODY

IT was with something akin to amusement that I read in one of the daily papers, a short time back, how a medical man had made the stupendous discovery that human beings possessed an aura, more than that he had backed up his discovery with a machine which rendered the said aura perceptible to the ordinary human eye.

This statement was made with all the assurance of novelty, as if no man had ever heard of an aura or "halo" as it was called before.

If it was the doctor who "discovered" it, or the pressman who wrote it up, I cannot say, but one or the other, or both, must have been sadly ignorant of all the knowledge which is piled up in the annals of occult history for many hundreds of years.

I should be inclined to blame the pressman, for if the doctor had known nothing of other people's discoveries, even if such discoveries were due to a *natural sense*, and *not* a scientific instrument, he

would scarcely have set out to “discover” that of which he had no idea. Be that as it may, occultists have now the support of the “faculty” when they claim to see the human aura, and that they *do* see it is beyond a question of doubt, or else how have they been aware for many hundreds of years of a fact which belated science now triumphantly demonstrates as being indeed true?

Yet this aura, which is a far more wonderful thing than the scientist can possibly realize, is attached, not only to men and women, but to nearly everything throughout nature.

A flower, a crystal, a piece of metal, each and all have their own distinctive aura, and each can be impregnated with the auras of all things with which they come into contact.

The mind-body manifests itself in its *outer* form as the human aura, and it grows in size, beauty, and rate of vibration as the mind develops and becomes organized through an habitual method of thought.

The aura very readily responds to the command of the mind, which, in fact, is responsible for its appearance and colouring. This aura is a spiritual, mist-like emanation which surrounds the body, and which literally exudes from the person at every point.

This etheric substance is so fine in texture as to be invisible to the naked eye, yet it is easily

perceived by the clairvoyant, to whom, indeed, it forms a guide which tells, with unflinching accuracy, the degree of development arrived at, the character and individuality of the person, and the events which are most marked in his life. The power to read these events depends, however, upon the strength of the seer, since they are not actually written upon the aura like scraps pasted up in a book, but are rather concealed in the depths of its mist-like envelope.

Every man, every woman, every child, carries round with them this wonderful and indelible record of the past, the present and the future.

A book with which they cannot tamper, upon the pages of which is emblazoned, in vivid colouring, the story of their life: the passions and desires, the battles fought and won or lost, the desires resisted, the temptations to which they have capitulated. A book upon which, in waves of red and blue, of green and grey or yellow, all their tempers and emotions are registered in tell-tale vivid colouring, gross or ethereal, as may be, dark and coarse, ugly and repulsive, or clear and pure in glorious tints far more beautiful than earthly eyes have seen, or any earthly palette can produce. Such tints as put the very heavens to shame, for never could the glory of sunrise or sunset, for all the vivid beauty of such

colourings, compare with the tints which the advanced ego emits from the auric envelope.

It has the curious property of being able to attach itself to anything the person may touch.

The room in which you live is saturated with your aura. If you write a letter that letter immediately becomes pregnant with the history of yourself, it reveals your nature, character and life generally. In fact, whatever is touched at once becomes alive with interest. That is why rooms in which evil or unpleasant people have dwelt are so repulsive. The gross and evil influences have impregnated the walls and remain there for all time, because nothing short of pulling down the house could remove them.

Other influences might be superimposed upon the evil, but it would still struggle through, and the ordinary sensitive person would just feel miserable in that room and possibly without knowing why.

Pain can be transmitted through the aura of one person to the sensitive centres of another, so that this wonderful misty envelope is really the key to most of the readings given by clairvoyants as to the general surroundings and conditions of their clients.

It is, in its nature, just like a very fine mist, so fine as to be invisible, yet even when unseen it can be *felt* by even the ordinary intuitive person who may be quite incapable of visualizing it.

In theosophy it is called the magnetic aura.

Linked with the aura we get the astral body. As I have already explained, this is the ethereal body of a man.

The substance of which the astral body is composed is called by the Rosicrucians "Astral Light," which, as you probably know, is capable of manifestation in various forms. When it produces "Radiance" it is called "Light," the inherent force by which it is put into activity is called Magnetism. In infinite space it is ether, or etherized light; it becomes Astral Light in the stars which it magnetizes, while in organized beings it becomes magnetic light or fluid.

In man it forms the astral body or plastic mediator. This agent, which, as we have seen, is universal, was the celebrated Magnum Opus of the ancients.

This electro-magnetic ether is the *one substance* which, in varying forms of manifestation and varying degrees of vibration, represents every form of life upon the universe. In its highest sense it is God-Atma, the pure spirit upon which all else depends. The astral body has nowhere been more beautifully described than in Leadbeater's "Man Visible and Invisible," a book that should be read by all.

Where the mental and spiritual faculties are still

more or less crude and unfolded, this astral body extends but a short distance from the physical body, and takes on an oval or egg-shaped form, which is compact, and does not spread, as, say, smoke might do, outside the oval.

It is then in colour dark and coarse, black, dark ugly browns, reds and greens predominate, and the higher spiritual colours are conspicuous only by their absence.

Any sudden play of emotion will bring new colour waves into being, since emotion is expressed by colour in the aura, and these changing waves form the keynote to present thoughts and conditions.

Day after day I personally see these colour changes as hope, despair, greed, lust, love, religious fervour, hatred—all the gamut of emotions the human heart and mind is prey to—sweep across the people with whom I come into contact in my work, until one is astounded at the kaleidoscopic changes which are possible, at the beauties, and sometimes, alas, the horrors such changes reveal.

Then as the ego or soul man developes, so will the cruder and coarser colours fade away from his astral body, to be replaced in the first instance with mere intellectual and later with spiritual colours. Moreover, as development proceeds with succeeding incarnations the radius of the astral extends, growing

gradually out of the oval shape until it spreads like a glory above and beyond the body, reaching out to the invisible in tones of changing radiant opal, too beautiful for any earthly colours to render truthfully, even in a comparative degree.

The degrees of this colour lexicon we all carry around with us vary according to the purity or otherwise of the animal soul, since this can darken and adulterate every colour the soul is expressing. Black and very gross colours indicate materiality, deep muddy reds and browns show the animal passions and acquisitiveness.

Scarlet and blood red show sudden passion and the murderous desires which sweep over some crude natures like the wind over a field of standing wheat.

The warmer tints of rose show earthly love and passion, the paler tints the purer love, such as a mother may give to her baby. Beyond that again is the pale tender flush which indicates the universal love element in the advanced spirit.

Green in varying tones shows intellect and brain power on the *purely* intellectual side, but the spiritual mind development is shown by a very pure clear yellow.

Pure light blue is indicative of religious fervour, but the deeper sapphire shades show spiritual development.

A dirty mustardy yellow is significant of jealousy, and I have seen waves of this colour sweep over the aura where that passion has been evoked.

The highest spiritual colour is white, not an opaque white, but an intense lustrous, blinding colour words cannot ever describe.

The astral body of a newly-born infant is a milk-white tint, because such a child has not yet developed its individuality sufficiently to produce a colour, it is like the pages of an unwritten book.

In the crude, uncivilized savage, who is also, *per se*, uneducated, the astral forms an oval emanation, spreading around him but a short distance. The colours are black, dirty brown, a dull murderous red, and rising about his head and the upper parts of his body a tint of green for the intellect he possesses, but a dull green, not untouched with red, since that intellect at this stage is rather a species of low cunning, and is the lowest possible expression of the mind-man. Take that same savage and civilize him somewhat, and the colours become clearer, less muddy, and not so violent. The black and red, however, will still predominate.

When I say savage I do not actually refer to coloured men, there are many whites who are as low, ignorant, and bestial, as the South Sea Islander, who

dines cheerfully off a missionary when he gets the chance.

As the ego passes through successive incarnations, so the grosser colours purify and become more ethereal, until at length they pass away altogether as the desire man becomes subservient to the spiritual man.

Fear tinges the astral with a peculiar, sickly grey-blue tint, that is specially hideous.

Intense anger and irritation will give a wave of scarlet, with little black tongues and zigzag patterns running through it.

Murderous thoughts give a peculiar deep and very ugly shade of blood red, with great splashes and blots of black intersecting it freely.

To imagine this astral body with any degree of realism, try to think how a very fine mist (a mist, however, which in this case is perfectly transparent), not of the whitey-blue, or whitey-yellow persuasion we are accustomed to, but of colours, ever-moving and ever-changing as varied emotions sweep across the individual.

This mist, if I may use the word for want of something better, records indelibly the desires and aspirations; shows if the animal soul rules, or the mind, or the spiritual principle.

Though invisible to the physical eye, its tell-tale revelations clearly indicate to the trained clairvoyant

upon what plane of existence the ego has advanced ; to what extent the natural desires have been given rein, how far the spiritual has fought and conquered.

That moving, swirling mass of colour, gross or glorious as the case may be, is actually a milestone to record the development of the ego, showing how far he has travelled upon the road to perfection.

A curious shade of greeny-brown is said by Leadbeater to belong to the miser. I have never personally seen such an aura, but I can well imagine that it would apply.

Of course the aura contains more than just this record of desires, it contains the life history of a man, it contains, moreover, that which shall befall him. It is the *book* of his life, and as it is just the universal astral light drawn and attracted to a special centre, so it will contain the record of his past lives, which, as he grows spiritually, he will be enabled to remember.

So long as the aura is gross and coarse in colour it obscures rather than reveals, as it grows purer it reflects more and more clearly the true ego, and so the past is possible to read ; all the same, these advanced egos are so few and so far between that not a great deal *can* be gleaned about their past incarnations, for the majority of us are as yet still enfolded with the material aura to some considerable extent,

and contact with those rare souls who have gone beyond us is of very rare occurrence.

Of course we many of us have hazy ideas about such lives. I, myself, know a gentleman who, when visiting Worcester with his father as a boy, knew every inch of the way, although he had never been there in his existence. He would say, "There is so-and-so round the corner, Dad," and be right each time. It was not until he reached a newly-built part of the town that he was baffled. I know, myself, that I could go blindfold over every part of ancient Rome, and I have a similar feeling about Melrose Abbey and the neighbourhood, though I have never been to either place.

The seer, curiously enough, is not *always* advanced, though it would seem strange that a comparatively material ego should be able to pierce the veil at all, but it is a fact that many of them can and do, so that it becomes sometimes possible for such an one to see more of the past incarnations of another than of his own.

Theosophy teaches us that by control, by mastering our passions and curbing the desires of the animal soul, we clear out the rubbish of the coarse and material aura, making it purer as we overcome the evil tendencies, and opening out the way for the higher soul principles to triumph.

Every passion controlled, every desire curbed, purifies the auric emanation; every passion killed, put behind us, utterly takes from the aura some gross colouring and permits the light to show. It is just as if, in this case, man was shrouded in fold upon fold of vary coloured flame, as a woman may shroud her dress with different coloured chiffons.

The inner colours are pure and radiant, the outer grow darker and darker, the darkest and coarsest showing the lowest form—Adam, the red-earth-man—not in this case an individual, but a species. As development proceeds with each successive incarnation, so these varied veilings are removed, until at length, purified by suffering and experience, only the pure bright colours remain, and as the dark restricting tints vanish, so does the scope and area of the aura spread.

The influence of the ego which has grown to freedom from the trammels of materiality is therefore easily understood to be more potent, farther reaching, and more lasting than the gross and restricted emanations from the undeveloped man.

“From pure behaviour comes self-power, which frees a man from (many) dangers. Pure conduct, like a ladder, enables us to climb to Heaven. . . .

“Follow right doctrine and be kind to all that lives; receive in moderation what is given; receive but *hoard not up.*

“The rich without contentment endure the pain of poverty; the poor if yet he be contented then is he rich indeed.”

I can't remember now where the above quotation comes from, but I think it is the tenets of Theosophy summed up in a nutshell.

. . . “Be kind to all that lives; receive in moderation all that is given; receive but hoard not up . . . ”

How many times have I been called improvident, and how many times has my trust been proved well-placed! The desire for gain, the discontent of some lives cloud and spoil the finest auras.

I think that passion itself does less harm than greed, discontent, and that grumpy, grizzling disgruntled outlook upon life which is so *much* too common now-a-days.

We should stop to think that, to a very great extent at any rate, it rests with us if we are to be attended by a dirty misty-coloured aura, or one that has the pure rainbow tints of a contented and pure mind.

Some of the ills that befall us here are the inevitable result of past Karma, and may be so bad that it becomes hard to face them without discontent and repining—yet it *can* be done. Others, however bad, are easier to bear. Karma will act surely, irrevocably.

“The mills of Fate grind slow,  
But they grind exceeding small.”

If people would only remember that Karma pays back, but that it *rests with us how we take the payment*—it's up to you, as the Yankees say, to prove the stuff you are made of, and believe me, half our troubles vanish if we take them the *right way*.

We can magnify them to quite ten times their real size, or we can reduce them almost to vanishing point.

Don't say, as most grizzlers do, “Oh! it's easy for you, you are naturally bright”—but make up your mind that you will put off all that can cloud your aura, that you will say “Thank God” for the gleams of sunshine that fall upon your way, and “Well hit” to the blows that knock the wind out of your sails. Just think that you don't want to spoil the beautiful spiritual dress you call your aura, that you want to keep it bright and untarnished; I fancy that thought will help you to overcome the matters that might cloud it!

## VI

### “ATMA”

THE word Atma conjures up no vision or idea in the mind of the man in the street, but to the Theosophist the term is synonymous with the conception of the Highest force, for Atma stands for Spirit, the Divine Spirit called God by other religions, but in the meaning attached to IT by Theosophy it comes nearer to the Mental Science conception of a Universal Force, the All Good, as they call it; although in Mental Science the All Good stands possibly for a mental, rather than a spiritual force.

This Divine force floods infinity. It is what I have spoken of elsewhere as the Divine Soul, not a part of man, but a glorious effulgence which permeates the being of man without becoming a part of it, just as the sunshine saturates the earth.

It is the universal soul, from which all else springs. It is the Absolute, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient. It is within all things, yet not of them. It is invisible ever, and is more present in some

centres than in other. It is the Holy Ghost of Christianity. It is, in fact, the Divine in Nature and the Infinite, and the true conception of what IT may be, or what the power IT contains is beyond the puny brain of man to conceive.

Theosophy teaches us to strive upwards towards this Divine Soul of the Universe, in order that we may be more perfectly saturated with its effulgence, and that our lives may be so ordered, we can manifest more and more of the Higher Self.

Annie Besant writes of this spirit as follows:—  
“But no words of mine can avail to explain or to describe that which is beyond explanation and beyond description. Words can but blunder along on such a theme, dwarfing and distorting it. Only by long and patient meditation can the student hope to vaguely sense something greater than himself, yet something which stirs at the innermost core of his being. As to the steady gaze directed at the pale evening sky there appears after a while, faintly and far away, the soft glimmer of a star, if but as a suggestion of a far-off world. Only to a patient and persevering purity will that light arise, and blessed beyond all earthly blessedness is he who sees but the palest shimmer of that transcendent radiance.”

You will realize by this time that Theosophy does not bind you down to any particular form of religion,

but that it strives to awaken the best in you, as it is itself composed of the best in all. As a matter of fact, the religion of Theosophy resolves itself into a question of right living. The law of Karma punishes and rewards, but it does not do either blindly.

Unlike the man who would condemn all who thought differently to himself to eternal damnation, Karma fits the punishment to the crime. Blind ignorance is not treated with the same sentence as conscious wrong-doing.

*“Let rules be fixed that may our rage contain,  
And punish faults with a proportion'd pain ;  
But do not flay him who deserves alone  
A whipping for the fault that he has done.”*

The man who stands before an earthly tribunal and an earthly judge often depends upon the skill of his counsel as to whether he is convicted or set free. It is not often that absolute proof of guilt or innocence is forthcoming, and in many cases the innocent suffer unjustly. But the law of fate knows no injustice. The man's heart is revealed. No skill, no eloquence can prevent him from receiving sentence. No partiality, no respite can come between him and that sentence.

Some people find this so terrible to contemplate. I cannot say that I do. Theosophy, as a matter of fact, is a question of living—right living, and action, more

than just [of thinking. No lip service, no large cheque for a local charity can take the place of right doing. I believe it does us good to think that we return to earth from time to time.

It has a very much more salutary effect upon us to *know* that as we sow so shall we reap, than to think that we can repent and be saved at the last moment.

A man who believes that he is making the conditions which will govern his future life at the present moment, is more likely to go straight than one who thinks he can do practically what he pleases all his life and still come off scot free if he repents at the last moment when life holds out no further advantages to him, when no longer the glitter of earthly baubles can attract. The feeling that "nothing matters," a feeling akin to atheism at times, is not likely to take hold of the Theosophist. He knows very well that *everything* matters, and that he cannot be too careful how he shapes his course. *He* realizes that revenge and cruelty will only be revisited upon his own head, that selfishness will bring him no reward but only be a stumbling-block in the path of attainment.

He knows very well, too, that whatever brightness he brings to the lives of others will be put to his credit, and whatever darkness he creates will create darkness for him. Therefore he strives to live the

true Christ life, to help those who are weary and heavy-laden, and to bring help and sunshine wherever he goes.

It is not enough to give. A cheque sent to some charity, where the personal element is not, is robbed of all its virtue.

If you give, let the gift be personal; if you meet a poor man and he begins the old familiar tale about a sick wife and seven small children, do not say, "Well, I will go and verify your story, and if it is true, your record is a good one, and you prove to be a deserving case, I will give you a letter to such-and-such an organization and they will help you."

Now that man *may* mean well, but he helps neither himself nor the beggar. Many beggars are rare humbugs, but that is *their* outlook, it is much better to give to ten undeserving cases freely and gladly, than to miss one who may want. I often get hauled over the coals for indiscriminate "giving," but I always say I would far sooner be taken in than miss a hungry man.

(I must have been very unjust to men in my past life, for it is nearly always men who come to me for help.)

The late dear Queen Victoria had the same belief, and I am sure it is the true spirit of giving.

The cut-and-dried charity through the hands of

another is not charity really. Charity means *love*, there is no love in such offerings.

“He who gives a cup of cold water—for My sake.”

Anyway the Theosophist looks upon it in this light, and if you come to analyse it, that is the right outlook.

It is the spirit in which the gift is bestowed that is lost when all the cut-and-dried enquiries have been made, and it has lost some of its proportions in the passage from your hands through those of the secretaries, etc., who run the institution, and who have to be paid out of your gift. A few coppers you can ill afford given to a poor beggar in the street *with* a cheerful word, a brotherly interest, is of more account than a cheque for £100 sent through a rich man's secretary to some organized charity.

*That* is not doing good in the true sense of the word, it is not the amount of the gift, believe me, it is the way it is given.

If one harms you speak no ill of him and seek no revenge. “‘I will repay,’ saith the Lord”—it is not your place to usurp the Karmic prerogative, in due time and in all good season that one will receive his due without your help. Do not make fresh Karma for yourself by seeking to injure him or by soiling *your* hands with revenge. Do unto others as you would be done by, think evil of no

man, do evil to no man, be ready to help with word and deed, try to bring light and sunshine into lives that are dark. Don't *preach*—ACT. Act for others, think for others, work for those who cannot work for themselves. Do it all simply, quietly, without thought of glory, and then you will be a true Theosophist.

Theosophy means unselfishness. The true Theosophist is not selfish. He seeks to help his fellow-men in the world of spirit, as well as in the world of bodily troubles. He should be as a beam of sunlight piercing through the darkness of a closed room; a breath of moorland air, free and fresh, wafted across the closeness of a prison cell.

We cannot all be perfect, very few of us are, but we *can try*, we can make our little effort good, we can seek to pile up good Karma instead of evil.

The Theosophical deity is a spirit, omnipresent, universal, filling all space, interpenetrating every atom throughout Infinity.

The "Absolute" of Theosophy is not personal, like the God of the Jews and Christians. On the contrary, IT is a universal force permeating all things throughout eternity.

It is the universal creative force of the Kabbalists. IT is in every man, and a part of every man. In a different sense IT is in every blade of grass, every

stone, every drop of water, every living, creeping thing upon the face of the globe, or in the depths of the waters.

If we can only realize that in hurting others we hurt ourselves, that the Universal Spirit is everywhere, I think that "Brotherly love" would not be the strained quality it sometimes is.

Personally, when I cannot get on with anybody I leave them alone, I do not keep them near me to create inharmony and unkind thoughts. Everybody cannot agree, different polarizations will make some people very antagonistic to one, and in this case if everybody would follow my example, life would be a great deal easier.

It is not always possible of course when the inharmony proceeds from a blood relation, with whom one is more or less forced to dwell, but I think even there a loophole may be found.

I know a girl who is always miserable with her mother. They clash and depress each other most pitifully, and both would be a great deal happier apart or if they only met once a week. There is no necessity for them to live together, but both cling to the old misery and glorify it with the name of "duty." Such mutual martyrdoms are not wanted and "Brotherly love" is hard to realize. Love all men, but let your conditions be harmonious or you

will end up by loving *nobody*, for the inharmony enters even into your soul, as rust eats into iron, or moth destroys fur.

To return to the Deity, as I have said the Theosophical conception is that of a universal, all-pervading spirit, but I can see no reason why this conception should prove a stumbling-block to those amongst us who are too old-fashioned, or too thoroughly imbued with the conception of the personal GOD they were taught to worship as little children.

It seems to me that *what* the DEITY may be is not for us to argue about, and I do not think it need in any way interfere with Theosophical doctrines.

Theosophy teaches of an abstract GOD, an infinite force.

We, many of us, have been brought up to conceive of a personal GOD in Heaven, who is also all-pervading in His power and influence.

It may be that we are not sufficiently advanced to appreciate the UNIVERSAL CREATIVE ENERGY until we can find a centre for it, and I know there are many thousands of people who would gladly take up the teachings and beliefs of Theosophy if it were not for this difficulty.

I think it does not matter at all what our conception of the Deity may be, whether personal or impersonal; conceive a centre from which emanates

the Divine Spirit, as light emanates from the sun. There is nothing to bar us from belief in the omnipresence of that emanation, to me it has always been possible to conceive a personal God who could yet be everywhere in spirit.

In the other case the vastness of the conception appears too much for the ordinary brain of the ordinary man to grasp and assimilate.

I am not and never have been a member of the Theosophical Society, but I have studied Theosophy for a great many years, and to the best of my power practised what I have learnt. It is a simple religion when freed from Sanscrit and metaphor, it is a hopeful religion, because it helps us to rely upon ourselves and makes us endeavour to lead better lives.

It is, moreover, a logical religion, because it is a teaching that really explains the cause of things, the reason "why," which is never vouchsafed otherwise.

Here we can trace the pathway of evolution, we can see for ourselves the growth of nations, we do not believe that a man enters upon life fore-doomed to destruction for sins he cannot help committing or of which he is ignorant. We know rather that he will evolve until he reaches that pitch of perfection which enables him to leave the earth-life and enter

upon the glorious and untold happiness which awaits him in Nirvana.

I write this book in all humbleness of mind, simply as a help and a guide to those who want simple teaching, and because that same teaching has brought me so much help personally, and made light for me many a dark corner which would have been *hopeless* without it. I might have joined the Society (if they would have accepted such an unorthodox student), but somehow I do not agree with Societies, and as stated above, although I hold faith to all their teachings that I *know* of, I must keep to my own conception of GOD.

The spiritual soul will still be the Divine monad, there is no reason why not, for to me, just as the rays of sunshine fall upon and touch the earth, so do the Divine emanations fall upon us and interpenetrate our beings, finding a shrine in every heart, where they manifest according to the stage of development at which the ego has arrived.

This seems so simple to me, but of course I do not suggest that such a theory (or fact) is arbitrary; merely that it appeals to me, as I honestly believe it will to many others who read my books, and who are not perhaps sufficiently advanced to accept the pantheistic theory of the deity, or those who, like myself, have been too thoroughly imbued with the

old idea in the days of their childhood, and thus find it impossible to altogether erase the conception thus ground into them.

The teaching as to "*Mahatmas*," which to the uninitiated is so frequently synonymous for Theosophy itself, is simple in the extreme in reality.

You will have noticed in everything that I have written here the undercurrent of desire for perfection runs like a silver streak through each stage of the ego's transition from darkness to light. It is always a striving upwards, at times but a faintly elusive idea, at times a mighty effort to gain spiritual perfection, to grow free from the trammels of earth-life.

The Sanscrit word Mahatma means literally a great soul.

Practically a Mahatma is an adept, who has attained complete mastery over this earth body and desires. They are not spirits nor spooks, but living men in a living body, the only difference between them and ourselves being that, whereas we are mastered by the material side of our nature and ruled more or less by the four lower principles, *they* are masters of the lower principles and live only in the higher soul life. As initiates they know the secrets of Nature, they are teachers to those who seek them out, and who are sufficiently advanced to

be ready for such teachings, they have powers over and beyond those possessed by ordinary men, but these are simply the result we could all of us obtain if we did but stifle the desire nature and allow the spiritual principles freedom to perform their natural functions.

Clairvoyance, telepathy, healing, powers of hypnotism; the ability to read the past lives of those around them, the knowledge of things as they are;—these are some of the gifts possessed by a Mahatma, and it is no less true that we ourselves—many of us—have already a dim conception of these powers and can use them, even if in a somewhat limited form, owing of course to the limitations imposed upon us by our desire nature.

The Mahatma of the Theosophist answers to the Guru of the Yogi.

It is a superstition frequently upheld by the ignorant that these masters reach to an enormous age, but the Theosophists themselves deny this, and I believe there is no reason to think that such is the case.

A Mahatma is just a man, and must live and die like a man when the time comes for him to lay down the body. He is also something more than a man, and as such, preserves his physical life beyond the age at which most men die. This, however, does

not mean that he exists for thousands of years in the same body, as is believed by the ignorant.

To the heights attained by these holy men some few Theosophists earnestly strive,

But those who thus seek initiation must first give up earth-life in the sense we understand it. They must be free from material ties, they must practise continuity, and they must live in such a way that they gradually learn how to crush out the passions and desires which belong to the lower principles of man.

Such an one will abstain from flesh food, from alcohol, and from intercourse with women. Animal food is said to overcloud and obscure the effort towards spiritual realization, though I believe the Society hold no hard and fast rule with regard to this matter. At the same time there is no doubt but that the student who desires to attain occult power and initiation must so abstain, since gross feeding and high thinking ability cannot and *will* not ever go hand in hand.

Whilst on the subject of occultism it may not be out of place to state here that Theosophy holds very strict ideas upon the subject of magic. A strict line of demarcation is drawn between black and white magic.

White magic is the use of one's powers, magnetic

and occult, for the benefit of others. Self must not take a hand in it in any way, or it at once develops into *black magic*.

I am afraid that most of us are consciously or unconsciously black magicians at this point, even in many little innocent ways, since the mere effort of will to make a man go the way you want him to might be included in this category. I am myself, because the mere use of my will-power to make money and success is liable to be so classed, although that success is as much for those I am responsible for as myself, still I undoubtedly share in it.

Of course, such innocent form of magic is not to be classed with the ceremonial magic of the sorcerers of the Middle Ages, when the most horrible rites and ceremonies were indulged in. But I think it serves to show how far we have still to travel before we can hope to have overcome the ordinary desires for which such unconscious powers are used.

Magic is, practically (outside ceremonial magic, black or white), the power to use the superior forces of one's being against and over the forces of another less strong, or less wide awake than ourselves.

That one may be perfectly desirous of being so used, or may not care one way or the other, but it is magic nevertheless, if, as operator, I benefit personally by such use of my powers.

It makes life a little difficult if we try to live up to this rule. I am not preaching for or against it. I only say it is not permitted, and of course I know it is more frequently done than perhaps any of the sins in the decalogue.

It is a point upon which I am not able to argue, but remember that the broad outline of the teachings I have put before you is intended only for the lay mind, and the average person is not yet keyed to that pitch of super-human perfection which is called for in the initiate.

We can learn what has been put before us by the masters, we can strive to cheerfully take our punishments with the knowledge that we only get what we richly deserve, and not to make a fuss over taking our physic; we can receive our joys without getting unduly elated, and we can try as far as possible to help others, and not to make fresh bad Karma for ourselves.

Some day, when we are ready, we shall be masters over our desire bodies, some day we shall reach Nirvana.

Until such time arrives let us do our best, and work hard at it, with the comforting knowledge given to us by the "wisdom religion," that whatever our merits or demerits, *justice* governs all things and LOVE ETERNAL is our goal at length.

Thus, striving ever upwards, we can draw with us those we love, and those who by the lives we lead come into contact with us. We can teach *them* how to avoid making evil Karma, how to live the best in life, and so, loving, giving, radiantly happy, we at last go to join the great souls who have preceded us, and the last mysteries are no longer a mystery to us.

If this book of mine shall help even one soul towards that far-off beacon of life and joy, then I have not written in vain.

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